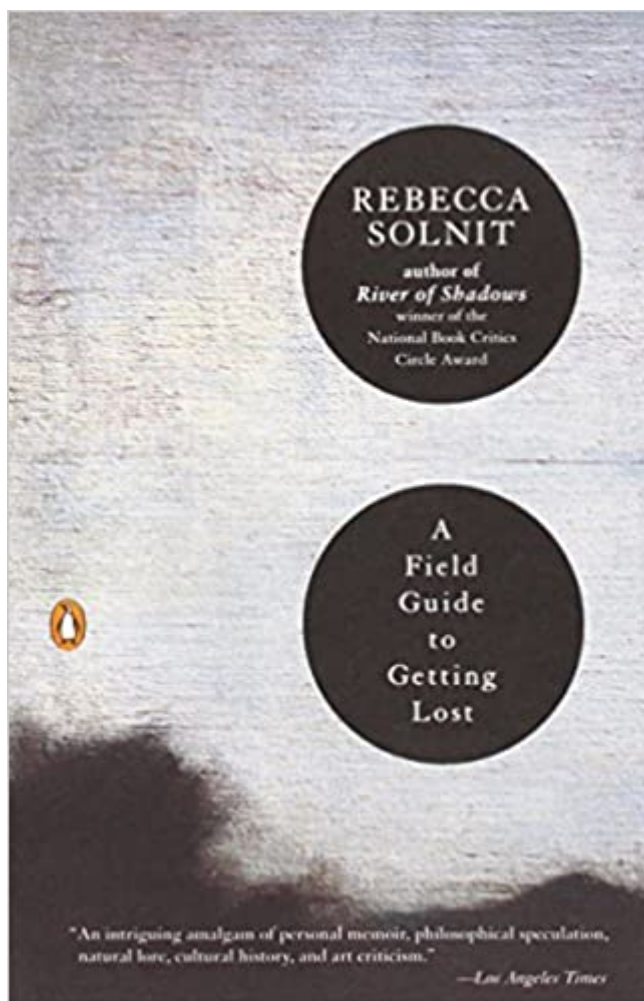


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# A Field Guide To Getting Lost



## Synopsis

A stimulating exploration of wandering, being lost, and the uses of the unknown from the author of *Men Explain Things To Me*. Written as a series of autobiographical essays, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* draws on emblematic moments and relationships in Rebecca Solnit's life to explore issues of uncertainty, trust, loss, memory, desire, and place. Solnit is interested in the stories we use to navigate our way through the world, and the places we traverse, from wilderness to cities, in finding ourselves, or losing ourselves. While deeply personal, her own stories link up to larger stories, from captivity narratives of early Americans to the use of the color blue in Renaissance painting, not to mention encounters with tortoises, monks, punk rockers, mountains, deserts, and the movie *Vertigo*. The result is a distinctive, stimulating voyage of discovery.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The virtues of being open to new and transformative experiences are rhapsodized but not really illuminated in this discursive and somewhat gauzy set of linked essays. Cultural historian Solnit, an NBCC award winner for *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*, allows the subject of getting lost to lead her where it will, from early American captivity narratives to the avant-garde artist Yves Klein. She interlaces personal and familial histories of disorientation and reinvention, writing of her Russian Jewish forebears' arrival in the New World, her experiences driving around the American west and listening to country music, and her youthful immersion in the punk rock demimonde. Unfortunately, the conceit of embracing the unknown is not enough to impart thematic unity to these essays; one piece ties together the author's love affair with a reclusive man,

desert fauna, Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and the blind seer Tiresias in ways that will indeed leave readers feeling lost. Solnit's writing is as abstract and intangible as her subject, veering between oceanic lyricism ("Blue is the color of longing for the distance you never arrive in") and musings about the limitations of human understanding ("Between words is silence, around ink whiteness, behind every map's information is what's left out, the unmapped and unmappable") that seem profound but are actually banal once you think about them. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This meditation on the pleasures and terrors of getting lost is-as befits its subject-less a coherent argument than a series of peregrinations, leading the reader to unexpected vistas. The word "lost," Solnit informs us, derives from the Old Norse for disbanding an army, and she extrapolates from this the idea of striking "a truce with the wide world." It's the wideness of the world that entices: a map of this deceptively slender volume would include hermit crabs, who live in scavenged shells; marauding conquistadors; an immigrant grandmother committed to an asylum; white frontier children kidnapped by Indians; and Hitchcock's *Vertigo*." Solnit imagines a long-distance runner accumulating moments when neither foot is on the ground, "tiny fragments of levitation," and argues, by analogy, that in relinquishing certainty we approach, if only fleetingly, the divine. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My favorite book by Solnit is *Wanderlust: a History of Walking*. I enjoyed these essays but found myself getting lost at times. They would have benefited from some editing for focus and clarity.

The root of the word, 'lost', is the Old English 'losian', to perish. Today, it carries some of that association, but more often means that we simply do not know where we are. Of course, many explorers have died knowing exactly where they were, some in circumstances readily manageable by locals. On the other hand, many pioneers settling in the wilderness and largely ignorant of where they were in the world, lived long and thrived. There is a second sense of the word 'lost' as being without direction or guidance--the 'lost generation.' I find that Ms. Solnit's essay bridges these two meanings of the word to bring a brighter context to being lost. Being lost is an opportunity to create new connections to place and people, to expand our existing map beyond its anxious margins. As ignorance is the starting place of learning, being lost is the starting place of finding oneself in the

world. I think for those who like to travel, this book may offer reasons and caveats for allowing oneself to get lost, to wander off the tour, and expand their maps of the known world.

I purchased this book online via . This book reminded me of Jack Kerouac's "On the Road", except Solnit writes better prose. Plenty of nuggets here. Some Fool's Gold, but there's enough of the good that it keeps the reader dipping the pan into the stream. You're gonna love Turtle Man.

Brilliant. Rebecca Solnit is just wonderful -- I want to read all of her books. I am also a writer, and she gives me so much inspiration. She also stimulates my mind. Any glimpse into her mind and the way it works is a gift. She has a wonderful mind, and the gift to express that mind like no one else. Most highly recommended.

I found Rebecca Solnit through her essay in the catalogue of the 2008 Whitney Biennial, where her writing outshone everything else - including the art in the exhibition. In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Solnit turns her brilliant intelligence to the many ways of being lost, both good and bad. Her essays cover a lot of ground without getting lost in any negative sense. Highly recommended.

This is one of those books that I wish would have kept going and going. I was lost in the book and subsequently went on to read just about everything else she wrote. Passed them along to my adult son who loves her work too. Keep writing, Ms. Solnit, I am a fan.

Anything Rebecca Solnit writes is well worth reading.

This was assigned reading for a class. I did not expect to find it such a gift.

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