



Open Doors to China and Tibet

Until 1980 no more than 2,000 foreigners had ever visited Tibet. One of them was Alan Winnington, *Daily Worker* correspondent in China, whose fascinating memoirs, titled **Breakfast with Mao**, are now published (*Lawrence and Wishart* £4.95 pbk).

It was not until after the Cultural Revolution and Red Guard vandalisations that Tibet was open to visitors.

Nowadays the doors are open. Two new guide books cater particularly for the independent back-packer. *Lonely Planet*, whose **China: A Travel Survival Kit** is now clutched in foreign hands from Shanghai to Shenyang, has produced a similar guide to Tibet. **Tibet: A Travel Survival Kit**, (*Michael Buckley & Robert Strauss*, *Lonely Planet*, £4.95) shows points of entry, both allowed and in theory banned, from four adjoining Chinese provinces.

The *Collins* guide by *Elizabeth Booz*, **A Guide to Tibet** (£8.95) is less adventurous, but strong on Tibetan history. Both books tell you, quite calmly, at what point on the highway to Nepal you can turn left for Mount Everest.

The *Lonely Planet China* will shortly be challenged by *Routledge & Kegan Paul's The Rough Guide to China* by *Rhonda Evans*, *Catherine Sanders* and *Chris Stewart* (£6.95). It is also strong on historical detail and some less familiar stopping-places, but it cannot keep up

with the pace of change as the door swings open wider. Much more is now possible than it admits says a recent backpacker scanning its text.

This could not have been imagined by Alan Winnington in 1949 as he drank moonshine with the leaders of the Chinese revolution on the eve of their victory.

Winnington went on to report on the Korean War from the Northern side. Accused of treason and deprived of his passport, he then worked in Beijing till he became disillusioned with the Great Leap Forward.

Breakfast With Mao is a curiously incomplete book and not only because Winnington died in the final stage of writing it. There is a sense of conspiratorial mystery and his Korean observations are enigmatic. The exception, is germ warfare, where he explains exactly why he is still convinced it was used.

Winnington becomes more discursive on the joys of China before the Great Leap – the 'golden years' before Mao when, 'half-way to madness', he insisted on trying to create 'overnight socialism' in Tibet and everywhere else. Mao created a fantasy world, Winnington concludes, in which the only winners were time-serving cadres. That is at least half true. The other half – the genuine excitement of mass mobilisation for many Chinese – is now only a historical truth which can never be relived. ● *John Gittings*

Trecks in Foreign Parts

In Trouble Again a special issue of travel writing is *Granta's* latest collection (£3.95).

Travel writing is a rather hybrid beast; part reportage, part autobiography, part journalism. At the very least it challenges the boundaries between 'fact' and 'fiction', in that the recording of the traveller's impressions will always provoke her/him to explore ways to evoke the exotic/frightening for the alien reader.

Perhaps with this in mind, the editors began the collection with *Redmond O'Hanlon's* extraordinary 'Amazon Adventure', a vivid account of two companions with different responses to the hardship of the jungle. This piece is really a story about hedonism and

curiosity, fear and resilience, with the documentary elements as back-up.

By contrast, *Hanif Kureishi's* 'Bradford' could have been an article in *The Guardian*, locating the complexities of Asian life in a British city. In between these we touch briefly on Cuba, Angola, China, India – a kind of white person's trek around foreign parts.

If I feel somewhat uneasy, it is nothing to do with the quality of the writing. With journeys to so many different places it's as if one were reading a collection of exotic fiction rather than documentary. But then again, perhaps such a collection highlights the fact that when the journey is done, it remains in the traveller's mind as a story to be told to others. ● *Michéle Wandor*

Travellers Tracts

Travel literature is a boom area these days. There are many tomes available for armchair consumers of travelling sagas. **A Book of Traveller's Tales** edited by *Eric Newby* is out in paperback (*Picador* £4.95) and is enjoyable to peruse before a warm fire. *Jan Morris's* offerings do encourage the reader to leave the armchair. Her two latest paperbacks are **Among The Cities** (*Penguin* £4.95) and **Journeys** (*Oxford* £4.95).

John Julius Norwich's A Taste For Travel (*Papermac* £7.95) is again for the armchair. *Granta* devotes another whole issue to travel.

Martha Gellhorn revisits Cuba, *Salman Rushdie* in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan... And though it's been on the shelves for a few months now, *Pandora's Half The Earth* (£5.95) deserves another mention.

Two other quick mentions. *Richard Barber's Penguin Guide to Medieval Europe* (£6.95) is ever so tasteful, and the 50th anniversary facsimile reissue

New York New York

Want to visit New York cheaply? Then you'd be wise to acquire the newly-published **Rough Guide to New York** by *Martin Dunsford* and *Jack Holland* (*Routledge & Kegan Paul*, £4.50 pbk).

New York is certainly 'a helluva town', as the song goes, but it's an expensive one too. The guide's suggestions for cheap accommodation are extremely useful and unusual. Points too for the sections on the outer boroughs and up-state that are too often ignored by visitors, and for the reminders that New York is not just glitz but also home to many unassimilated

ethnic groups and homeless people.

But guidebooks are always a little out-of-date and it shows here in the nightclub section (rich, chic hangouts and the passé) and sketchy coverage of upper west side (home of left intellectuals, blacks and Hispanics).

However, if you ignore the laboured and mis-spelt dictionary of New York slang, and chance your luck with the many cheap, ethnic restaurants not mentioned, the **Rough Guide to New York** should prove an invaluable introduction to the Big Apple. ● *Anya Schiffrin*

alarming and distasteful infection that few travellers catch, but it gets two absorbing pages. The chapter on intestinal parasites is brilliant, and the lines on 'creeping eruption' will change your view of dogs forever.

A wonderful, juicy book that will help people with serious medical problems (like diabetics) to cope with different environments, whilst warning the truly intrepid against local pathologies. Tuck a copy into your toupee before you take off. ● *Steve Iliffe*

The Itch

If you have the itch to travel, **Travellers Health** (*Richard Dawood*, *Oxford University Press*, pbk £6.95) should cure you. No sniggering jibes at *Montezumas* revenge here, just gruesome detail and sound advice parcelled into neat essays custom-made for that long flight or slow train.

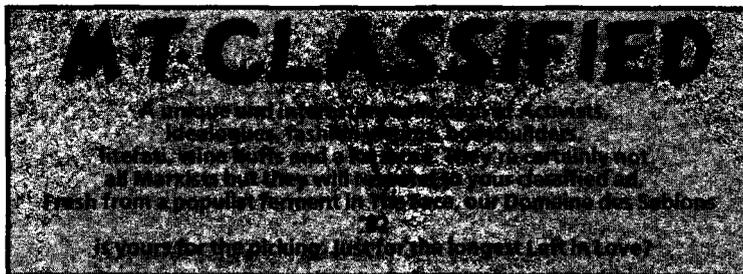
Beware of Japanese puffer fish cooked by an amateur; death is preceded by a tingling of the lips... Don't forget that the best time to cross the Sahel coincides with the meningitis season. Guinea worm is an



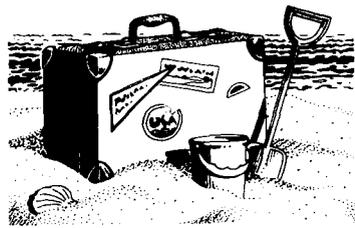
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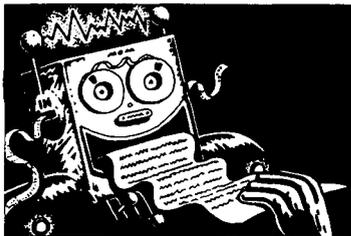


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