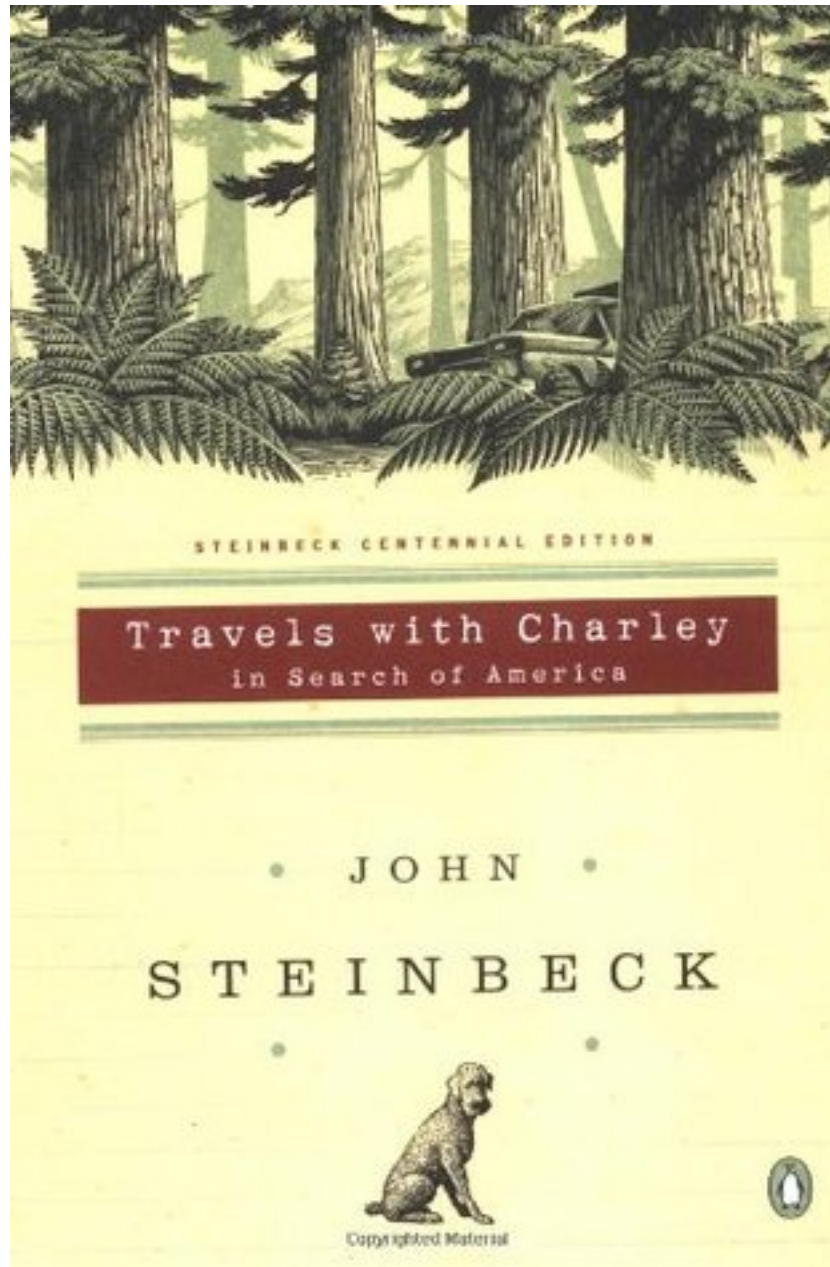


Travels with Charley: In Search of America Book PDF Download



By:
John Steinbeck

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What people Say:

karen

dude, steinbeck is so much better than kerouac.

and i know that is a totally obvious statement, but if i want to read a story about a man traveling across america and describing his findings, it is going to be a man with a varied vocabulary, a keen eye for detail, and some powers of interpreting his experiences. john, i am listening...

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this is my first nonfiction from steinbeck, and i am impressed with how conversational it reads. he has a real skill in making his experiences near-visible to the reader, in both his physical descriptions and his musings about what an "american" is. i feel like he would be a fantastic road-trip companion, and i envy charley.

and that is another thing. when it comes to dogs, i am completely breed-ist. there are dogs that i love, and then there are dogs i think should be banned from breeding, so i don't have to see them ever again. poodles are among these breeds. they are the silliest of all dogs, and how a man's man like steinbeck could travel across the country with one of them baffles me.

this is not a dog, it is an aberration:

but, for steinbeck's sake, i can read about a poodle for a little while, and it is sweet how they bond with each other. but i still think they are ugly and not "real" dogs.

steinbeck misses out on an investment opportunity:

Jeffrey Keeten

John Steinbeck was not feeling very well before he decide

John Steinbeck was not feeling very well before he decided to take a trip across country. It wasn't only physical, but also a general malaise about the condition of the country and his own place in it. Early in the book he makes a statement that reveals exactly his state of mind. The words betray a clairvoyance of a near future that would catch up with him in 1968.

Okay, that is the life philosophy that he has tried to live by, but it is what he says next that shows that he is feeling the tight grip of his impending demise.

So he is on a heroic quest. He even found the loyal steed to carry him from place to place. He named her Rocinante after the horse in

as if he'd already decided before starting that for most of the journey he was going to be tilting at windmills. Bill Steigerwald, former journalist, in 2010 decided to unravel the murky, twisting road of Steinbeck's trip by following in his tire tracks. Instead of a GMC pickup, specially made with a deluxe cabin, Steigerwald took his Toyota Rav4 and slept in Walmart parking lots and used car lots. His goal was to try to part the curtain of pure mythology and actually determine where and what Steinbeck did.

There are discrepancies. There are holes in Steinbeck's...lets call it a tale...so large that you could have driven Rocinante pulling the Empire State building through these gaps and still had clearance on both sides.

Bill Barich wrote in his book

So the thinking is, that instead of this solo trip where he has cut all ties to the comforts of his life and is out among the people pressing the flesh and writing down his observations of real America, that Travels with Charley is actually a tall tale. The truth is, for most of the trip, he was in luxury hotels, motels, and only camping in Rocinante occasionally. The writing, well crap, he is a novelist. He was not spinning most of it out of whole cloth, but pretty close. The original manuscript, I'm told, has his wife Elaine as a companion through much more of the trip than what he admits in the book. In the story he has her flying out to Chicago as an emergency care package dropping in to give solace to the weary traveler.

I do find it sweet how attached to his wife he is. He had a hard time leaving her and I'm sure at some point the decision was made that if this trip is going to be any kind of success at all that he needed the care and comfort of his wife along the way. The book doesn't have the same ring to it as Travels with Charley and Elaine.

Diane

I first read this book in high school, and it's what made me fall in love with travelogues. In 1960, John Steinbeck drove a small camper around the United States with his dog, Charley. He wrote that he wanted to get to know his country again, to learn more about this "new America."

"For many years I have traveled in many parts of the world. In America I live in New York, or dip into Chicago, or San Francisco. But New York is no more America than Paris is France or London is England. Thus I disco

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"For many years I have traveled in many parts of the world. In America I live in New York, or dip into Chicago, or San Francisco. But New York is no more America than Paris is France or London is England. Thus I discovered that I did not know my own country. I, an American writer, writing about America, was working from memory, and the memory is at best a faulty, warpy reservoir. I had not heard the speech of America, smelled the grass and trees and sewage, seen its hills and water, its color and quality of light. I knew the changes only from books and newspapers. But more than this, I had not felt the country for twenty-five years. In short, I was writing of something I did not know about, and it seems to me that in a so-called writer this is criminal. My memories were distorted by twenty-five intervening years."

"Travels with Charley" was published in 1962, and Steinbeck, who had been in poor health, died just six years later.

I remember

this book. I loved Steinbeck's stories about the people he met and the places he visited, and even the details of how he organized the camper and his trip. I have recommended this book to countless friends over the years, gushing about how good it was.

So you can imagine my UTTER HEARTBREAK because I found out that parts of the story were fabricated or fictionalized. Reporters have verified that some details in the narrative could not have been true, and that Steinbeck made up a lot of the conversations he supposedly had with people along the road. (This news first broke in 2011, but I didn't learn it until I saw it mentioned in John Waters' book about hitchhiking, "Carsick.")

When the 50th anniversary edition of "Travels with Charley" was published in 2012, it came with a disclaimer: "Indeed, it would be a mistake to take this travelogue too literally, as Steinbeck was at heart a novelist, and he added countless touches – changing the sequence of events, elaborating on scenes, inventing dialogue – that one associates more with fiction than nonfiction."

So here is my conundrum: Knowing that parts of it have been fictionalized, should I continue to recommend it to others? If the book is as good as I remember, doesn't that outweigh its dubious origin?

Will Byrnes

John Steinbeck put a house on a pickup, left the wife behind in their Long Island home and traveled the nation for several months. This is his tale of that experience. I found many quotables here, and I guess one should expect that when the traveler's name is Steinbeck. In a book of about two hundred pages, one can hardly expect a detailed look at all of America. Steinbeck picks his spots. Sometimes they work, sometimes not. It was, of necessity, merely a sketch of some parts of the country. But

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- from the NY Times

The subtitle of the book is "In Search of America." What travel books are really about, particularly when undertaken by a literary person, is self-discovery. It works the same as in literature. The road, the quest, the journey all exist in an interior landscape and lead to an inner destination. I did not feel that this was much at work here, and was disappointed. Steinbeck kept his eyes on the external road. Sometimes his snapshots of early 1960s America were uninteresting. Sometimes they were compelling. The compelling parts made the trip one worth taking.

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Apparently, there is some thought that not all the material in this book was actually...um...real. GR friend

sent along a link to a site by a guy named

, who writes about Steinbeck. Looks like he did a fair bit of research and concluded that Steinbeck's journey may have been more of an internal one than we believed. check it out.

Kim

In 1960, when John Steinbeck was 58 years old, ill with the heart disease which was to kill him eight years later and rather discontented with life, he decided to embark on a road trip around the United States in a fitted-out pick-up truck, accompanied by his standard French poodle, Charley. Steinbeck's plan was to re-connect with the America which had informed his fiction and to assess how much it had changed over the years.

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This book is the result of that trip: part memoir, part travelogue, part philosophical treatise and part fiction. Just how much of the narrative is fiction rather than fact has been the subject of investigation and discussion in recent years, much of it instigated by the work of journalist Bill Steigerwald, who recreated Steinbeck's trip and exposed what he argues to be the fallacies in the narrative. This article in the

summarises Steigerwald's findings and typing Steigerwald's name into any reliable search engine will locate a range of Steigerwald's writings on the issue, as well as some responses to his position on the book.

While I've read Steigerwald's conclusions about Steinbeck's journey with interest, it matters little to me that the work has been edited in such a way as to make it look like Steinbeck and Charley were travelling alone almost all the time, whereas Steinbeck's original manuscript (held at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City) shows that Steinbeck's wife Elaine was with him for much of the time and that he probably spent more than half the nights he was away sleeping

in hotels rather than in the truck. Likewise, it matters little to me that Steinbeck's reported conversations with people he meets on the way are fiction rather than reportage.

In relation to this, the fact that Steinbeck preserved and then donated his manuscript indicates that he was not concerned that readers might discover that there was more (or possibly less) to the journey than appears in the book. Further, the narrative itself is full of disclaimers. Steinbeck does not claim that the book is a day-by-day, diary-style account of his journey. Rather, what he conveys is a range of impressions on a number of topics, some insights into issues he considered important and some at times painful self-reflection, all conveyed in Steinbeck's powerful yet accessible prose. On some matters Steinbeck was ahead of his time. For example, what he wrote about the destruction of the environment and the overuse of packaging products ("The mountain of things we throw away are much greater than the things we use."), expressed what I doubt was a matter of widespread public concern as early as 1960.

Other parts of the narrative are much more personal. Steinbeck's encounter with old Latino drinking buddies in a bar in Monterey is particularly poignant. As Steinbeck's friend tries to persuade the New York resident to come "home", Steinbeck names all of their friends who have died and concludes that

was right: "You can't go home again because home has ceased to exist except in the mothballs of memory."

Possibly the most powerful incident in the book is Steinbeck's witnessing of the "cheerleaders" in New Orleans - a group of women who stood across the street from William Frantz Elementary school and yelled obscenities at Ruby Bridges - the first black child to attend the all-white school - and at the few white parents who did not comply with the white boycott of the school. Ruby, who had started at the school only a week or two before Steinbeck was in New Orleans, was escorted to school by federal marshalls. Her ordeal is recorded in