



## Mystery Tour Resource for Armchair Travelers



Can't travel? Let the pages of a book take you there in every other sense. **OIC Moments** has packed your virtual travel kit with a varied selection of great mysteries from all around the world.

For best use, read this on a mobile device. Then click on the links to find out more about an author or to take a virtual tour of the location. You'll also find recipes, maps, souvenirs, and a world of "literary travel" resources.

Bon voyage!  
Joyce McGreevy

### CANADA

**Québec:** [Louise Penny](#), *The Inspector Gamache series*

Based on the real-life town of Knowlton, Three Pines is one of the world's most appealing settings in fiction. Oh sure, there's the occasional murder. But this village is also where fan-favorite Inspector Armand Gamache and a memorable cast of neighbors gather in Olivier's cozy bistro for fireside banter over croissants and café au lait. Visitors who find the off-the-map village (often by getting lost) stay at the B&B of Olivier's partner, Gabri, and browse at Myrna's bookshop.

**BE THERE:** Take a virtual tour of [Knowlton](#) (also known as Lac-Brôme). New to the series? Meet the author at this virtual gathering of [The Three Pines Book Club](#).

**Montreal and Ottawa:** [Melissa Yi](#), (pen name) *The Dr. Hope Sze series*

A gritty, witty side of Canada awaits readers of medical mysteries, written by real-life emergency physician Dr. Melissa Yuan-Innes. Book #1 (*Code Blues*) introduces Dr. Hope Sze, fresh from a family medical residency in a quiet corner of Ontario, Hope drives to Montreal, where she anticipates a warm French-Canadian welcome, *pain au chocolat*, and the occasional date.

Within minutes she's hitting potholes and getting flipped the bird. Within hours, she's met the city's most charming doctor. Within 24 hours, he's dead. The authenticity of the setting, from the city streets to the inner workings of the Canadian ER, make this "appointment" reading with thrills to test your BP, clever twists to nourish your "little grey cells," and romance that's good for your heart. Book #5 (*Human Remains*), moves the action to Ottawa, the author's real-life home.

### UNITED STATES

Though set in Paris, the first detective novel in history was an American creation. In *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841), Edgar Allen Poe introduced Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, a man with extraordinary analytical skills. Since then, the roll call of U.S. mystery authors has risen into the thousands.

As for mysteries with American settings, readers are spoiled for choice. From [Hawaii](#) to [Montana](#), [Louisiana](#) to [Maine](#), every state in the union claims its environment has inspired the best mysteries. With that geographical abundance in mind, here's a postcard's worth of recent favorites.

#### **Cross-Country Road Trip:** Peter Heller, *Celine*

How's your cabin fever? Does life in lockdown have you fantasizing about hitting the highway? Then remember this: If one is to drive all the way from Brooklyn to Glacier National Park just to find out if someone's father has been eaten by a bear, one does need good company, darling. Celine Watkins fits the bill splendidly.

At 68, this paradoxical paragon quotes the poetry of Wallace Stevens, tracks down missing persons, keeps up with AA meetings and her Sarah Lawrence alumnae, can launch a VW bus into rapid reverse, stores four handguns in her safe, and generally prefers her breakfast in bed.

When Celine is summoned to solve a far-flung mystery, the itinerary includes famous libraries, several restaurants, the Paris and Nantucket of Celine's childhood, and some of the best scenery on either side of the Continental Divide. Besides, as Celine says, "A road trip frees the mind, revitalizes the spirit, and infuses the body with Dr Pepper and teriyaki jerky."

#### **California:** [Lisa Lutz](#), *The Izzy Spellman series*

Beginning with Dashiell Hammett in *The Maltese Falcon*, many a male mystery writer has laid claim to the City by the Bay. Hard-boiled classics abound, but when it comes to contemporary mystery writers, Lisa Lutz is my favorite San Franciscan.

Lutz's tongue-in-cheek series features the Spellmans, a family of private investigators who spend as much time snooping on each other as they do trailing suspects. The dialogue is both witty and wondrously immature (the perfect way to lighten up during these heavy times), and even the footnotes are hilarious. For pandemic shut-ins who miss hanging out at the local dive bar with sarcastically hilarious BFFs, Lutz's entertaining tales of the city are the perfect getaway vehicle.

#### **Florida:** Lucy Burdette, *The Key West Food Critic Mystery series*

Remember sunny destinations and dining out? If winter snows and "CLOSED" signs on your local restaurants are getting you down, why not escape to Key West? The change of setting includes the houseboat of fictional food critic Hayley Snow and a full menu of delicious titles, like *Killer Takeout* and *Scone of Contention*.

**EAT LOCAL:** Enhance your virtual travel experience by cooking up some of the [recipes](#) in Burdette's books.

### **East Coast College Tour:** Pamela Thomas-Graham, *The Ivy League Mysteries*

This one's for all the college students who've been missing out on campus life because of COVID restrictions. Add this smart series to your syllabus. Professor Veronica "Nikki" Chase is an African American professor of economics at Harvard who minors in solving crimes. In *Orange Crushed*, Professor Chase heads to Princeton for an event in honor of the professor who mentored her. But celebration turns to shock when Professor Stokes suddenly ends up dead.

## LATIN AMERICA

### **Brazil:** Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, *The Inspector Espinosa series*

Near the Rua Carioca, in Rio de Janeiro, Bar Luiz offers a view of old colonial houses, with their stone facades and wrought-iron balconies. Savor the moment, then fortify yourself with a snack at the Confeitaria Colombo.

You'll need your strength as you and police chief Espinosa search for clues in every plaza and side street of his Copacabana precinct. Fortunately, like his philosopher namesake, Espinosa likes to stop and ponder life's everyday mysteries, too.

**PREPARE FOR TAKEOFF:** Read an engaging interview with the [author](#). Yes, it's in AARP, but trust me, Garcia-Roza's books are steamy.

### **Cuba:** Leonardo Padura, *The Lieutenant Conde series*

Lieutenant Conde adores Havana, and readers will, too, as Padura's lyrical, introspective mystery novels guide you through a feast for the senses. Just don't expect cliché. Oh sure, you'll taste the rum and catch the scent of cigar smoke, but this hard-drinking detective's favorite sensory experience is to follow the fragrance of old papers into an antiquarian bookshop.

Conde, you see, would rather be a writer than a detective. Start your armchair travel with the *Havana Quartet*, also known as *Havana Gold*, a four-season, four-book chronicle of a year in Conde's life.

**PREPARE FOR TAKEOFF:** This [interview](#) from Words Without Borders previews the sense of place evoked by Padura, the recipient of Cuba's most prestigious literary award.

### **Chile:** Ramón Díaz Eterovic, *The Investigator Heredia series*

When not investigating crime, Heredia gazes out his office window at the Mapocho River and the La Chimba neighborhood—or reads detective novels. Even his cat reflects Heredia's obsession with the genre. The feline's name is Simenon, a nod to Georges Simenon, best known as the creator of fictional detective Jules Maigret. But motive is all. As Heredia says in *Dark Echoes of the Past*. "I wanted to . . . escape into the rabbit hole of a good story that would make me forget the reality that was pulsating just a few steps outside my office door."

## GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

**England:** With mystery novels for passports, armchair travelers can easily explore almost any corner of England. This is the land that produced one of the world's best known and most influential mystery authors, Agatha Christie. She and a host of other superlative novelists turned the 1920s-1930s into the Golden Age of Mystery. So where to next? Let these contemporary English mysteries become your boarding passes to new flights of adventure.

[Richard Osman](#), *The Thursday Murder Club*

The title is a nod to Christie. The style is empathetic and slyly humorous. The setting? Only the most elegant, empowering, non-stereotypical retirement community on the planet. A gem!

[Anthony Horowitz](#), *The Word Is Murder* and other titles

I'd follow Horowitz anywhere, from idyllic Crete to a deadly Suffolk hotel (*Moonflower Murders*), from a 1950s hamlet to the riskiest setting of all, a publishing house (*The Magpie Murders*). In some titles, Horowitz nests a second book within the main book.

In *The Sentence Is Death*, the author himself appears as a TV show is filming on a London street. The TV show is real—"Foyle's War"—and yes, Horowitz wrote that superb mystery series, too, setting much of it in scenic Hastings on the Sussex coast.

**Ireland:** [Tana French](#), *Dublin Murder Squad series* and other titles

Cancel your Zoom meetings and switch your cellphone to "Do Not Disturb." Reading any mystery by French is an immersive experience. French reveals Ireland not as a quaint little island but a world vast with the secret side of urban and rural life. She also excels at casting Irish characters in Irish settings as outsiders.

As French builds your bond with each protagonist, she seduces you into savoring every detail of the mystery's environment. Start with *In the Woods*, or her stand-alone, *The Searcher*, a suspenseful story about a Chicagoan who thinks moving to a small Irish village will be the perfect escape. It is—for the reader.

**Scotland:** [Kate Atkinson](#), *The Jackson Brodie series*

From the famous Fringe Theater Festival to the extinct volcano known as Arthur's Peak, I've trailed soldier-turned-private-investigator Jackson Brodie from one end of Edinburgh to the other. The complex, beguiling single dad who's less likely to catch a break than a sucker punch is a crush-worthy guide, thanks to Atkinson's perfect balance of humor, empathy, and exquisite prose.

In *One Good Turn*, (Book #2), Brodie, a Yorkshireman, looks up from Princess Street at Edinburgh Castle: "A rustle of excitement preceded the One O'Clock Gun. The story went that the citizens of Edinburgh had been too mean to pay for twelve cannon shots for midday and so had settled for a gun at one o'clock."

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**BE THERE:** Take a virtual-reality walk to Arthur's Seat, complete with 360-degree views, [here](#). Then marvel at pre-COVID mingling at [Edinburgh Castle](#).

**SCORE A SOUVENIR:** Brodie always brings cherished companions on long drives: Country Western and Alt-Folk. Listen to the [Spotify playlist](#) for BBC's "Case Studies."

[Ann Cleeves](#), *The Jimmy Perez series*

Are you drawn to dramatic settings? To visit the Shetland Islands, sail to the northern Atlantic Ocean between Scotland or Norway. Or climb aboard this captivating series. You'll enjoy every rocky moment.

Cleeves also ventures into England, where her contrarian, resilient detective, Vera Stanhope, fights crime in rugged Northumberland. And Cleeves' new *Two River* series, takes readers to North Devon, where the rivers Taw and Torridge converge and run into the sea. The latest series has already been optioned for TV by the same company that produced *Shetland* and *Vera*.

**BE THERE:** Explore [Shetland](#)'s landscape and soundscape. Then put on a Vera-style floppy green hat and patrol [Northumberland National Park](#).

## EUROPE

**France:** Martin Walker, *The Chief Bruno series*

Escape to St Denis, a charming village in the sun-dappled, vineyard-covered Périgord region of France. This area has inspired many novels, but none more beloved than Martin Walker's mystery series. Small-town police chief Bruno, who works without a team and whose seldom-used surname is Courrèges, might just be France's most likable man.

He cooks (exquisitely), hunts truffles, builds his own home, grows vegetables and herbs, organizes local festivities, demonstrates a keen ear for music, likes dogs, and has a weakness for intelligent women. What's not to love? Oh, right, crime. Not to worry, Bruno's on the case. Afterwards, he'll help you find a great case of Bordeaux.

**BE THERE:** View [Bruno's world](#). Then visit Bruno's kitchen, cellar, and favorite places in [Perigord](#).

David Foerkinos, *The Mystery of Henri Pick*

Fancy a trip to Brittany? This armchair traveler's itinerary is perfect for fans of "biblio-mysteries," mystery novels centered on the love of books, bookshops, and libraries. The library in the little town of Crozon houses rejected manuscripts. When a visiting editor takes one of them back to Paris, it becomes a sensation. The ensuing mystery around the author sets off a string of events with more zany twists and turns than the Arc de Triomphe roundabout at rush hour.

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[Cara Black](#), *The Aimée Leduc mysteries*

These cozy-chic mysteries double as tours of Paris arrondissements. Ever since Aimée Leduc ditched pre-med studies at the Sorbonne to become a P.I., she has never hesitated to don a disguise, hack into a computer, or go down into the Paris sewers, whatever the mystery requires.

Aimée knows where the bodies are buried and the best boulangeries are open. Her character has been described by Booklist as “a delightfully unbuttoned Audrey Hepburn for the twenty-first century.”

**SCORE A SOUVENIR:** *The Aimée Leduc Companion e-book* includes interactive maps for locations in the series, as well as some of the author’s favorite Paris places.

**Hungary:** [Jessica Keener](#), *Strangers in Budapest*

Art Nouveau architecture, 19th-century coffeehouses, thermal baths, and bridges guarded by stone lions. The city lives and breathes in the pages of Keener’s mystery. Set shortly after the fall of the Communist regime, *Strangers in Budapest* is the story of a young American couple who have moved there from Boston with their infant son. For Annie, it represents a place of refuge, for Will a chance to build a future. Then friends from the U.S. write asking the couple to check on an elderly man. But as they discover, this new arrival to Budapest is on a mission of revenge.

**Italy:** [Andrea Camilleri](#), *The Inspector Montalbano series*

The grand villas of Spigonella are walled off from each other like the wealthy people inside them, but the houses of Tricase—little homes lived in by little people—are out in the open, like they’re talking to one another. So explains Fazio, as he and his boss, Inspector Montalbano, stake out a suspect.

“Have you become a poet?” Montalabano asks his sidekick.

Fazio blushes.

“Sometimes,” he confesses.

In the world of Montalbano, poetry, seafood pasta, and political philosophy are always in abundant supply. Set in sunbaked Sicily, this is a place where even crime must pause for two-hour lunches and where a policeman’s morning begins with espresso on the terrace and a long, meditative swim in the sea.

Vigata, the fictional town where Inspector Montalbano lives and works, is based on the author’s hometown, Porto Empedocle. Large sections of the town were abandoned after World War II, but for Camilleri, the empty streets teemed with ghosts who cried out to have their stories told. Over time, the popularity of the books and the television series have reinvigorated Porto Empedocle.

**BE THERE:** Take a virtual tour of [Montalbano’s world](#).

**EAT LIKE A LOCAL:** Get recipes for many of Inspector [Montalbano’s favorite dishes](#).

## OIC Moments' Mystery Tour Resource for Armchair Travelers

[Donna Leon](#), *The Commissario Guido Brunetti series*

The globe-trotting Donna Leon was born in New Jersey, but she knows her way around Venice better than almost anyone. The sense of place is nothing short of wondrous. This is the Venice most travelers never get to see, a Venice before the influx of big-brand retailers, fast food joints, and jostling crowds.

Commissario Brunetti shows you Venice close-up: Walk up the steps (all 94 of them) to his apartment for dinner with his charismatic wife and kids. Go backstage at La Fenice opera house. Stop by Ai Greci for espresso, and dine at Da Remigio with Brunetti's in-laws, the Count and Countess Falier. You'll go inside Venice's best architecture and enjoy its unique views. You'll also meet Brunetti's team at the Questura police station and meet his boss. Vice-Questura Patta, a born bureaucrat, is unwittingly hilarious in his attempts to take credit for Brunetti's success.

**BE THERE:** Start with a tour of [Brunetti's world](#). Then hear the [author](#) explain why you can read the books in any order at all.

**Russia:** [Julia Phillips](#), *The Disappearing Earth*

One summer afternoon, eleven-year-old Alyona and her eight-year-old sister Sophia vanish from a beach in Kamchatka in northeastern Russia. Over the year that follows, *The Disappearing Earth* invites us into the lives of several women and girls, each of whom is somehow connected to the crime.

Kamchatka, a jagged knife of a peninsula, is a place of volcanoes and icy seas, tundra and Soviet-era towns. As Phillips' brilliant prose immerses readers in this fascinating environment, she renders the human landscape no less compelling.

**PREPARE FOR TAKEOFF:** Until recently [Kamchatka](#) was one of the most remote places, cut off from most Russians and the rest of the world.

**Sweden:** [Fredrik Backman](#), *Anxious People*

Not all "Scandi" is "noir." This character-driven, comedic novel from the author of *A Man Called Ove* has several mysteries up its cardigan-cozy sleeve. Set in "a not particularly large town" outside of Stockholm, it offers a whole new, big-hearted version of the locked-room mystery genre.

Helen Tursten, *An Elderly Lady Is Up to No Good*

If you insist on some noir with your Nordic mysteries, treat yourself to this irreverent and hilarious tale. Maud is 88, Swedish, and so determined to maintain her peace and quiet that—well, let's just say she has her own way of dealing with annoying neighbors. Hailed as a "juicy dose of senior justice" (Kirkus Reviews), this title brings new meaning to "guilty" pleasure.

### ASIA

**Japan:** [Keigo Higashino](#), *The Inspector Kyochiro Kaga series*

One of my personal favorites. Set mostly in Tokyo, this elegantly written series helped make Higashino one of the most popular mystery authors in Japan. At least 20 of his books have been adapted for television and film.

The author's hallmark is subtlety. Higashino evokes a sense of place by suffusing the text with elements of Japanese life, rather than through descriptive passages. Characterizations are subtle, too, focused less on physical detail than on inner geography. For mystery fans seeking something new, this series is not to be missed.

**BE THERE:** Take a walk around [Shinjuku, Tokyo](#).

**Laos:** [Colin Cotterill](#), *The Dr. Siri Paiboun series*

“The sights, smells, and colors of Laos practically jump off the page,” raved the Denver Post as this series debuted. It's delightful—not an adjective you'd expect to apply to a series about a septuagenarian coroner dealing with the daily frustrations of government bureaucracy. But with Dr. Siri Paiboun as your guide, you've chosen the right destination. This coroner-sleuth has a big heart, sardonic wit, a tongue-in-cheek approach to rules, an idiot for a boss, and an admirably quirky staff.

**Malaysia:** [Yangsze Choo](#), *The Night Tiger*

This murder mystery with a gorgeous backdrop shows the versatility of the genre. The author makes compelling use of magic and mythology and illuminates aspects of Malaysian and Chinese cultures. Set in the 1930s, the narrative alternates between Ren, a child servant, and Ji Lin, a young woman who has been forced to give up her goal of working in the medical profession. As they and three other characters get caught up in the quest for, of all things, a severed finger, so will you.

**India:** Sujata Massey, *The Widows of Malabar Hill*

In 1920s Bombay, the city's only female lawyer is Perveen Mistry, who works at her father's firm. As a woman, Perveen isn't allowed to argue in court. When she is assigned the seemingly routine matter of a will on behalf of three Muslim widows, events take a suspicious turn. Replete with local sights, sounds, foods, and customs, the narrative also features a haunting backstory.

**TRAVEL TIP:** Read Massey's historical notes first. Although placed at the back of the book, they set critical context for the story.

**EAT LIKE A LOCAL:** Discover authentic Indian recipes on [Massey's website](#).



## THE MIDDLE EAST

**Egypt:** [Parker Bilal](#) (pen name of Jamal Mahjoub), *The Makana Mysteries series*

Makana is a former police inspector who has fled Sudan for Egypt. His home in exile is a rickety houseboat in Cairo, a city where the ancient and the humane endure amid tumult, ranging from petty crime to breaking-news global events.

Set between 1998 and the early 2000s, this six-book series is no mere tourism itinerary, but an atmospheric evocation of Egyptian locations, culture, and politics presented through highly personal narratives.

**BE THERE:** Relax with tea on your balcony in [Cairo](#), then explore the city.

**Saudi Arabia:** [Zöe Ferraris](#), *Finding Nouf*

When sixteen-year-old Nouf ash-Shrawi goes missing, her prominent family calls on desert guide Nayir al-Sharqi to lead a search party into the desert. When Nouf turns up dead, the coroner determines that the cause of death was drowning.

Now Nayir, a soft-spoken and pious Palestinian, must investigate Nouf's private life, while navigating a rigidly gender-segregated society. Ferraris, an American who lived in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia with her Saudi-Palestinian relatives, offers a nuanced look at both the traditional and contemporary elements of the setting.

**Israel:** Batya Gur, *The Michael Ohayon series*

Known as “The Agatha Christie of Israel,” Batya Gur is widely credited as the author chiefly responsible for making the mystery novel a flourishing genre in Israeli culture. Her protagonist, Chief Superintendent Michael Ohayon, is intellectual and compassionate, a newcomer from Morocco who solves cases by patiently working to understand the communities in which the crimes have occurred. For sense of place, start with *Murder on a Kibbutz*, which avoids stereotypes to gradually reveal an intimate look at a 300-member community.

**BE THERE:** Travel all over [Israel](#) on virtual tours.

## AFRICA

**Botswana:** [Alexander McCall Smith](#), *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series*

McCall Smith, who is Zimbabwean-British, is arguably the best-known writer of mysteries set in Africa. Set in and around the capital city of Gaborone, the series features Precious Ramotswe, a cheerful, self-taught sleuth who leverages an inheritance from her father—a herd of cattle—to set up a detective agency at the foot of Kgale Hill.

Thanks to her lovestruck admirer, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, mechanic and owner of the local Speedy Motors, Mma Ramotswe's clunker can manage the journey to the village of Mochudi, where she grew up, and the beautiful Mokolodi Nature Reserve. The real-life manager of the park makes an appearance in *Blue Shoes and Happiness* (Book #7) when he calmly picks up a snake that has been terrifying her and her bookish, high-strung secretary, Mma Grace Makutsi.

**BE THERE:** See Mma Ramotswe's Botswana on this [Facebook tribute page](#).

**Ghana:** [Kwei Quartey](#), *The Inspector Darko Dawson series*

“[T]he southernmost tip of Ghana is beautiful and wild. Verdant forest covers the three finger-like peninsulas that jut into the Atlantic Ocean. Dizzying cliffs overlook the cyan waters,” begins *Murder at Cape Three Points*. Into this beautiful scene, under the “rosé blush” of the Equator dawn, floats a traditional canoe holding a most unbeautiful sight—the bodies of a prominent Ghanaian couple with ties to oil companies and real estate developers.

The skill with which the author establishes a complex sense of place is one of many reasons to read this acclaimed detective series. Quartey is adept at creating suspenseful page turners that also reflect life in contemporary Accra. The author, who was born in Ghana, is now a practicing physician in California. Quartey uses his expertise to great effect, such as in his culturally contextualized subplot about Detective Dawson's son Hosiah, a child with a rare cardiac condition.

**South Africa:** [Malla Nunn](#), *The Detective Emmanuel Cooper series*

Born in Swaziland, author and filmmaker Malla Nunn brings a cinematic sensibility to her mystery novels. Detective Cooper is a mixed-race British newcomer who passes for white in 1950s apartheid South Africa. His partner, Detective Constable Samuel Shabalala, is a member of the Nguni ethnic group. But Nunn is first and foremost a storyteller, not a lecturer. Her settings come vibrantly alive through sensory detail, great dialogue, and revelatory moments.

## THE ARCTIC CIRCLE AND ANTARCTICA

[Charlotte McConaghy](#), *Migrations*

Early in *Migrations*, you meet a mysterious wanderer named Franny who is traveling south—to Greenland. Set in the all-too-possible future, it follows Franny's search for the world's last flock of Arctic terns. Her journey, set in motion by her dark secrets, goes to Antarctica. Along the way, the hyperreal settings shift constantly, so believably that you'll still feel the pull of the ocean tides and picture "great shards of cerulean ice floating languidly by" long after you close the book.

Other notable mystery novels set in the Arctic and the Antarctic:

- Greer Macallister's *The Arctic Fury*. When 12 women join an 1850s Arctic expedition, most don't return. Adventurer Virginia Reeve sets out to find them—and ends up standing trial for murder. Based on the true story of Lady Janes Franklin, a patron of Arctic exploration.
- Sarah Andrews' *In Cold Pursuit*. A geology student arrives at McMurdo Station in Antarctica—where her professor has been arrested for murder.
- Olivier Truc's *Forty Days Without Shadow: An Arctic Thriller*. The loss of a sacred relic from Kautokeino, a village in Lapland has deadly consequences. Critics have hailed its in-depth depiction of an ancient indigenous culture under pressure from the modern world.

**BE THERE:** See reindeer and the aurora borealis in [Lapland](#). Then take National Geographic's blissful nature break in [Antarctica](#).

## OCEANIA

**Australia:** [Jane Harper](#), *The Dry*, *The Lost Man*, and other titles

What do you do when you're fed up with cocooning through the pandemic, but bone-chilling winter won't let you go outside? Set your virtual GPS for a scorching blast of rural Australia. Harper's debut, *The Dry*, is so assured that even as it transports you into the drought-stricken location of a farming community on the brink of dying out, you won't want to be anywhere else.

In her third mystery, the Melbourne-based Harper raises the stakes for armchair travelers. *The Lost Man* plonks you down in the Australian outback. You can practically see the shimmering waves of heat. But you'll be too engulfed in the atmospheric sense of place and the page-turner of a plot (with a jaw-dropper of a denouement) to look up and re-check your actual surroundings.

**New Zealand:** [Vanda Symon](#), *The Sam Shephard series*

I've roamed all over Otago, one the most stunning regions of New Zealand's South Island. From the city of Dunedin—known as the Edinburgh of the Southern Hemisphere—to small farm towns, coastal villages, vast plains, and gardens of kowhai trees and toetoe grasses, Otago is a country in its own right. Visit from the other side of the planet, in the company of tough-taking policewoman Sam Shephard. In *Overkill* (Book #1), the remote rural town of Mataura contributes not only a captivating environment but a unique plot twist. *Containment* (Book #3) takes you from the coastal village of Aramoana to the city of Dunedin.

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**BE THERE:** Most of the locations in Symon's mysteries, even small towns, are [real](#). Then enjoy this interview with the [author](#).

[Ngaio Marsh](#), NZ-based titles of *The Inspector Allen series*

Next time I'm in Christchurch, New Zealand, I'll visit the home of Ngaio Marsh, the Kiwi Queen of Crime. The mystery novelist died over 40 years ago, and her house is now a museum, but fans say it looks as if she had just stepped out on errands.

Until then, I'll read the mysteries Marsh set in New Zealand. (Most take place in England.) In *Died in the Wool*, a member of parliament visits a sheep farm in beautiful Mackenzie country—and turns up dead in a bale of hay. In *Colour Scheme*, set at a spa resort based on a famous tourist destination, Rotorua, the natural mud baths create a fatally “sticky situation” for one guest.

**BE THERE:** Sneak a peek at Ngaio Marsh House [museum](#).

**New Caledonia:** [Rachel Joy](#), *Miss Benson's Beetle*

What could be more mysterious than setting off on a quest for something that may not exist, with an assistant whose identity is in doubt, and whose qualifications are nowhere in evidence? Miss Benson, a schoolteacher and spinster, ditches her stifling existence in 1950s London to sail 10,000 miles south in search of the fabled golden beetle of New Caledonia.

And her assistant? Meet Enid Pretty, human magnet for trouble, whose idea of outdoor gear is an all-pink ensemble with matching pom-pom sandals and lipstick. Stow away on this voyage for an exquisitely rendered journey through New Caledonia—and a mystery tour of a most unlikely friendship. Superb!

**BE THERE:** Do a fly-over of [New Caledonia](#).

### MORE Mystery Readers Resources for Armchair Travelers

- **Stop, You're Killing Me!** “A website to die for . . . if you like mysteries.” The minimalist design is aptly deceptive—this site holds a lifetime's worth of clues for your next great mystery read. You can even search for mystery novels by [location](#), or [diversity](#).
- **The Book Trail** Looking forward to travel? [Match your next read](#) to almost any destination with this literary travel agency that features books of all genres set around the world.
- **Strong Sense of Place** In each episode of this fabulous podcast, hosts discuss one destination and what makes it different than every other place on Earth. Then they share recommendations for great books — novels, nonfiction, graphic novels, short stories, and more — that took them there on the page. First Class! [Subscribe here](#).
- **Library Thing** This is the ultimate rabbit hole for hardcore lovers of the [mystery genre](#). There are no background details, no author bios, just title after title of readers' favorite mystery novels organized by country and state or region.