



Wish You Were Here: Adventures in Cemetery Travel

Loren Rhoads

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Almost every tourist destination has a graveyard. You go to Yosemite National Park: there's a graveyard. You go to Maui: graveyards everywhere you look. The Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park: both graveyards. The number one tourist destination in Michigan has three cemeteries. America's best-preserved Gold Rush ghost town has five. Gettysburg is a National Park because it has a graveyard.

Some graveyards are even tourist destinations in themselves: the Old Jewish Cemetery of Prague, the colonial burying grounds of Boston, and Kennedy's eternal flame in Arlington National Cemetery. Jim Morrison's grave in Père Lachaise Cemetery ranks in the top five tourist sites of Paris.

Wish You Were Here: Adventures in Cemetery Travel contains 35 graveyard travel essays, which visit more than 50 cemeteries, churchyards, and gravesites across the globe.

Over the past two decades, Loren Rhoads has visited literally hundreds of graveyards. She's traveled to London's Highgate Cemetery, strolled through the Paris Catacombs, seen Hollywood Forever pulled back from the brink of destruction, studied Native American graveyards in Michigan, explored a circuit minister's churchyard on Maui, delved into the Protestant Cemetery of Rome and Zoshigaya Reien in Tokyo, and made stops in Prague, Boston, Los Angeles, Hiroshima, Yosemite, Sleepy Hollow, Gettysburg, and New Orleans along the way. Come along on her adventures.

Loren Rhoads was the creator of the cult nonfiction magazine *Morbid Curiosity*. She edited the book *Death's Garden: Relationships with Cemeteries* and served as the monthly cemetery columnist at *Gothic.Net* for four years. Now she blogs about graveyards as travel destinations at *CemeteryTravel.com*.

Wish You Were Here: Adventures in Cemetery Travel Details

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From Reader Review Wish You Were Here: Adventures in Cemetery Travel for online ebook

Dana says

This book was okay, but I wish it had been more historical, more informative and less self-important.

Valerie -Cats Luv Coffee says

I love cemeteries. They are wonderful destinations of introspection and peace. I, like the author, enjoy rambling clusters of monument and headstones. Flat, manicured graves don't have the same character and as such, hold no appeal. In the same way, I enjoy reading books that allow the reader to transport themselves into whatever destination is being recounted. The author gives such descriptions in "Wish You Were Here" that the reader has no trouble visualizing each place traveled.

Read the rest of my review at Cats Luv Coffee

Cat says

I love visiting old cemeteries, the headstones, mausoleums, crypts and often times the people buried in them , are so worthy of a visit! Loren Rhodes has now added to my bucket list of cemeteries to visit. Why not take a peek at this book and try to visit a few yourself? Most places have pioneer cemeteries, and larger cities over times have amazing and historical cemeteries right near by. Some cemeteries even offer tours. Really bring history alive for children to see the graves of people they read or hear about in school. People who enjoy travel should include this book when planning their trips.

I received a Kindle Arc in exchange for a fair review from Netgalley.

Loren says

This is my new book, so I'm biased. I'm glad to answer questions about cemeteries and travel, if you have any.

Leilani says

I bought this book as a present for someone I know who is a cemetery historian, but it sat for so long as I waited to see her again that I finally read it myself before handing it off. I enjoy checking out cemeteries, and have been to several she covered in the book. My 2nd favorite cemetery was included (Green-Wood in NYC), as was one near my hometown which my dad and his friends got drunk in growing up! They probably did some of the damage Rhoads was so bummed about witnessing. Jerks!

I really appreciated that she wrote about her negative experiences traveling as well as the positive. Yes, you and your friends get on each others nerves, and maybe the person who is hosting you gets annoyed with you too. Made the stories more enjoyable and relatable. It bugs me when people omit the imperfections. I hope my friend enjoys the book we well.

Carole Tyrrell says

This is my second reading of this book and as I'm a confirmed taphophile – lover of cemeteries – I devoured and enjoyed it all over again.

What makes people want to visit cemeteries? They're just full of dead people right?

Well, yes they are but they also contain much more than that as far as I'm concerned. They're repositories of local history, a wildlife haven, a place of serenity and peace and also perhaps a place for you to meet your ancestors.

The author, Loren Rhoads, who is a hero of mine, runs the entertaining blog, cemeterytravel.com which is where these pieces originated. The book is entitled Adventures in Cemetery Travel and it's like a really good travel book. But instead of directions to glittering nightlife and cultural hotspots, Loren and her partner Mason and also Loren's mother visit the last resting places of the famous and the well-loved.

Rhoads works on a broad canvas as the book features marble orchards from London, Paris, Japan, USA, Prague, and Venice. There are some that she describes that I have long wanted to visit such as the Old Jewish Cemetery and Pinkus synagogue in Prague and Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery. In 2006, as I was driven into NYC from JFK airport it was almost heartbreakingly to whizz past several large cemeteries and not be able to stop for a wander. Like Rhoads I also visited Ground Zero prior to rebuilding and it really affected me actually seeing it first hand and remembering that terrible day.

Rhoads has an easy, conversational but knowledgeable style and these pieces have all previously appeared on her blog, cemeterytravel.com. They are just the right length as she tells you about her reasons for visiting that particular cemetery or graveyard, a little about its history, who's buried there and the trip itself. This is the book that you would like to take with you on a cemetery excursion and I could certainly have done with it as I fruitlessly searched for Diaghilev and Stravinsky's graves on San Michele. After reading the descriptions of the angels that she and Mason saw there, and that I missed due to lack of time, I definitely want to return.

The book begins with an engrossing introduction in which Rhoads discusses the beginning of her fascination with cemeteries by her mother wanting to entertain her and her younger brother during a school holiday by taking them to their local graveyard, Bendle, to make gravestone rubbings. Rhoads was hooked as she further explored the small graveyard to find the graves of her relatives. Tourist destinations for her, like me, always involve finding and visiting a cemetery or graveyard. As she says 'I like to see what people in different cultures do to commemorate the lives of those they've lost.' She also briefly discusses funerary symbols and recommends two classic books on the subject to the reader. Rhoads also states that 'cemetery travel is nothing new as, in the Middle Ages, people went on long pilgrimages to visit the graves of the venerated such as Thomas Becket in Canterbury. She also discusses the Taj Mahal, a monument to grief, the Great Pyramid of Giza and Jim Morrison's grave in Paris's Pere Lachaise.

This is followed by the trips themselves - the splendour of London's Highgate and the climb up Highgate Hill – not for the faint hearted – to see the celebrated Egyptian Avenue (which I almost fell off when lost), Karl Marx and the Circle of Lebanon and a lot of famous dead people. Then we're plunged into the depths of the Paris catacombs and its neatly stacked skulls, femurs and fibulas of anonymous. Then Pere Lachaise

which I've also visited. This was the first garden cemetery in the world and a blueprint for others. I was fascinated by the broom cupboard appearance of many of the family sepulchres and the peaceful atmosphere before we headed off to find a citron presse. Rhoads is intrigued but mystified by the Japanese way of recording death at the Hasedera Shrine in Kamakura, Japan. She and Mason also visit places of notoriety such as the Hiroshima Peace Park and the watery grave of the USS Arizona with the uncomfortable suggestion that the attack on Pearl Harbor might not have been such a devastating and nasty surprise if the US Navy had been more alert.

The visit to the old Jewish cemetery in Prague is poignant with the realisation that 1200 years of Jewish history had been wiped out by the Holocaust as exemplified in the Pinkus synagogue's walls recording the names of 80,000 people murdered during World War II. There's also the horrible anonymity of more large, anonymous mass graves at the Terezin concentration camp. Perhaps that is another function of burial places – to record the deaths of those unknown to the world as a permanent reminder of what was done to them.

I particularly enjoyed the chapters on pre-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans cemeteries especially Metairie where after the flood, Rhoads sees TV footage of 'mausoleums barely cresting the water.' Another classic is the 'best preserved ghost town in the USA' – Bodie in California. Rhoads feels that the town's hastily abandoned atmosphere is as if 'a neutron bomb went off and vaporized the inhabitants, leaving their daily lives awaiting their return.' Rhoads enables the reader to see what she sees as she almost takes you by the hand and you go for a stroll with her amongst the departed.

34 visits are recounted in this book and there is a useful bibliography at the end with a small paragraph of additional resources which I found very helpful. A terrific book to dip into if you're intending to visit a particular location or the nudge you needed to be planning one. The book ends with a pregnant Rhoads considering her many visits to childrens' graves and how she now understands 'the crushing erasure of dreams a parent might feel' at the death of their child.

Perhaps that is cemetery travel's greatest gift. It's a way to empathise with past generations, to acknowledge the inevitability of death and to make good use of your time alive. And also to let those who have gone before know that they are not forgotten and that their memory lives on.

And the title? It comes from Rhoads' large collection of vintage postcards of cemeteries. In fact it was the most popular greeting on them.

Teresa says

I may be considered weird by some people, but I love roaming around cemeteries. The older the better. I have had an account for years on findagrave.com for years and have posted thousands of photos and added numerous people. I think my family got me started at a very young age when every year on Memorial Day we all loaded up and headed to all the cemeteries we had family buried in and laid flowers on all the graves then had a huge family picnic at the one cemetery my Grand Father donated the land for. I also am big into Genealogy. So cemeteries are kind of my thing. When we go on vacation I love to visit old cemeteries we pass, and I am lucky enough to have a husband who humors me and stops.

After reading this book I honestly believe Loren Rhodes and I would get along quite well. We both love touring cemeteries all over. I would love to go with her on her travels all over the world. The book is very

interesting, she tells of her travels to the cemeteries in other part of the world. How some of those cemeteries are very different from our, some of the cemetery customs, and how many are the same as ours here in the states. There are also pictures!! Most of the pictures of the front gates but I am thrilled to see those as well.

This book is very well written. It has personal accounts of Loren's travels. It also has personal thoughts of hers as well. There is some humor included as well. She also lists throughout the book other cemetery books which I am dying to check out as well.

I received this book from the Author or Publisher via Netgalley.com to read and review.

Mason Jones says

I'm biased about this book, but given that it's a collection of essays about visiting cemeteries around the world, how could it not be good anyway?

Kellye says

I won this book in a giveaway, and I danced for delight when it landed on my porch. I love, love, love graveyards and anyone who loves them. However, then I shook myself and prepared to give the book a fair and objective read so that I could write a review that did it justice. It was hard. Loren Rhoads writes well and easily draws you into her delight in the history and humanity of graveyards. I immediately wished for more pictures of the features that she describes so well (It's hard to imagine sculpture in 3-d, no matter how talented your guide) and was delighted when she mentioned books of photos of graves that she has published.

It's hard to explain to people who are repulsed or creeped out by graveyards why I like them, and Loren describes dealing with the same difficulty. I don't think it's 'morbid' to love graveyards. Nobody gets out alive (which I'd want on my tombstone, if I was going to have a tombstone) and it's nice to spend time pondering this eventual end. To me, it re-affirms my connection with all humanity; all life. It reminds me that this one brief life I have is important, matters, and is the only shot I get. It reminds me that what joy I take out of my life is mine, and what anguish I experience will be submerged in the long, quiet rest at the end. When I've spent an hour (or a day) visiting a graveyard, I feel calmer, more peaceful, ready to be happy and to endure trials, more connected to the world.

Loren Rhoads' book gave me a feeling of being invited along on her similar travels, to companionably experience her journeys to great graves. I felt a kinship with her (and with all mortal life) and felt invited to share her experiences. This is a great book! There are some typos (mostly typesetting errors, especially words hyphenated to be split at the end of a line, but which now fall entirely on the same line. I was engaged enough in the story that these were minor irritations.

Jennifer says

I'm really bad about updating my Goodreads. Read this a few months ago. I have enjoyed Loren's work (fiction, essays, blog) ever since we met in a writing class some years ago, and this collection is no

exception. Perhaps I didn't read it the way the author intended (front to back), but I loved dipping into the essays at random, savoring a visit to one cemetery or another, often at bedtime.

Vnunez-Ms_luv2read says

I found this book to be very good and enjoyable!!! The subject matter is a bit different, but the writing and information draws you in. I think this is a book that many will shy away from due to the subject matter. Do not do that. You will be missing out on a good read. Thanks to NetGalley, the author and the publisher for the ARC of this book in return for my honest review.

Josh says

I finally finished "Wish You Were Here: Adventures in Cemetery Travel" by Loren Rhoads. Wish You Were Here is not your typical cemetery/grave hunting book where the author guides you through the cemeteries and chronicles the graves of noteworthy, famous or infamous personalities buried in them. This book is a collection of about thirty-four travel essays based around cemeteries around the world. Loren relays her impression on those cemeteries with thought provoking insightful commentary. With the way, the book flows along. Wish You Were Here will no doubt inspire you to visit the cemeteries highlighted within its pages. So if you're a self-proclaimed taphophile or you enjoy reading books on cemeteries, thanatology, grave hunting, and things of that sort. You will seriously enjoy this book.

Ann says

As the author, Loren Rhoads points out there is a cemetery everywhere you go. With the popularity of Genealogy now taking over the country, cemetery's are popular places to visit as a destination. I grew up in a caretaker family of a small cemetery and as I mowed grass in the summers I would read a lot of tombstones. As I got older I could put families together from around the various plots. Loren Rhoads gives a thorough sometimes funny account of visits around the country and the world. This is a really a set of essays about cemetery visits. Each is stand alone and covers sadness to ghostly encounters. Loved this book, I'm sure there would be enough information to have Part 2. I received a copy of this ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Sue says

Really an interesting and enjoyable read. As one who loves exploring old cemeteries, and has done so with two GR friends who happened to visit Massachusetts, this was a particularly exciting find. There is a small colonial era burial ground in the town next to mine which I visited with one friend. With the other, I visited Author's Ridge in the fine old cemetery at Concord MA. In Wish You Were Here, the author presents a combination of objective information about burial grounds, cemeteries of many types across the United States and around the world, a very interesting bibliography and her personal responses to the places she has visited over the years.

As a person who has always been fascinated with historic/old graveyards, I just had to read this book. I have seen many in my home area of New England, some in England, Ireland, Israel, and the graveyard at Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico. Each is different in so many ways as are those Rhoads visits. And she is sensitive to these differences both dictated by the surrounding society, by changes in culture, and by the financial pressures of cemetery maintenance. At times she rambles freely through open areas searching for graves she knows are within, at others she participates in organized tours. Throughout this book she provides history of each cemetery from its inception to the time of her visit. Some she visits more than once.

The author is in So. California at one point and visiting some graves of celebrities who are of interest to her. The contrast between the multi-level extravaganza for Al Jolson and the simple marker for Bela Lugosi is immense. Her deepest emotions were with Lugosi. I have never done this sort of cemetery tour. Discussing a trip to Japan and visits to a shrine, temples and small graveyard, the author is struck by how little she knows of Japanese culture, of Buddhism, of social propriety in a country so different from her own. This limits her ability to gather information as she usually does.

As the book progressed, I found myself increasingly immersed in Rhoads' style. Her personal responses really spoke to me and gave me visuals to add to the one photo per chapter the book averages. While I initially was disappointed there weren't more photos, after some reading I found that the descriptive words provided more than ample detail.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Fizzgig says

Probably a good book just not the right reader.

I love the idea of this book. I love graveyards and often wonder about the people gravestones represent. Who were they, who misses them, who comes to see them after they are dead, and other such musings. I love the author's opening and explaining how the book came into being. After the first two stories, I just felt like the book wasn't for bedtime reading.

I almost always read books while going to bed. The book reads like a textbook sometimes. You read for a bit but then you have to look up the famous person she is talking about because you have no idea. It's not what I want to do while drifting off to sleep. I got some references which made it interesting but not enough to keep me interested.

If there is a rainy day and I feel like learning something, I will pick the book up again and load up Wikipedia for those people I just don't know who they are.
