

*Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility*

# LITERARY FICTION TOURISM

**UNDERSTANDING THE PRACTICE OF  
FICTION-INSPIRED TRAVEL**

Nicola E. MacLeod



# Literary Fiction Tourism

This timely and insightful book critically reviews the synergistic relationship between books, literary culture, and the practices of tourism.

The volume sets literary fiction tourism within its historical, theoretical, and managerial context and explores the current provision of literary tourism sites and experiences. It focuses on literary fiction and the interplay between imaginative worlds, literary reputation, and tourism. The volume explores a variety of literary tourism forms in a global context such as biographical sites, imaginative sites, literary trails, and book towns, identifying the challenges associated with interpreting and managing them for visitors. Current international case studies allow readers to understand this most ancient of touristic activity within its contemporary context. This book offers new insight into the diversity of the literary tourism landscape, the range of experiences and visitors and the variety of interpretive responses that may be appropriate. The relationship between literary fiction and other forms of media such as film and digital culture are also explored.

International in scope, this volume will be of interest to students of tourism, heritage studies, cultural studies, and media studies, as well those interested in literary tourism more specifically.

**Nicola E. MacLeod** has been a tourism studies academic for over 30 years and is Director of the Tourism and Marketing Research Centre at the University of Greenwich.

“Despite the apparent novelty of virtual worlds, we forget the power of the text in the construction of imaginary ‘real’ worlds we can inhabit through reading and travelling. Tourism allows the exploration of fictional landscapes layered upon the real, and MacLeod provides an excellent guide of how these imagined places, peoples and pasts have shaped / continue to shape, the tourist experience.”

**Mike Robinson**, *Professor of Cultural Heritage, Nottingham Trent University, UK.*

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# Literary Fiction Tourism

Understanding the Practice of  
Fiction-Inspired Travel

**Nicola E. MacLeod**

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**To my late father, Duncan Charles MacLeod and my aunt,  
Elizabeth (Betty) Jane MacLeod.**

**Both teachers of English, storytellers and my inspiration always.**





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# 1 The literary fiction tourism landscape

‘Frankfurt was delightful. I saw Goethe’s house, Schiller’s statue ... It was very lovely’ (Alcott, 2018, p. 368). In a letter home, Amy March, one of the main characters in Volume Two of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1869) tells her mother of her European literary tourism experiences. In this book, which is part of Alcott’s much-loved novel series about a family of young women living in nineteenth century Massachusetts, Amy is accompanying her Aunt Carroll on the American Grand Tour of Europe. This was a touring circuit with which Alcott’s readers would have been familiar and which undoubtedly Amy’s literary adventures would have further promoted amongst her readership. Orchard House, the home of Alcott and her family, is now a popular visitor attraction in Concord, Massachusetts, a town also famed for its wider literary heritage and associations. The house provided the setting for the imaginary March family home, and visitors to this site enjoy learning about the influential Alcott family through personal artefacts, hearing about their famous literary neighbours, and invoking the fictional characters of Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy March whom they report in reviews that they can sense in every room. Visitors may extend their experience by buying commemorative bags, mugs, and *Little Women* tea in the gift shop and, of course, can purchase copies of Alcott’s novels and their film adaptations. There have been seven of these over the years, the most recent being the very well-received 2019 production, directed by Greta Gerwig. The above example clearly illustrates ‘the consumption, production, re-production, commodification, transformation, communication, and distribution of literature for tourism purposes’ (Robinson and Anderson, 2002b, p.5).

People read literary fiction before, during, and after travel and have long been inspired to visit places because of what they have read. The link between travel and the literary imagination has always been strong with both the fictional outpourings of authors and the interest around their own lives creating an impetus for visitors to tour specific locales. Travel is also a key theme for many writers which creates a synergistic relationship between the activities of reading, writing, and tourism. Literary tourism has the ability to take readers/visitors on a journey to real or imagined places. In these places, authors, and their works, in addition to other literary associations, are the attraction for



## 2 *The literary fiction tourism landscape*

visitors. According to Hoppen, Brown and Fyall (2014), ‘literary tourism occurs when authors or their literature become so popular that people are drawn to either those locations associated with the author ... or those featured within their writings’ (p. 37). It is becoming an increasingly popular form of specialist tourism with a diverse range of literary experiences and destinations available for visitors in most regions of the world.

Literary tourism takes a variety of forms, whether the visitor is keen to visit individual sites associated with the life of an author, or the imaginative locations of their fictional worlds. An anthropological interest in the personality behind the creative process may lead us to visit the home which the author inhabited, for example the apartment in Place de Vosges in Paris where Victor Hugo worked on his novel *Les Misérables* (1862). Devotional feelings may inspire us to take a pilgrimage to an author’s burial place such as Ernest Hemingway’s simple gravestone in Ketchum Cemetery, Idaho, United States of America (USA), where fans still leave coins, flowers, and half-drunk bottles of alcohol in tribute. Or perhaps we might wish to engage with the creative artform of literature itself – this impulse might lead us to the Pennine Moors in West Yorkshire to relive the heightened drama of Emily Brontë’s Gothic novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) in its real-life location. Thus, it is either the content of the art form that inspires the visit or an interest in its creator. Fiction-inspired visitors also enjoy wider book-related themes by attending literary festivals, exploring destinations with a strong literary heritage and well-stocked bookshops, or following literary trails and tours. There is even touristic interest in visiting libraries and iconic literary artefacts such as *The Book of Kells* in Trinity College, Dublin or the *Gutenberg Bible* in the Library of Congress, Washington DC.

England’s national tourist board, VisitEngland, stated in a recent report that one in four domestic visitors had visited a United Kingdom (UK)-based literary site in 2016 (VisitEngland, 2017). Overseas visitors also show an interest in these attractions with 5% of all inbound tourists to the UK visiting a literary, music, or media site in 2019 (Visit Britain, 2020). Mintel’s 2011 report on international literary tourism predicted that the market will continue to expand with an ageing population boosting visitor numbers (Mintel, 2011). However, despite its recent growth, this form of tourism is not a new phenomenon as shall be seen in Chapter Two. Visitors have been following in the footsteps of their favourite authors as long as there have been writers to trail. However, the study of literary tourism as a form of organised travel practice is relatively new with academic enquiries in the field only being produced since the 1980s. Early classic studies include those of Butler (1986), Herbert (1996), Pocock (1992) and Squire (1994), and a recent review of scholarly articles on literary tourism reveal that the bulk of these publications date from the early 2000s onwards (Çevik, 2020). Most of these articles are based in Anglophone countries and it is clear to see that English Literature and its canon of literary greats still defines much international travel (Robinson and Andersen, 2002b). This is, in part, a legacy of the historical development of this form of touring, but it is also

evident that other regions of the world are currently developing their literary tourism and exploiting their associations (see Box 2.1).

### Forms of literary tourism

In an attempt to organise this mass of literary-inspired activity, studies have tended to broadly categorise literary tourism resources as either author-centred or fiction-centred (Herbert, 2001; Robinson and Andersen, 2002b; Hoppen *et al.*, 2014). In the author-centred category, places specifically associated with the life of the author are the focus of visitation. Such places comprise writers' homes or graves. Fiction-centred places relate to the imaginative output of the author and include landscapes which inspired literary locations which appear in texts. Within this broad author/fiction distinction, various researchers have attempted to further classify the various literary experiences offered by these locations (see Table 1.1).

The first and most-cited typology of literary place is from Richard Butler's study of 1986 where he proposed four forms of literary tourism, the first being homage to an actual location, for example, a fan of Charles Dickens visiting his house in Doughty Street or his grave in Westminster Abbey, both in London.

Table 1.1 Types of literary tourism

<i>Type of literary tourism</i>	<i>Features and examples</i>
<i>From Butler (1986)</i> Aspects of homage to an actual location.	Visits to the authentic homes or burial sites of literary greats e.g., Boris Pasternak's house in Moscow or Robert Louis Stevenson's grave on the island of Samoa.
Places of significance in the work of fiction.	Visits to places which have featured in works of literary fiction e.g., the town of Nikko in Japan, the setting for James Clavell's novel <i>Shogun</i> (1975).
Appeal of area because they were appealing to literary and other figures.	Visits to locations much-loved by writers, for example Spain's associations with Ernest Hemingway and Robert Graves.
The literature gains popularity in the sense that the area becomes a tourist destination in its own right.	Visits to regions which become known as literary 'countries' because of their close association with authors and their work e.g., 'Brontë Country' in Yorkshire, 'Steinbeck Country' in California.
<i>From Busby and Klug (2001)</i> Travel writing.	Visits to places that have been showcased in popular travel writing and have thus gained renown e.g., those featured in the work of bestselling author Bill Bryson.
<i>From Busby and Laviolette (2006)</i> Film induced literary tourism.	Visits to literary locations because a tourist has seen a screen adaptation of the literary work e.g., popular film and television adaptations of the works of George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Jane Austen can induce such visits to film locations.
<i>From Mintel (2011)</i> Literary festivals.	Visits to towns and regions to attend literary festivals, e.g. Jaipur Literature Festival, Rajasthan, India.
Bookshop tourism.	Visits to towns which are renowned for their wealth of book shops e.g., Clunes book town in Victoria, Australia.

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Butler later suggests that this homage could take two forms – one might be a literary fan who may wish to see the very desk where a novel was written or they may seek to experience the ‘backcloth against which a work was produced to gain new insight into the work and the author’ (Butler, 1990, p. 115). The second type of literary tourism proposed by Butler (1986) is to places of significance within the work of fiction itself such as Thomas Hardy’s Wessex or John Steinbeck’s Cannery Row in Monterey, California (see Fig. 1.1), both of which provide compelling settings for the fictional action in their novels. The third type relates to the draw of an area because it was appealing to literary figures, for example the connections between Spain and the American writer Ernest Hemingway who travelled extensively there from 1936 onwards. The final type is when the area becomes so associated with its literary theme that it becomes a tourist destination in its own right, the most referenced example of this being the creation of the seaside resort Westward Ho! in North Devon, which was developed as a direct result of the popularity of Charles Kingsley’s novel of the same name (see Chapter Six). The seaside resort was founded in 1863, nine years after the publication of Kingsley’s novel in 1854. The resort is still welcoming visitors and Kingsley’s tiny cottage in nearby Clovelly is open to the public (Essex and Brayshay, 2018). Other examples which Butler proposes are the literary ‘countries’ which emerge around the fame of literary figures and their work within regions. The Lake District and its direct association with the Lake Poets or the Highlands of Scotland, almost singlehandedly brought to the attention of Romantically inclined tourists by Sir Walter Scott, are both clear examples of these ‘destinations in their own right.’



*Figure 1.1* Cannery Row, Monterey, California. Photograph by C. Le Fort.

Since Butler published his classification in 1986, various authors have proposed additional types of literary tourism to the classification, for example Busby and Klug (2001) added travel writing and film-induced literary tourism, and in their report, Mintel (2011) suggested including literary festivals and bookshop tourism. Travel writing plays an important role in communicating the character of places, and destinations are opened up to a wider public through the lens of travel writers such as Dervla Murphy, Paul Theroux, and Bill Bryson amongst many others. The power of travel writing as ‘a channel through which both places as well as people have been re-interpreted and communicated to wider audiences’ (Hoppen et al., 2014) is acknowledged here but will not be considered in this book which is focussed on imaginative literary texts. Busby and Klug (2001) and Busby and Laviolette (2006) also propose the inclusion of what they call ‘film-induced literary tourism’ where visitors have been attracted to a literary location, character, or author after watching a screen adaptation. The various English country houses and estates which have been used as locations for popular television adaptations of the novels of Jane Austen, for example, have experienced extra footfall through this form of inducement. The strong link between screen tourism and literary tourism will be explored in Chapter Nine. Finally, Mintel (2011) proposed that literary-themed events such as festivals should be included in the list of categories as should bookshop tourism which draws visitors to specific destinations because of the quality of the book shop provision and the opportunities for leisurely holiday browsing which they offer. Often these destinations also host literary festivals and other themed events, and these linkages will be examined in detail in Chapter Seven.

In this book, the focus is specifically on literary fiction and the interplay between creators of imaginative writings, their literary settings, and touristic activity. In order to explore these themes, this book will acknowledge the existing studies, but will concentrate on five specific categories of literary fiction tourism which draw on the typologies elaborated above. These categories are: Touristic activity associated with biographical literary places; Imaginative literary places; Socially-constructed literary places; Places of literary repute and literary trails and tours (see Table 1.2). These classifications are explained in more detail in the following section.

### ***Biographical literary places***

The first type of literary fiction tourism setting that we will focus on is the biographical place which is considered in detail in Chapter Four. Here we will specifically examine those places and associated artefacts which have an immediate link to the life and death of the author, the most popular of these being writers’ former homes and their final resting places. Both spaces offer an immediate connection as the visitor can imaginatively populate the domestic space with their image of their favourite author, look through their eyes at original interiors or views through the window and ponder on their

## 6 *The literary fiction tourism landscape*

Table 1.2 Categories of literary fiction tourism used in this book

<i>Categories of literary fiction tourism used in this book</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Biographical literary places – places and artefacts closely associated with the author's life (see Chapter Four).	Visits to novelist Katherine Mansfield's birthplace in Wellington, New Zealand.
Imaginative literary places – locations presented within the literary works (see Chapter Five).	Visits to Verona, the Italian setting for Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .
Socially-constructed literary places – themed sites and destinations deliberately constructed to explore a literary theme (see Chapter Six).	The reconstruction of children's author Beatrix Potter's farm outside Tokyo, Japan.
Places of literary reputation – areas renowned for their literary heritage and associations (see Chapter Seven).	Durban, South Africa as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) City of Literature.
Literary trails and tours – guided and self-guided journeys through the literary landscape (see Chapter Eight).	Agatha Christie Trail in Devon, UK; Don Quixote Route, Castile-La Mancha, Spain.

writing desk, or a lock of their hair. The authenticity of such spaces and objects is key to the power of the biographical place and this is considered in detail in Chapter Three. Graves and monuments are also important biographical sites, offering a tangible place for pilgrims to be in the presence of the remains of authorial genius and offering an opportunity for a more emotional response within the literary tourist. Homes and graves are potent places, but special mention must also be given to birthplaces, favourite holiday locations such as hotels and holiday homes, and workspaces such as libraries and cafés, all of which retain close biographical links to the life of the artists and may also appear in their works. In Chapter Two we consider the 'homes and haunts' genre of literary tourism which extends the writer's domestic sphere into the familiar hinterland of their habitual wanderings.

### ***Imaginative literary places***

The biographical site represents the bricks and mortar which houses the literary genius and reflects their life and mode of production, but the imaginary place is a more slippery construct. In Chapter Five, we consider the places which have become the focus of visitation, not because of any direct link to the life of the author but because they have featured in a literary work. These settings are just as powerful as biographical settings as they allow the visitor to inhabit a place that has only hitherto existed in their imagination as they read a work of literary fiction. Compelling characters that dwell in the imaginations of the reader can be brought to life through visiting the fictional settings against which the action

takes place, and this can create meaning for visitors. Thus, it is the work of fiction that provides the draw here, rather than details of the life and work of the author. The imaginative setting may be a real place, so meticulously detailed in a work of fiction that the novel might be used as a travel guide by the reader, for example the *Waverley* novels of Sir Walter Scott, set in the Highlands of Scotland, which offer accurate topographical detail for the would-be literary tourist (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2002). Alternatively, it may be a composite place that uses real settings, imagined spaces, and renamed locations to create a new literary landscape. These more diffuse landscapes may provide enticing challenges for doughty readers who want to use the books as clues to the physical locations of favourite fictional scenes. Of course, the separation of autobiographical and imaginative spaces is not always as clear cut as this overview might suggest and some authors, such as Lucy Maud Montgomery, author of the popular *Anne* series of books (1908–1921) set in Canada's Prince Edward Island, use their childhood or adult homes as inspiration for their literary settings. Watson (2006) suggests that the most poignant and arresting places are those which combine both the autobiographical and the imaginary and such spaces are explored further in Chapter Five.

### ***Socially-constructed literary places***

Not all sites of literary fiction tourism relate to the immediate biographical sites of the author's life or the settings for imaginative locales in literary works. Some sites which still attract large numbers of visitors have been deliberately constructed in order to present a literary theme. These sites may exploit and extend an existing literary theme *in situ*, for example a visitor centre on the site of an 'official' literary location which may offer a multi-sensory experience for visitors, involving participation and other forms of interpretation. Conversely, a socially-constructed site may offer de-contextualised experiences based on a literary motif such as those found in theme parks which often use figures from children's literature as the basis of the experience. Such sites are often commercially owned or are developed as part of regional tourism development policies. The presence of these socially-constructed literary sites demonstrates the power of the literary marker as a unifying theme to create identities for places. It also exemplifies the usefulness of such motifs for individual enterprises to attract a range of visitors who may or may not have specific literary motivations. Literary themes also generate the production and consumption of associated merchandise and souvenirs which extend the theme, sometimes rather tenuously, and serve as reminders of the literary encounter. The broad range of literary-inspired products which are sold at literary sites, within the wider literary destination and through online gift retailers, will also be considered in Chapter Nine.