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Strigberger's travel guide takes reader down lighthearted path

By Paul Russell, AdvocateDaily.com Contributor



Few travel books take a lighthearted approach when exploring the world, which is why his should appeal to many people, says humorist and author [Marcel Strigberger](#).

"I figured the world could use an amusing book about travel," he tells [AdvocateDaily.com](#).

"There are many facets of travel and tourism which beg for humour, and I realized there wasn't a book like this around, so I wrote *Poutine on the Orient Express*."

Strigberger says the book, available in paperback and Kindle formats on Amazon and other vendors, takes an irreverent look at a wide range of subjects, ranging from how to pack your luggage to why cities are proud of their historical disasters.

It has been winning praise since its publication last year, he says, referencing as an example the testimonial on the back cover from Mark Breslin, founder and CEO of Yuk Yuks.

"There are a lot of books about travel, and lots of funny books, but not many funny books about travel," Breslin is quoted. "Toronto wit Strigberger is working at the top of his game."

With its short chapters, Strigberger says the book can be enjoyed like a box of chocolates, one piece at a time.



“A lot of people won’t consume the whole thing right away,” he says. “They will get a fix, then and put it down for a bit, before coming back for another chapter.”

As a retired lawyer with 42 years' experience in personal injury and family law, Strigberger infuses legal knowledge into his travel writing.

“I talk about why Stonehenge doesn't have a roof by creating a fictitious legal case where the monument has just moved from Wales to where it is now, and the movers lost the roof,” he says.

“So the Druids — Celtic pagans believed to have built Stonehenge — are making a claim against the movers about the roof, and I have a mock legal judgment there,” Strigberger says.

Another chapter focuses on the legal contracts required by cruise ship operators.

“You basically sign your life away,” he says. "The conditions read something like, 'By taking this cruise you waive all claims against us other than claims for negligence. By clicking Accept, you are accepting that we are never negligent.'”

That chapter also notes that the full terms of the contract are available to view in the engine room of the ship.

“But when you get there, there's a sign at the entrance on the engine room reading, 'Do not enter. Unauthorized entry could result in our staff throwing you overboard,’” Strigberger says.

“You don't have to be a lawyer to read or enjoy this book,” he says, “though some legal issues just come out automatically.”

Most chapters deal with situations that everyone can identify with, Strigberger says, such as why it took up to 600 years to build some cathedrals in Europe.

He gives the example of the Cologne Cathedral, which began construction in 1248 but was not completed until 1880. He makes suggestions as to why there may have been construction delays.

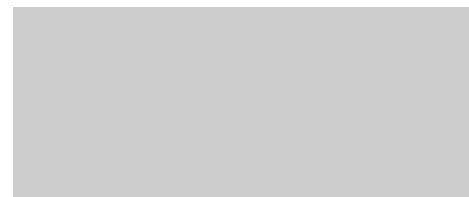
“Bubonic plague no doubt accounted for some of the delays,” Strigberger says, “and then there were fires and strikes, plus with many of these structures, the architect usually fell off the steeple during construction. In some places, they will show you the spot where he landed.”

In a chapter titled, “Location, location, location,” Strigberger writes about how Caribbean stops begin to look alike while on a cruise.

“I believe there really are only one or two islands out there,” he writes. “At night the cruise ship sails out, maybe 10 to 15 km offshore, and in the meantime, the island tour company changes the harbour area, putting up a fake front with a new name, welcoming cruisers.”

When the switch is complete, the tour company telephones the ship and says, “OK, we are now St. Kitts. Bring them back.” The people unsuspectingly prance off the ship onto the same island they visited yesterday, thinking they made some headway, Strigberger says.

“When your boat docks, they have the same calypso band playing, but with different hats. And the jewelry stores are all identical,” he says.



Strigberger says he spent a long time coming up with a name of his book but decided on *Poutine on the Orient Express* for two reasons.

“The Orient Express is a famous, snobby train that serves fine food on expensive linen and china, so by way of contrast, I wanted to pick something they would never serve, and that’s poutine,” Strigberger says.

The title plays off Agatha Christie’s famous novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*, “with the second joke being that poutine will kill you if you eat too much of it,” he says.

Strigberger, who says his next book may be about the joys and difficulties of aging, says most people need to lighten up and laugh more.

“Humour is a vital element for us civilized beings,” he says, “and given that most people travel, this is a relevant book for many.”

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