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## [Five Books for the Perceptive Traveler](#)

Posted November 12th, 2011 by Kerry Dexter

Guidebooks, travel memoirs, how to books, atlases, maps:: all of those make good reading for the traveler. Other sorts of books serve to inspire, recall, and illuminate travel too. Cookbooks, biographies, memoirs, stories real and imagined all have their place on the perceptive traveler's bookshelf and with the winter holidays approaching, perhaps on the perceptive travelers' gift list.

Musician Rosanne Cash didn't set out to write a travel book, or an autobiography either, with her memoir [Composed](#). Her vivid images of place and stories of experiences in different landscapes linger long after reading



her words, though. A walk to the place she was living as a young woman in London, a road in winter in Tennessee, making her way through Manhattan streets on 9/11, taking her sorrows to the sea shore: whether central to the story Cash is telling, or mentioned as background, her sense of place stay in mind. "For me me music has always involved journeys,. both literal and metaphoric," she writes. So does her prose.

Brette Sember is a traveler as well. Her lens though which to remember and share her travels is food. In [The Parchment Paper Cookbook](#) she offers recipes for Thai lemongrass chicken, swedish meatballs, artichoke pizza, and baklava, none of which you'd usually think of to make with the parchment paper techniqu, which involves wrapping the food to be cooked up in packets. Sember offers tips and recipes for many sorts of international and all American dishes dishes to cook this way. Another advantage for the traveler occurs to me: should you want to cook for friends you are visiting, orif perhaps you are staying in a self catering place or in a hostel. when you cook in parchment there will be no pots and pans to clean up.

Visual art was the aspect of place and travel which interested Charnell Havens and Vera Marie Badertscher. That, and the life story of a Navajo in the American southwest, Quincy Tahoma. The two spent more than a decade following the often slender threads of memory and conflicting records and research concerning the artist's life, while connecting with many who knew the man or owned his work. The result is their book [Quincy](#)

[Tahoma](#) which is extensively illustrated with images of Tahoma's paintings. Both story and image evoke the landscape of the American southwest.

Poetry and photography have their place in travel writing and reading, as well. Photographer Andy Hall has brought he two together in his book [Touched by Robert Burns](#). He asked a range of Scots to choose a favorite poem's by Scotland's national bard, and then set out to make photographs that not so much add to the poems and the written reflections as extends the ideas offered there and opens up new ways of seeing and thinking about them.

Fiction belongs in travel reading as well, with places from India to Paris to Oslo to the west of Ireland to Argentina to the Yukon and all points between playing part in well read stories. As it is coming on Christmas, for fiction I'll point you to Philip Gulley's gentle tale of the [holiday season in small town Indiana, Christmas in Harmony](#).

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