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Blues Traveling: The Holy Sites Of Delta Blues



Synopsis

Updated and expanded, the indispensable guidebook to the blues birthplaces, juke joints, and crossroads of Mississippi, Memphis, and Helena --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

In *Blues Traveling: The Holy Sites of Delta Blues*, Steve Cheseborough prescribes a course for getting one's fill of Mississippi blues. This localized, detailed and lively guidebook to blues music in Mississippi recommends following (by car) "a rough circle beginning and ending in Memphis" for a comprehensive tour, although those with less time can choose from the long list of blues sites. With maps, specific directions and succinct historical tidbits, Cheseborough describes blues venues as well as points of special interest, like the Clarksdale station, where Muddy Waters boarded the train for Chicago along with thousands of other African-Americans in the 1940s. A recommended listening section completes the picture. (Mar.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Independent scholar and blues musician Cheseborough has compiled a detailed guide to blues music landmarks in Mississippi and Memphis. Providing excellent maps and driving instructions, he begins the trip in Memphis and then directs the reader down the western part of the state to Vicksburg, across to Jackson and Meridian, and then north to Tupelo and Oxford. Along the way, Cheseborough provides details on the towns, homes, and grave-sites of famous blues musicians, buildings where they played, radio stations, sites of music festivals, and current clubs and

restaurants that feature the music. Similar to Christine Bird's *The Jazz and Blues Lover's Guide to the U.S.* (LJ 3/15/91), this guide may also be read as a history of the blues in Mississippi. Essential (at least in paperback) for all libraries in Mississippi and surrounding states and for large public and academic libraries in the rest of the country. John McCormick, New Hampshire State Lib., Concord
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I used this book last summer while traveling through the Mississippi Delta and would give it more than 5 stars if I could. Very easy to use (step-by-step directions) and full of great information. Highly recommended if you're planning to explore the area and its blues sites.

Some of the directions could have been better, like Robert Johnson's grave site. It wasn't really clear how to get to downtown Greenwood, MS, but we eventually got there! Lots of good information. Stumbled upon MS John Hurt's grave while trying to find Robert Johnson's, so that was a plus. All blues lovers and enthusiasts should get this book before your journey. Lots of good information about the area, and details about the musicians you want to know more about!

I recently used this guide on a tour from Memphis, TN, through the Mississippi delta to discover the blues trail. There are wonderful historical details and information to highlight any tour of the area. Since I couldn't possibly see everything, I will use it again and again.

I highly recommend this book for anybody considering a Blues trip into the Delta. It is the best available resource on the market. Looking at its competitors, they all miss the mark due to either outdated, incomplete, or just plain incorrect information. I have just completed a Delta blues trip and read the book after I returned. Having actually done such a trip provides a very authoritative vantage point from which to judge any such work. Our trip was preceded by 6 months of online research into every aspect of the Delta and surrounding areas. Over 100 pages of information were accumulated prior to departure. The trip itself covered nearly a 1400 mile loop by car that began and ended in New Orleans. So many of the stops we made along the way ~ Jackson, Ms.; Greenwood, Ms.; Clarksdale, Ms.; Helena, Ark.; Memphis, Tenn.; all the historic gravesites; the prisons and the plantations were all covered in Steve's book. He certainly did his homework. (For goodness sake, he moved there as part of the overall immersion process, LOL!) We met Steve in Helena while he was lecturing and playing at the 'Blues on Main Street' exhibit opening at the Delta Cultural Center on Cherry St. He is proficient at both. It was there we bought the book that got carried home and

subsequently read after the fact. If you don't have 6 months to do your own research, just buy his book and read it in a week. He covers everything. Then take it with you and use it as a guide on the road. (p.s. Plan your trip so it somehow involves the WC Handy awards in Memphis in late April, as well as the Beale Street Music Festival that follows that weekend).

A work of love. Major Kudos. Thanks very much. The opportunities to make an important American history connection that are contained in this book are inspirational. I just got back from the Delta (there's only one, isn't there?) last month (12/01) and had the opportunity to visit 8 sites. I drove a small car with my 15 year old son, and the information this book and my experience with the blues provided, prevented the mayhem one frequently associates with excessive exposure between generations from the same family. We started in Leland and went to Clarksdale and came down to Greenwood and back to Leland. While I expect to continue to use this book for years to come as my family and I go back to annually visit the in-laws, my sole complaint is the directions. I've driven from Guatemala to Vancouver and been in 26 countries, so I have a well seasoned sense of direction. Perhaps I'm overly pedantic but some of the directions did not anticipate some of the predictable confusion I experienced. While the directions to Zion Church in Greenwood were good, confirmation such as a green roof or easily visible from a mile away just after the curve to the right would be helpful. It was a lovely church but I was a somewhat self conscious about parking in the driveway. Fortunately there wasn't anyone else there at the time. The graveyard for Mississippi John Hurt was fascinating but the directions could have been a bit better. When a turn is called out and the driver makes it, I'd prefer to see right away that one should park right after 1.0 miles. By the time my son read the preceding information, before the distance, to me, I wasn't sure how many tenths of a mile we'd gone. So, do we turn around to the mail boxes or try to guess? We tried the latter and should have tried the former (it was getting late in the day). It was well worth it since the graveyard was fascinating in how natural, secluded and private the sites were. Thanks for the tip about wearing bright clothing due to hunters, but I wish that had been in a section in the front: Preparing for Your Journey. That section could include common sense photographic suggestions such as extra film, batteries, a flash and a tripod. I'd suggest adding to the Sonny Boy Williamson grave directions to make the first right after 2nd street (instead of turn at the gas meter, not all gas meters in the country are the same) on the named street, I'm going to guess Bruister (starts with a B anyway) Street. The locals walking that road saw me 4 times in a half hour, probably livened up their day. I'm sure I expect too much, but I would have liked some idea about the driving time between sites with a line item complete itinerary in the back with the driving time between the site you're looking at and

the site on the line above. That way if you wanted to skip some of the less interesting (varies from person to person) sites, you can plan your day more efficiently. I wish I had unlimited capital and could pay the author to try to find out who else is buried in these various graveyards. Were they family or neighbors? I wish there were money to pay someone to go to these graveyards annually to spruce them up a little, secure lopsided gravestones etc. I'd want to see all the individuals in the graveyard get equal treatment. Go slowly and make notes in the book in case you ever want to redo the trip or take another blues enthusiast on the trip of their life that wouldn't be available if it weren't for this excellent book.

Blues Traveling: The Holy Sites Of Delta Blues by Steve Cheseborough (an independent music scholar and a performer of blues music) showcases the contributions of John Hurt, Jimmie Rodgers, Bessie Smith, Muddy Waters, Fred McDowell, Howlin's Wolf, B. B. King, Little Milton, Elvis Presley, Bobby Rush, Junior Kimbrough, R. L. Burnside and other notables essential to a proper understanding and appreciation of this authentically American music tradition. Blues Traveling is a literary and historical excursion through the Mississippi delta taking the reader on a kind of pilgrimage to juke joints and churches, birthplaces and graveyards, dusty roads and levees, where down-home blues music was born, nourished, and evolved. Blues Traveling is a unique guidebook enhanced with photographs, maps, easy-to-follow directions. If you are a fan of the blues and will be finding yourself in the delta country, the begin your trip planning by a serious perusal of Steve Cheseborough's Blues Traveling!

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