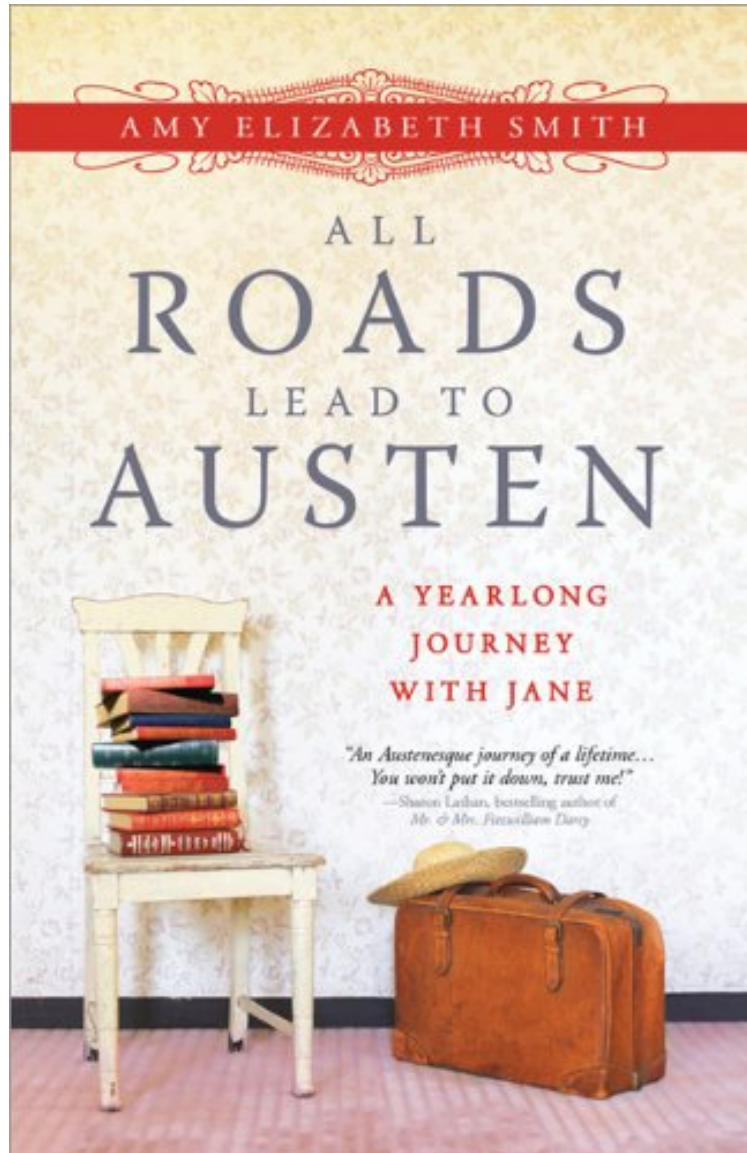


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All Roads Lead to Austen: A Year-long Journey with Jane

Amy Smith

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#852702 in Books Amy Smith 2012-06-01 2012-06-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x 1.00 x 5.50l, .75 #File Name: 1402265859384 pagesAll Roads Lead to Austen A Year long Journey with Jane | File size: 40.Mb

Amy Smith : All Roads Lead to Austen: A Year-long Journey with Jane before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised All Roads Lead to Austen: A Year-long Journey with Jane:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not enough Austen in this bookBy Tina in FloridaThis book, All Roads Lead to Austen, called to me as it was about travel, adventure and, of course, Jane Austen books. I have to

admit straight away that I did not finish this book. I just plain ran out of steam and got a little.....bored. The idea of spending a year traveling in foreign countries is very intriguing and adventurous. I know this not only by reading as much as I did of this book, but because I have done just that. Decades back I traveled around Europe for an entire year and half. No plans in particular, just roaming and enjoying other cultures. That is an adventure in itself, although my father didn't quite agree with that sentiment at the time. LOLI could relate to that part of the story about picking up books from the countries she visited. Being a bookworm I am guilty of packing a suitcase with books from foreign places, dragging heavy luggage along to enjoy my treasures when I got home. The author did manage to come up with a good reading list from the countries she traveled. Talking about the Austen novels with her book "clubs" was also enjoyable. But I started losing interest in her nattering on about her family, her mother and the sometimes pretentious observations about her love life. Do I believe she honestly met a Mexican man and moved in with him without knowing much about him? No, I don't. Maybe it happened but it seemed exaggerated. So did her affair with the Argentinian. Basically, there wasn't enough Jane Austen in a story with a title All Roads Lead to Austen. That's my humble opinion. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very engaging book! By AnnaEmmett I really liked this book. My biggest problem with it was that it assumed a fairly good knowledge of all the Jane Austen characters. While I've read most of her books, it's been a really long time and I don't remember all the different characters and I felt that I was missing out on some really good insights because of that. Other than that, it was a really wonderful book. I've lived and traveled a lot but only in Europe and the US. It was so interesting to get a sense of the different personalities of the individuals and the cultures. I have a completely different perspective on Central and South America! The book is really well written and the story is very engaging. I highly recommend it to anyone who likes Jane Austen, enjoys traveling or even just hearing about other countries and cultures. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. All Roads Really Do Lead to Austen By luzikl15 If you're a fan of Jane Austen, or even if you've never read a Jane Austen novel before, you'll fall in love with Amy Elizabeth Smith in her new book All Roads Lead to Austen: A Year-Long Journey with Jane. A professor on a journey through South America, Smith forms reading groups in six different countries to see how they react to Austen's novels. While most of the readers respond just as Smith's students have in the past, there are a few surprises when the groups are formed of mothers, husbands, scholars and those who rarely have the time to read for pleasure. Smith's writing will transport you to Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, Paraguay, and Argentina, beautiful countries ripe with native language and unique personalities. We can laugh with Smith while she blunders through the different dialects of Spanish and learns the hard way about making assumptions. We can also relate to her as she sorts out her romantic situation thousands of miles from home. No matter your stance on Jane Austen, Amy Elizabeth Smith is sure to keep you entertained.

"An illuminating insight...fascinating." Amanda Grange, bestselling author of Mr. Darcy's Diary "A journey through both a physical landscape and the geography of the human heart and mind...delightfully entertaining and often deeply moving, this book reminds us that Austen's world and her characters are very much alive." Michael Thomas Ford, author of Jane Bites Back WHERE DO BOOKS TAKE YOU? With a suitcase full of Jane Austen novels en español, Amy Elizabeth Smith set off on a yearlong Latin American adventure: a traveling book club with Jane. In six unique, unforgettable countries, she gathered book-loving new friends taxi drivers and teachers, poets and politicians to read Emma, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice. Whether sharing rooster beer with Guatemalans, joining the crowd at a Mexican boxing match, feeding a horde of tame iguanas with Ecuadorean children, or tangling with argumentative booksellers in Argentina, Amy came to learn what Austen knew all along: that we're not always speaking the same language even when we're speaking the same language. But with true Austen instinct, she could recognize when, unexpectedly, she'd found her own Mr. Darcy. All Roads Lead to Austen celebrates the best of what we love about books and revels in the pleasure of sharing a good book with good friends.

"An illuminating insight into other cultures and a testament to Jane Austen's relevance in the modern world. Fascinating." - Amanda Grange, bestselling author of Mr Darcy's Diary. "A journey through both a physical landscape and the geography of the human heart and mind, All Roads Lead to Austen deftly explores the universal themes of Austen's work while telling the story of Smith's own search for understanding, friendship, and, yes, love. Delightfully entertaining and often deeply moving, this book reminds us that Austen's world--and her characters--are very much alive." - Michael Thomas Ford, author of Jane Bites Back "An Austen-esque journey of a lifetime! The power of Jane Austen recounted through humor, poignancy, adventure, and, naturally, romance. You won't put it down, trust me!" - Sharon Lathan, bestselling author of Mr. Mrs. Fitzwilliam Darcy and other Darcy Saga sequels to Pride and Prejudice "Smith's account reads like an educational travel blog, full of colorful characters, overviews of the history and the traditions of each culture, as well as reflections on her own preconceived assumptions and stereotypes. This enjoyable book should appeal to fans of literature and travel, especially those interested in Latin America." - Publishers Weekly "All Roads Lead to Austen, like the best of Austen's works, features a narrative as thoroughly enjoyable as the lively conversations it contains. The story of her travels - delivered with humor, poignancy, and insight - could stand on its own as an impressive travelogue. But as an Austen lover, I was thrilled to see conversations

I've had time and again with fellow fans echoed by people whose lives and cultures are so different from my own. I truly loved this book!" - Amy Patterson, Jane Austen Books, Novelty, OH "I loved this book! It's Eat, Pray, Love meets The Jane Austen Book Club-an unforgettable journey of the mind and heart. Amy Elizabeth Smith proves that Austen does indeed transcend time, place, and language, and we all have something to learn from her, if we will only listen. Amy's tale is so fascinating, thought-provoking, and real, I felt as if I were there with her, every step of the way. I cheered at the ending, and so will you." - Syrie James, bestselling author of *The Lost Memoirs of Jane Austen* "A delightful romp that should appeal to those who appreciate the savvier realms of chick lit." - Kirkus "Narrated in a breezy style, this is a fun twist on the fascination with all things Jane." - Booklist "Smith's narrative voice is so personable that it's almost like traveling with a friend (who isn't afraid to fess up to having a bad attitude at times or making snap judgments of people despite what she's learned from Austen's novels)." - *Diary of an Eccentric* "Her tale is so fascinating, thought-provoking, and real, I felt as if I were there with her, every step of the way. I cheered at the ending, and so will you. 4.5 out of 5 Regency Stars" - *Austenprose*

About the Author Amy Elizabeth Smith has an undergraduate degree in music and a masters and PhD in English. She teaches writing and literature (including a course on Jane Austen) at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. She loves traveling, dancing, classic cinema, and watching squirrel videos on YouTube. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Getting Started Jane Austen just won't stay on the page. I enjoy everything I teach at a small university in California, but I especially love my Jane Austen course. The students and I read her novels together, discuss Austen's historical context, and explore the amazing ways Austen keeps coming to life through sequels, updates, and spin-offs Bridget Jones, Bollywood, zombies, and all. Instead of writing final papers, students do Austen projects that we showcase in December at a public Jane Austen Night bash. We've had *Northanger Abbey* in rhymed heroic couplets, a short play with the Dashwood sisters transformed into gay brothers, a sign language lesson using Austen plots, and my favorite, a marriage of Kafka and Austen: *Emmamorphosis*, wherein Emma wakes up one fine day as a giant cockroach (just imagine what her exoskeleton does to her best muslins!). Austen moves her readers. Semester after semester, when my students talk about Austen's novels, they transition seamlessly between their own lives and Austen's fictional world. "My sister is such an uptight Elinor, she makes me crazy!" somebody will always say after we start *Sense and Sensibility*. Or, "Yeah, I've met a Willoughby or two." Or with endless variations, "Marianne needs a serious dope slap." By the end of each semester I can compile a list of the most smackable characters from student feedback: topping the charts are always Marianne, both Eltons from *Emma*, John Thorpe from *Northanger Abbey*, and of course, Mrs. Bennet. Students just don't react this way to novels I teach in other classes, such as *Wuthering Heights* or *Jane Eyre*. Austen's postmortem rivals wrote great novels, but not a single student has read Emily or Charlotte Bront and reported back to the class, "That Heathcliff is just like my ex-boyfriend," or "Rochester's wife reminds me of my aunt," or "Somebody ought to pop Jane Eyre a good one!" Not once. Bront World is to be viewed and enjoyed at a distance, but Austenland is a place where people feel inclined to get cozy with the locals, even give a few verbal wedgies. Or a dope slap. It's not only my students who react this way to Austen. After a rough divorce, my friend Larry, a fellow native Pennsylvanian, went into an emotional tailspin. He ditched his job and, out of the blue, retrained as a railroad engineer. This led to long hours in hotel rooms between runs, either brooding alone or phoning me for where-did-it-go-wrong debriefs. "You're an English teacher what should I read?" he asked one evening, realizing we needed something to talk about other than his still-broken heart. "Would I like Jane Austen?" *Pride and Prejudice*, her best-paced work, seemed a good recommendation for a man spending too much time staring out of train windows wondering how his marriage had gone off the rails. After a longer than usual silence, I got his first post-Austen call. "I liked it. Took a little getting used to the style, though," he said in his endearing Pittsburgh twang, la "let's go daahntaahn 'n watch a Stillers game." "You know," he went on, "I thought I married a Lizzy Bennet, but maybe I really picked a Lydia?" Well, so much for diverting him from divorce talk. As Larry made his way through all of Austen's novelseven *Mansfield Park*, whose heroine he dubbed the most "smackable" of all our long conversations became populated by Emma, Captain Wentworth, Fanny Price, and others. What is it about Jane Austen that makes us talk about the characters as if they're real people? People we recognize in our own lives, two centuries after Austen created them? When my first development leave from the university rolled around, I decided it was time for me to try my own Austen project, just like my students do. Something creative, something fun. So I got to wondering: the special connection that people feel with Austen's world, this Austen magic would it happen with people in another country, reading Austen in translation? Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is one of the most moving books I've ever read on how literature matters in people's lives. She covered six different authors with the same group of students in post-revolution Iran. Inspired, I decided to try a new twist. Why not read the same author but shift through six different countries, instead? Jane Austen reading groups, on the road. Growing up, I envied Nancy Drew's jet-setting ways, which set me on a course to travel at every opportunity as an adult. I spent a year in Prague in the early 1990s, and since my brother Shawn has an even worse travel bug than my own, I've tagged along like a good little sister to visit him when he lived in Italy, then South Africa, then Egypt. With that year's leave from the university ahead of me, I wanted to explore new territory: Central and South America. In *Clueless*, the nineties update of Austen's *Emma*, the heroine Cher offends her family's Salvadoran maid by assuming that anybody who speaks "Mexican" must be a

Mexican. But Cher's no worse than the average clueless North American. Central and South Americans are our neighbors, but all too many of us can't tell one country from another south of the border. At work I'd met latinos and latin@s from a host of countries I couldn't locate without studying a map. So, on the road I could pick up some firsthand knowledge while seeing what Latin Americans would make of Jane Austen. Would they identify with her characters? Or maybe want to smack a few? Plus, I could find out who their Jane Austens werewhich authors are beloved in Central and South America, which novels come to life off the pages. It would be a whole new world of books (and bookstores!). Unfortunately, the only lesson I remembered from high school Spanish was that *pero* means "but" and *perro*, "dog." Thanks to my university's ties with a language school in the city of Antigua, I settled on Guatemala for both a warm-up and a starting point. The plan was to take five weeks of Spanish lessons during my winter break, then return in July to begin my "year with Jane" in earnest; I'd do my first reading group there. The second country would let me mix business with pleasure. I'd made two short trips to Puerto Vallarta prior to cooking up my Austen project. In fact, maybe that influenced my planning because in Mexico I'd met Diego, a cheerful, handsome taxi driver who also happened to be a booklover. We were both eager for a much longer visit. I wasn't a fan of long-distance relationships, but there was something special about Diego. I was willing to jump in and see how things might turn out. For country number three, I decided on Ecuador, where I could visit a friend-of-a-friend in Guayaquil. The next and longest stop would be Chile. I signed on to teach with a study abroad program for a semester in Santiago, where I was sure I could find some interested Austen readers. After that I'd head for Paraguay to stay with another friend-of-a-friend. Even without a connection, who could resist a mysterious, allegedly dangerous place almost nobody can find on a map? For the big finale, I'd spend a month in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I didn't know a soul there, but it seemed fitting that Jane Austen should wrap up her Latin American tour in the city many consider the literary capital of South America. With five weeks in Antigua under my belt (and plenty of practice), I had a foundation for speaking Spanish. As I read and planned, I could see that each country would be unique, but the five-week language trip offered me a taste of what to expect. I walked the cobbled streets of a colonial Spanish city; I saw looming, active volcanoes; I heard marimba music at midnight; I learned to make my way through Conan the Barbarian stories in Spanish. Come that May, there wasn't a student on campus more eager than I was to bolt. Was I nervous about spending a year away from family and friends, trying to function in a foreign language I had a tenuous grip on while convincing several dozen people in six different countries to join me for book groups? You bet. Was I excited about the trip anyway? You bet! When classes were done, I packed up my worldly goods and found new homes for my chickensthree Cochins, a white Silkie hen, and Nikolaus-Nikolaus, a strutting Frizzle rooster named after a stern German ancestor. Stopping through in Pennsylvania, I bought my mom a computer so we could use email along with phone calls; she's a worrier. And I visited my father's grave. One evening a few years back, he'd set down the book he'd been reading and a heart attack took him fast, right there at home with the woman he'd loved for fifty years. The book was a novelization of *Casablanca*, a film he'd seen repeatedly, so as my dad slipped away, he wasn't even troubled with any nagging questions about how it would all turn out. To me, that's kind of a big deal. Unless I go in my sleep, I fully expect to be dragged off to eternity with at least three half-read books around somewhere, wryly wondering the genre-appropriate version of "Damnation, whodunit?!" Raised by booklovers, I'll be a booklover 'til the end. In fact, now that I'm back from Latin America, I regret only one thing connected with my year's travelsthat my father, the man who built me my first bookshelves, won't get to meet the devoted reader I'm about to marry, someone who played a role in my Austen adventure. Diego from Mexico? Maybe. Maybe not. But I will say this: as Austen fans know, when Austen's in the picture, somebody's going to end up hitched. My dad would have loved my fianc's sense of humor and his insight. After I'd returned to the States and was talking to some people about the book groups I'd done, one of them frowned and said, "That was superimposing European literature on those people, you know." The man didn't outright call me a Yankee Imperialist Pig-dog, but that seemed to be the subtext. When I passed this comment on to my fianc, he was both annoyed and amused. "Sounds like he's confusing you with the CIA in the 1970s," he said. "So latina cultures are so feeble that we can't enjoy a Jane Austen novel without our literary world collapsing? Somebody needs to learn a bit about Latin America." Austen was a fan of not making assumptionsof avoiding prejudicesof making sure you're reading a situation (or a person or a place) very carefully. She never set foot outside of England, but what she has to teach about astute reading applies across time, across borders, and even, as I came to learn, across languages. I wish I could say that I never made any gaffes of my own while traveling, that I never brought too much old baggage to new places or into relationships with people I met. But thanks to bad judgment (and at times, bad Spanish), I wound up in quite a few bonehead situations. Like fleeing from a ghost in a Mexican bookshopputting a scare, myself, into some unfortunate Ecuadorians in a grocery storefending off an amorous senior citizen in a Chilean laundry roomand on one stellar occasion, barely escaping a good hard soaking from a police water cannon. Fate stepped in at times too, independent of my own blunders, to deal some painful surprises. I struggled for months with the most serious illness of my life, much to my poor mother's distress. I made it throughbut not all of the smart, warm, incredible new friends I met along the road were still around by the time I reached the end of it. Yet, as Austen well knew, life's challenges and sorrows help us appreciate what goes right. No amount of stumbling on my part could spoil the pleasures of drinking rooster beer in Guatemala; of floating in the gentle sea at Puerto Vallarta; of

feeding a hoard of tame iguanas in an Ecuadorian park; of seeing the snowcapped Andes in Chile; of riding a rocking horse in a Paraguayan nightclub; of watching seductive Argentineans tango on a narrow street in Buenos Aires on a chilly afternoon. In every country I visited, I had the pleasure of not just learning but living a new language, along with the nerdy fun of browsing bookstore after Spanish-language bookstore. And the Austen reading groupseach so different from the others, each letting me see Austen in surprising, enlightening, amazing new ways. On top of it all, I wound up with a nice old-fashioned happy ending, one that still leaves me and my fianc marveling at our own dumb luck for having crossed paths in the first place. It was a wonderful year, mistakes and all. The funny thing is, I made my very biggest mistake before I even hit the road: I set off on my travels thinking of myself as a teacher, just because that's how I earn a living. So clueless. What a lot I had to learn.