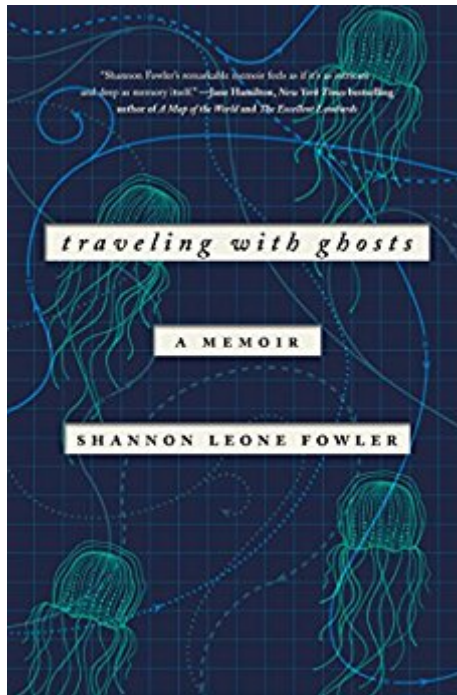


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Traveling With Ghosts: A Memoir



Synopsis

From grief to reckoning to reflection to solace, a marine biologist shares the solo journey she took through war-ravaged Eastern Europe, Israel, and beyond to find peace after her fiancé suffered a fatal attack by a box jellyfish in Thailand. In the summer of 2002, Shannon Leone Fowler, a twenty-eight-year-old marine biologist, was backpacking with her fiancé and love of her life, Sean. Sean was a tall, blue-eyed, warmhearted Australian, and he and Shannon planned to return to Australia after their excursion to Koh Pha Ngan, Thailand. Their plans, however, were devastatingly derailed when a box jellyfish—the most venomous animal in the world—wrapped around Sean's leg, stinging and killing him in a matter of minutes as Shannon helplessly watched. Rejecting the Thai authorities' attempt to label Sean's death a "drunk drowning," Shannon ferried his body home to his stunned family—a family to which she suddenly no longer belonged. Shattered and untethered, Shannon's life paused indefinitely so that she could travel around the world to find healing. Travel had forged her relationship with Sean, and she hoped it could also aid in processing his death. Though Sean wasn't with Shannon, he was everywhere she went—among the places she visited were Oświęcim, Poland (the site of Auschwitz); war-torn Israel; shelled-out Bosnia; poverty-stricken Romania; and finally to Barcelona, where she first met Sean years before. Ultimately, Shannon had to confront the ocean after her life's first great love took her second great love away. Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* meets Helen Macdonald's *H* in this beautiful, profoundly moving memorial to those we have lost on our journeys and the unexpected ways their presence echoes in all places—and voyages—big and small.

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Customer Reviews

This is a beautifully written, tragic memoir. It was honest, gripping, and sad and I loved reading every page

I can't recommend this book enough. The author takes you through a winding journey through time, illustrating how memories can allow one to be on a hot Thai beach and hiking through snowy mountains in Eastern Europe all at once. She breaks open herself to the audience with a raw, unflinching, honesty that doesn't spare the reader from pain or the author from criticism. She manages to capture the complexity of human feelings and emotions when life isn't fair and there may not be a meaning to be found. She doesn't hide the brutal thoughts that come with grief or the heartbreaking missteps that friends, family, and random strangers can make. The author takes you with her on her travels around the world to meet people and places that will cause you to fall in love and be broken into a million pieces, all at the same time.

This book is moving and deeply personal, but also bears witness to the suffering of others around the world. In beautiful detail, we travel with the author to places few of us have been, and experience the heartbreak and resilience of so many who have suffered loss. As a world traveler myself, I reveled in the immersion of place and the interactions with people in countries I have not visited. Now more than ever, a book like this is important to read, not just to identify with loss, but to identify with the humanity of people everywhere. Read it!

Read this book at the recommendation of a friend, found myself unable to put it down. I felt as though I was traveling with Fowler, experiencing Sean's death as if I too were on the beach that

night. Hopping back and forth from her present day to her travels with Sean to her week after his death made the entire book an emotional journey. The transliterated blurbs in foreign languages gave me a glimpse into her confusion amidst new cultures and customs. This book is not a travel guide nor a tragic and depressing story. This book is a journey of adventure, happiness, loss, death, grief, growth, and all other emotions that come with the highs and lows of life. So clear up your weekend schedule, make yourself a cup of tea, and read.

This is an exquisitely heartbreaking book, circling back and forth between the past and the "now" of the narrative. I sometimes had to stop reading due to the intensity, but couldn't wait to return to the beauty of pure love, made permanent on the page.

Carefully and thoughtfully crafted, this story of love and loss will stay with you long after you've read the last page. Be prepared to carve out a lot of time for this one, because once you start, you won't want to put it down!

Gorgeously written, evocative, and profoundly moving. I felt the love the writer and her fiancé shared, her grief at his death, and the love and curiosity she felt for the world that allowed her, ultimately, to keep going. A deeply impactful book.

This is a beautiful written and compelling memoir. Shannon Fowler really transports the reader into a place pain and loss that would otherwise be indescribable. Shannon Fowler has really takes the reader into her story of loss and perseverance. She captures the essence of traveling alone and healing the heart. I could not put this memoir down.

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