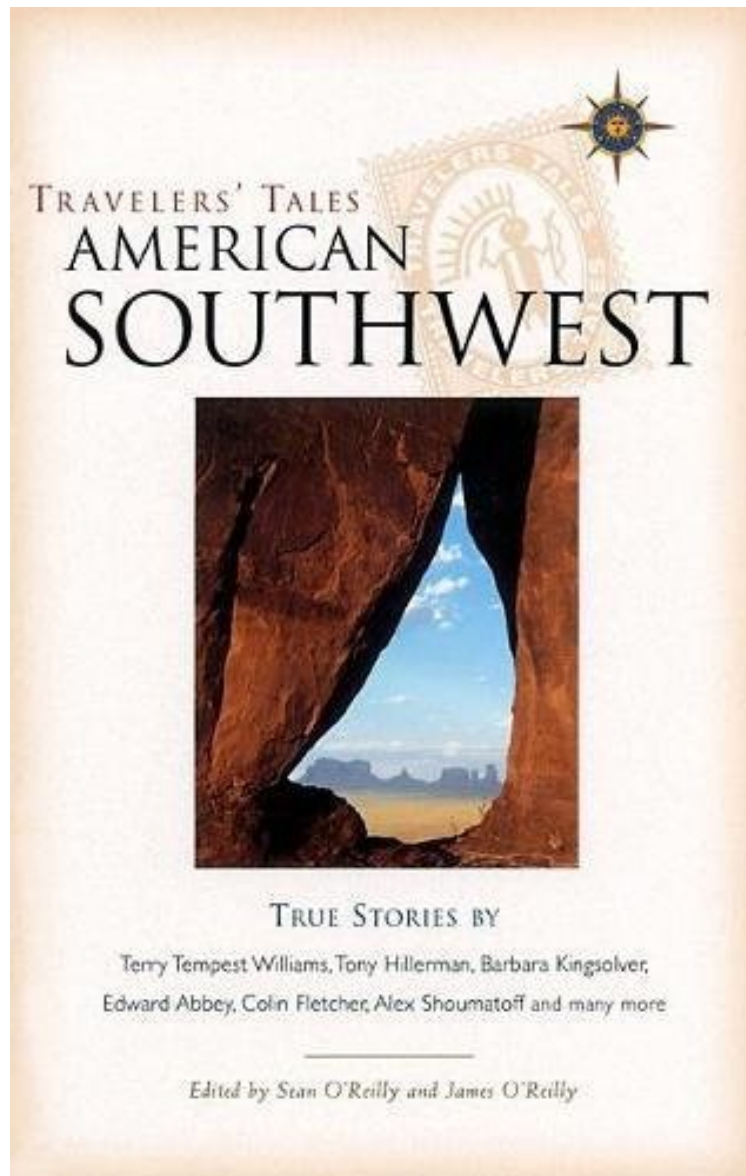


[Download] Travelers' Tales American Southwest

## Travelers' Tales American Southwest

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**From Brand: Travelers' Tales : Travelers' Tales American Southwest** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Travelers' Tales American Southwest:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Delivers the spirit of a uniquely beautiful regionBy OdysseusThe Travelers' Tales series is a set of anthologies of short pieces, typically 5-20 pages each, assembled around a particular theme. Many of the volumes are dedicated to a particular travel destination (e.g., the Southwest, Thailand, Italy), while

some are thematically organized (Food, Spiritual Gifts of Travel, Women on the Road, etc). The collections run from the passable to the magnificent: reading them reminds of how terrific writing becomes when inspired by an exotic, memorable place. The best of these volumes bring back the flavors, the smells, and the breezes of distant places with an immediacy that your vacation photo album can't by itself match. This southwest volume is probably one of the better ones in the series, owing largely to the fantastic quality of the region. I consider myself a fairly experienced world traveler, and for my money the unspoiled beauty of the landscape in this part of America is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. (I haven't yet seen New Zealand, the Alaskan wild, or the Himalayas, so I'm still reserving an absolute final judgment.) I am a lover of desert landscapes, but I've come to understand that I don't love all deserts equally: I've seen deserts ranging from the Gobi to the Sahara, but have found nothing quite like the American southwest, with its canyons, its hoodoos, its towering red rock formations like so many giant goblins, its endless views, its rock labyrinths, its lizards, the peaceful shade of its cliffs, its scents of juniper, sage and pinion. The introduction to this book compares a journey into the desert southwest to a breath of fresh air in the soul, and that certainly fits. With such inspiring material, a collection of pieces by skilled writers could hardly miss, and this one delivers. The best piece in here is probably the excerpt "Water" from "Desert Solitaire," by the incomparable and curmudgeonly Edward Abbey. This piece is, however, closely rivaled by the also-magnificent "Bridge Over the Wind," a tribute to Landscape Arch in Arches National Park, vividly capturing not only the gorgeous improbability of that particular arch, but also the feel of a hike through Devil's Garden to reach it. Other fine pieces in the collection explore the hidden treasures of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, the fascinations of Navajo country, and activities ranging from flying solo over Monument Valley, to hunting for obscure pictographs. It's not a flawless collection: there are a few too many New Age-y pieces for my taste. The southwest seems to draw a fair number of spiritualist pilgrims, so for every Edward Abbey withdrawing to the wilderness to see himself and the society around him more starkly, there are plenty of folks who luxuriate in reducing Native American culture to a collection of comforting but absurd talismans and superstitions. A reader with a perfectly healthy respect and appreciation for Native American cultures might well come away, as I did, annoyed at some of the insipid romanticization of their folkways. But, in a sense, it is what it is; this phenomenon is definitely part of the southwestern cultural landscape, and it's therefore appropriate that it be reflected in this book. The collection is a pleasant read throughout, and will inspire both real and armchair travelers to direct their attention to this most beautiful of American places.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The "unsummable totality of human perspectives..." By John P. Jones III... a phrase I fully admit is borrowed from Tim Robinson, author of two books on the Aran Islands, off the coast of Ireland. In these books he does an admirable job describing all facets of the human experience on these islands. The American Southwest is several magnitudes larger than the Aran Islands, yet the same spirit seemed to motivate the editors, the O'Reilly brothers-- to capture as much as possible, from as many different dimensions, that which gives the Southwest its character. And they succeeded in spades, as they would say in Las Vegas, one of the story subjects. There were some delightfully "quirky" stories: Papankolas's "News from Nowhere," about LV, the gambling, the gangsters, the moving sidewalk at Caesars Palace, a reminder from the editor that LV was once home to one of the more reclusive, paranoid, and racist millionaires, Howard Hughes; Tom Miller's ironic tale of poetic justice, entitled "Saguaro"; and Patrick Prister's "The Recruiter," a tale of a hitchhiker picked up by a Marine. There are more "standard" pieces, standard only in the sense that they address the great topics of the Southwest. The editors managed to attract some of the most famous names associated with the area: Barbara Kingsolver's "Making Peace"; Colin Fletcher's "The House of Time" Edward Abbey's "Water"; and Tony Hillerman's "A Museum Etched in Stone." I had never heard of Craig Childs before, alas, but his two contributions to the book, particularly "Seeking Father Kino's Tinajas" led me, in the best spirit of anthologies, to his wonderful book, "The Secret Knowledge of Water." I particularly liked Jeff Rennie's "The Grand Staircase" on Utah's relatively newly created Grand-Escalante National Monument, the largest one in the lower 48, but as the author reminds us: "sometimes it is not how much you see, but how deeply you look." The Rosebrook's did a good job of explaining the image propagation of the West to the rest of the world via movies in "John Ford's Monument Valley." I also liked Timothy Egan's "The Place that Always Was," about Acoma, the oldest continuously inhabited village in North America, dating from the times they were building Notre Dame, in Paris. Acoma has also been the place of numerous personal visits; the guide, par excellent, of this "sky city," Orlando has now "gone home." Another who has also "gone home" has left words that should be rung out across the land, particularly in our now troubled economic times. In "Water" Abbey said: "They cannot see that growth for the sake of growth is a cancerous madness, that Phoenix and Albuquerque will not be better cities to live in when their populations are doubled again and again. They would never understand that an economic system which can only expand or expire must be false to all that is human." Amen. The book also encompasses a good map (that finally explained how Hwy. 66 actually went!), a solid, selective bibliography, appealing drawing, and some clever "editorial sidebars." Overall, a truly wonderful selection of stories, "uneven" though some must be. In the same series is one on Provence, fittingly with the Abbey de Seneque on the cover. I look forward to reading it.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful read By A Customer This is just a fabulous book. It will bring the Southwest to life for all discerning readers.

With its vast vistas, splendid sunsets, and rich history, the American Southwest has always inspired superb writing. Travelers Tales Southwest features a selection of some of the best. Tony Hillerman explores the wonders of Canyon de Chelly, while Douglas Preston takes the reader on a poignant journey into the land of the Hopi. Barbara Kingsolver learns how to live in harmony with the desert, and Barbara Beckwith joins the secret world of Native American pottery hunters. The book covers a wide physical and mythic terrain, with essays on director John Ford's dramatic use of Monument Valley, and the Mad Monks' bizarre excursion through Planet Nevada.

"...celebrates both the spare beauty and the danger lurking in the canyons and deserts of the Southwest." -- Chicago Herald  
"...helps the reader understand why the American deserts are so special." -- Salt Lake Tribune  
"...provides close-up encounters with this compelling region..." -- The Light Connection  
"If traipsing around the great outdoors doesn't fit into your schedule...this...is the next best thing to being there." -- Phoenix Magazine  
"This...book is like visiting this magical, rugged part of the world with a friend who actually lives there." -- Tucson Weekly