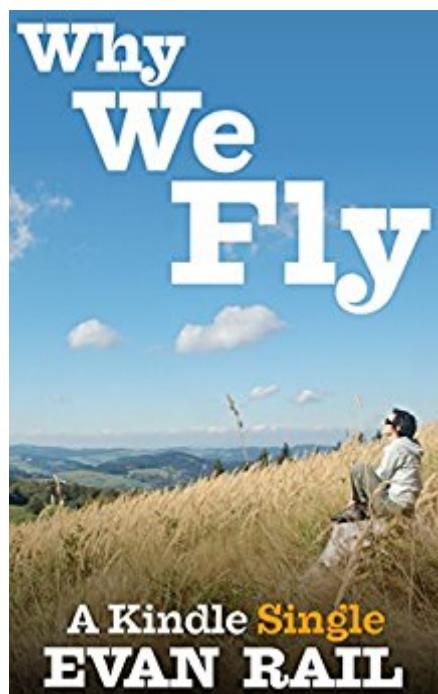


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Why We Fly: The Meaning Of Travel In A Hyperconnected Age (Kindle Single)



Synopsis

It was supposed to be a routine road trip: a pleasant drive through Hungary's Tokaj wine region on an assignment for Condé Nast Traveler magazine. But there was a small problem: the car, an old Skoda 120 L from the communist era, often simply would not start. The second problem: instead of a bridge across the muddy Tisza river, they were unexpectedly forced to take a ferry, getting to the other side of the river with a dead engine at the front of a long line of Hungarian cars. Thus begins "Why We Fly," a thoughtful meditation on the meaning of the voyage by the travel writer Evan Rail, the author of more than 70 travel articles for the New York Times. In it, Rail questions the meaning of travel from the perspective of a travel insider, finding unexpected pleasures in the worst moments on the road and asking serious questions about what travel means. When just about everything is available everywhere, what is the point of packing ourselves into aluminum tubes and shipping ourselves to the other side of the earth? Why, in fact, do so many of us fly and drive and ride? And just what kind of jerk was Petrarch, anyway? A 30-page lyric essay, "Why We Fly" is a humorous and erudite investigation into the point of going anywhere at all, and a moving and personal reflection on the nature of journeys, love and family.

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Customer Reviews

I found it hard to believe that the word "travel" is descended from the name of an ancient torture device. But on second thought, having to pass through a TSA gauntlet just to earn the right to be shoehorned into an ever-shrinking airline seat seems close enough to torture that it's not so unbelievable. I learned that little tidbit and a lot more in travel writer Evan Rail's captivating essay on travel. Why the author travels is no mystery - as a travel writer, it's his job. The rest of us endure the hardships of travel for a variety of reasons, such as commuting to work, seeing the grandchildren, reuniting with old friends, or to see new places - needs that in most cases cannot be satisfied by email, Skype, or any other electronic means. For those who have ever dreamed of being a professional travel writer, Mr. Rail gives a down to earth description of what it's like to spend much of his time on the road gathering information, digesting it, and trying to give the reader an accurate up-to-date picture of a travel destination. It's hardly the glamorous job it appears to be. "Why We Fly" is a fascinating, insightful examination of travel and its effects on people and society. If I learned one thing that will stay with me (and likely resurface in nightmares), it's to avoid the cheese on Sardinia. And that's all I'll say about that.

Evan Rail takes the reader on a wonderful journey making travel seem more essential to the human experience than ever before, despite the fact we no longer "need" to travel to visit a place. "The most obvious reason to travel, of course, is simply to be somewhere else. But when so much of what you need to know about another place is accessible from where you already are, what is the point of going there? Part of the answer must lie in the chasm that remains, despite all efforts, between information about a place and the place itself. Rail provides historical perspectives on travel wrapped into a distinctly postmodern review of the exquisitely human and being struck by the fact that while they were "roughly the ideal opposite(s)", Rail nonetheless "felt a spiritual component to just being in his presence, something that I am certain I could not pick up through Skype." He also shares wonderful observations from other writers about the reasons we travel (Whatever you choose, however many roads you travel, I hope that you choose not to be a lady. I hope you will find some way to break the rules and make a little trouble out there. -Nora Ephron) or should travel (Somewhere I have never traveled, gladly beyond any experience... -E.E. Cummings). But in the end, who would not want to read an essay on travel by a writer, who midway through his piece states, "My possessions are at war with my brain."

This line alone is worth the read to find ÅfÃ¢Â ª like the many treasured jewels Rail unearths in Why We Fly. If you didn't think there was a reason to still travel, Evan Rail may just change your mind.

I thoroughly enjoyed "Why We Fly: The meaning of Travel in a Hyperconnected Age". I didn't want to put it down because I wanted to find out what happens to them on the ferry with the broken-down Skoda! He starts off with a quote about music for airports, and then you are suddenly in an old Skoda on the banks of the muddy Tisza River in the middle of Hungary. He then explains that traveling isn't always about what goes right, but also it's about what goes wrong, or what often goes right after the wrong. I was immediately reminded of the time my wife and I missed our cruise ship in Hamburg, Germany because we got lost returning our rental car. Not a week goes by since then, where we don't talk about our adventure in finally catching up to our ship! He discusses the importance of actually VISITING a place rather than googling it. He goes on to explain that a computer can't respond to a raised eyebrow, or give a smile, or even a high five, etc. I think "Why We Fly" should be required reading for any serious traveler! It reminds my of the travel philosophy I used to glean from early Rick Steves' books such as Europe Through The Back Door ten years ago. I can't wait to read Mr. Rail's other Kindle Singles, "Why Beer Matters" and "In Praise of Hangovers"!

Full disclosure: I'm an Evan fan. I got to know him (virtually) because of his brilliant "Why Beer Matters." He followed that with "Triplebock," three beer-related short stories, and "In Praise of Hangovers." So there's that. But when he's not writing about beer, Evan focuses on travel writing, a genre that, as a rule, doesn't much interest me (because I hate traveling). But in "Why We Fly," Rail managed to persuade me to re-think my travel loathing. He's a terrific writer, but more important, he's terrifically able to ponder the human condition, in this case by thinking about travel. So. Read this Kindle short. You won't regret it. And now I'll sit back and await more delights from the mind of Evan Rail.

There is some interesting writing here but no sense of clear theme or organisation. It is a bit of a mixed salad of random ideas tossed together with no discernible organising principle. Not worth the price.

Mr. Rail offers thoughtful insights on travel, informed by professional experience and made relatable

with personal recollections. A very worthwhile read, especially for those of us with vagabond tendencies.

Amusing, heart-warming little essay relating the author's take on why we leave the comforts of home to endure the travails of travel

It was more a discussion of man's need to fly with no story attached. Too much history for me on vacation.

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