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Locations

Jan Morris

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Locations Jan Morris
From San Jacinto Plaza in El Paso, to nostalgic Oslo, to Norfolk Island, home of the Boobook Owl, *Locations* is an honest and insightful look at thirteen unique places from the woman who has, in her own words, been earning her living "by perpetual wandering and writing" for nearly forty years. One of the world's preeminent travel writers, Jan Morris is the author of a number of highly acclaimed volumes. And now, in *Locations*, she presents yet another collection of provocative essays on destinations as varied as Paris and Oslo, West Point and Chicago.
These pieces reveal not so much how a place looks, feels, or sounds, but Morris's own response to a particular moment, her appreciation of history's causes and effects, her sharp eye for a telling detail, and her ability to find the meaning in a chance encounter. In Vermont, ("the receptacle of the symptoms Romantics like to identify as American Innocence") she retells with delight how, like the keys to a city, she was given the gift of a piece of lead piping from which the stallion Justin Morgan (the father of the breed of Morgan horses) had drunk. She finds Oaxaca (pronounced like "wa-HA-ka") colored violently by its Indianness, where one can hear the arcane languages of the Mixtec, Zapotec, and Ixcatec, and, five thousand feet above sea level, get a benign and hallucinatory effect of breathiness and romance. Morris captures what she calls the pungency of the Tex-Mex frontier, where one can not only find clans (who have lived there since before Texas was born) that maintain their immemorial feuds on both sides of the Rio Grande, but also such unexpected settlers as a "blond and smiling Swiss lady, like someone out of a Renoir" in charge of her breakfast counter in Laredo, and a multilingual world-traveller who prefers Texas to his homes in France and Italy. And we experience the mood in post-Wall Berlin, where "the awful fear that used to hang over the Wall like a black cloud" has vanished, and "the soldiers of the People's Army have turned out to be human after all."
The *Los Angeles Times* praised Morris as "poet of the odd point of vantage." And in *Locations* we find a vivid tapestry of evocative prose from the woman who has brought to travel writing a style that is arrestingly her own.

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