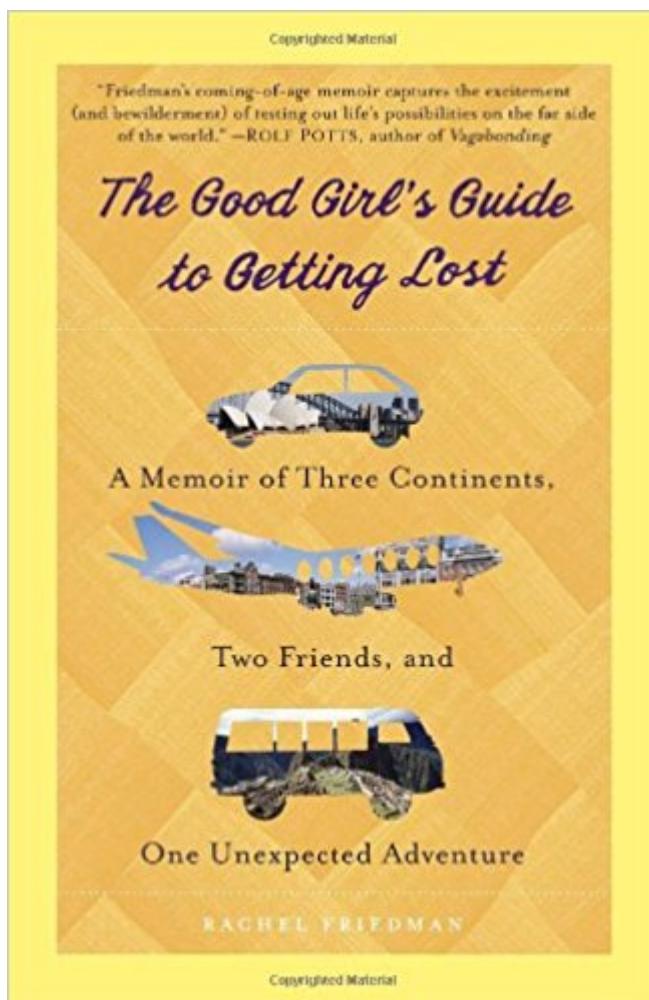


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# The Good Girl's Guide To Getting Lost: A Memoir Of Three Continents, Two Friends, And One Unexpected Adventure



## Synopsis

Rachel Friedman has always been the consummate good girl who does well in school and plays it safe, so the college grad surprises no one more than herself when, on a whim (and in an effort to escape impending life decisions), she buys a ticket to Ireland, a place she has never visited. There she forms an unlikely bond with a free-spirited Australian girl, a born adventurer who spurs Rachel on to a yearlong odyssey that takes her to three continents, fills her life with newfound friends, and gives birth to a previously unrealized passion for adventure. As her journey takes her to Australia and South America, Rachel discovers and embraces her love of travel and unlocks more truths about herself than she ever realized she was seeking. Along the way, the erstwhile good girl finally learns to do something she's never done before: simply live for the moment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Friedman's coming-of-age memoir captures the excitement (and bewilderment) of testing out life's possibilities on the far side of the world. You'll laugh and empathize as you get lost with her." --Rolf Potts, author of *Vagabonding* "Curious, candid, energetic, and witty, Rachel Friedman is the ideal travel mate, and her sense of humor makes every page of this book a pleasure to read. A beautifully written and engrossing story, *The Good Girl's Guide to Getting Lost* reminds us how much a person can grow when she defies the expectations of her parents, her culture, and her youngest self. Rachel, like so many fresh college grads, doesn't know what to do with her life. Just be warned: Rachel's company is so delightful, you won't want to come home." --Colleen Kinder, author of *Delaying the Real World* "Teeming with warmth, *The Good*

Girl's Guide to Getting Lost is a wonderful read for anyone who wants to travel, misses traveling, or has ever entertained thoughts of dropping everything to go explore new territory. With humor and honesty, Rachel Friedman beautifully captures the pitfalls and exhilaration of backpacking, ultimately reminding us that our world is an infinitely fascinating and (mostly) open-hearted place. Please read this funny, insightful, adventurer's book.

--Rebecca Barry, author of *Later, at the Bar*"Friedman deftly moves from musings on family to specifics about working abroad to first-rate travelogue about the places she visited, striking just the right balance between personal and universal." -Publisher's Weekly

[1]Our heroine, verily drowning in self-pity at the tender age of twenty, embarks on a grand adventure that is not yet either grand or an adventure but, rather, a hastily concocted plan to escape the confines of her current existence and the quotidian yet oppressive pressures contained therein.The plane descends through a thick belt of clouds into blinding light. I haven't fully registered the transition from night to day until sun pours through the oblong windows, jarring me out of semi-consciousness. For the past eight hours, ever since I waved goodbye to my father at the airport and marched myself onto a plane bound for Dublin, I've been wondering if I was in some altered state when I planned this trip, because the reality of it feels distinctly like a bad hangover. Being bathed in golden light only adds to my surreal arrival. Isn't it supposed to be raining in Ireland?We thud against the tarmac, and my fellow passengers shuffle to life, folding in half to gather their belongings from beneath the seats. Eager to depart, the frizzy-haired girl in the row ahead of me springs up like a jack-in-the-box as soon as the seat-belt light clicks off for the last time. I remain belted in, doing my best deer-in-headlights impression. I might just stay on this plane all day, ride it round-trip like I did once when I was little and too frightened to get off the revolving ski lift at the top of the mountain. The elderly woman sitting next to me, a tiny person with papery hands and merlot-stained lips, leans over and taps the book sitting in my lap: Angela's Ashes. "Oh, that poor Angela," she sighs in one of those lilting Irish accents that make a grocery list sound like a Yeats poem. "Heaven knows she did the best for those boys, then Frank comes along and airs their business to the whole bloody world." Her tone is heavy with disdain, as if the author sold naked photos of his mother to the tabloids, not penned a Pulitzer Prize winner about his Irish childhood. Coming from the land of "all publicity is good publicity," I'd just assumed McCourt's native country embraced his memoir, proudly adding him to their long list (suspiciously long, really, considering Ireland's size) of distinguished writers. But like I was wrong about the weather, it seems I am mistaken about

this, too. Here are the facts of the present moment. It's 2002. I'm twenty years old. I've just embarked on four months in a foreign country alone. I'm carrying six hundred dollars in traveler's checks, money saved up from waitressing last semester. I booked two nights in a Dublin hostel before I left. Other than that, I've got no plan. And this greatly confounds me because I always have a plan. At least I used to be the kind of girl who always has a plan. In a few months, I'll be a college senior. School has been the organizing principle of my existence for as long as I can remember, and I have no idea what comes after that. My academic parents raised me to be ambitious and goal-oriented. In particular, my father, a film professor, molded me into a second-wave feminist whose duty it was to burst forth into the world and crush the male competition. He used to routinely deconstruct the PG films we watched together to comment on the functioning of the male gaze, say, or to illustrate how gender is performative. I still remember his lecture on *The Little Mermaid*: "It's just not equitable. Ariel has to give up everything for this guy • first her voice, then her home. On a very real level, Rachel, she has to give up who she is. What are we to make of this?" • "Jesus, Lester," my mother would sigh. I was eight. But I listened. I always listened. I was a scholarship kid at a small, eccentric college-preparatory high school, the kind of place where you juggled two dozen AP classes at once. Much of my teenage world revolved around studying, carefully calibrated extracurricular activities, and endless rounds of practice SATs. There was never a question of whether I would attend college • only where. And I was desperate to go, both because my parents' divorce when I was fifteen had left me without a place I truly identified as "home" • and because I genuinely loved school, where the formula for success was straightforward. Study and you get good grades. Simple, safe. But no class has prepared me for the post-student leap I am facing now, and being an eternal overachiever who bases her self-worth on her GPA, I am woefully ill-equipped to take on the unpredictable, unscheduled life awaiting me after college graduation. I am terrified of this unknown. In the Dublin airport, confident, purposeful travelers swirl around me, off to meetings and reunions and homes. All of them seem to know exactly where they are headed • except me. For a few moments, I am frozen and directionless, lost amid the drifting crowds. My brain works in slow motion, registering my tasks: pick up suitcase, exchange money, find hostel. I've never been to a foreign country alone, though I've been abroad a few times, starting with Germany when I was ten. My brother Dan was stationed there, and I flew over with my parents to visit him. We rented a car and dashed all over Europe. Ten days in at least as many cities, pausing just long enough to snap photos. It was exhausting, and I'm told I didn't appreciate much of it. Every few years, my

brother reminds me, shaking his head with renewed disgust, that I slept (slept!) through the pristine Alps. After my sophomore year of high school, my parents discharged me to Israel with a temple youth group, even though I had recently articulated that I was *so over Judaism*. But it was difficult to stay pissed off for an entire summer, especially on a bus with twenty-five other teenagers and Yamud, our gigantic, hairy Israeli graduate-student guide who insisted on blasting *We Built This City on Rock and Roll* on his boom box every morning at six a.m. as we boarded the bus, still bleary-eyed. If you were drooping sleepily into the aisle, one of his enormous flailing wrists would smack you in the head. You might slip quietly into a window seat in the back and shut your eyes only to find his meaty fingers jabbing them open. Each of us was assigned an identifying number and forced to shout it out (in order) at least twelve times a day, making our trip resemble one long Sesame Street episode. Peter, an unruly Canadian, insisted on substituting his name for his number. He was Rastafarian and claimed he was simply *too burned out to remember my number, brotha*. We found this, along with the dreadlock wig he wore over his shaved head and the fact that he smoked an invisible joint for hours at a time, across-the-board hilarious. Our Israeli guides, so unlike our regimented parents back home, just smirked and checked him off the list. They told the bus driver *a skinny man with the same real cigarette burning out of the corner of his mouth, seemingly for days, as if fueled by miracle menorah oil* *that we were all accounted for and ready to go*. My souvenir from this first semi-independent trip to a faraway land was a small tattoo. I acquired it in a dingy corner of Jerusalem from one of those muscly guys who have inked every available nook of their flesh canvas. The tattoo is a simple quarter-sized blue flower on the lower-right side of my back: five blue petals with a hint of purple at the base, outlined in black ink. Tiny tendrils poke out like rays of sunlight. I arrived at the tattoo parlor with two quivering guy friends who insisted I go first. I smiled reassuringly up at their worried faces as the needle scratched into my bare flesh. I felt incredibly wild. But this trip to Ireland is my first time alone in a foreign country: no family, no friends, no crazy Yamud making sure number twenty-eight is on the bus. I have only myself to rely on *which is precisely what worries me*. My friends and families collective concerns echo in my brain: *Where will you live? How will you find work? Won't you be lonely? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.* All I knew was that I needed to get away. I hadn't actually pictured myself on the other side of that conviction. *You're so brave to go off on your own*, my best college friend, Erica, told me a week ago, bestowing *brave* upon me with the distinct tone usually reserved for the word *insane*. Erica is interning at an art gallery in New York City

this summer. It's the kind of thing I think I should be doing, trying out my career instead of skipping town for no discernible reason. I can barely heave my massive red suitcase off the conveyor belt. It feels twice as heavy as when my father and I launched it into the trunk of his Hyundai before heading off to the airport. I'm here for just over four months (an impossibly long time, now that I think about it) and have, I think, packed accordingly. Several outfits for day or night, flats for walking, sandals for warm days, sneakers for running, boots for trekking (will I be trekking anywhere? I don't trek back home), two pairs of pretty heels for nights out, though, of course, I don't know anyone in Ireland to go out with. I've packed toiletries, twelve books, twenty pairs of underwear, ten pairs of socks, three sweaters, two jackets, three swimsuits, enough vitamin C to turn me into an orange, and two fluffy bath towels. A guy with greasy blond hair and Atlantic-blue eyes hoists a backpack onto his shoulders. He snaps it around his waist. It's half the size of his body, and I could fit four of them inside Big Red. Surely, with such modest gear, he must be traveling only for a week or two. And he must be moving around a lot. I plan on staying right here in Dublin. My instinct, as always, is to settle down, dig my heels in, and work hard at something, even if that something is only waiting tables. But it will be waitressing in a foreign country, far away from home. The backpacker strides swiftly out the door, looking carefree and unencumbered, leaving me with the exhausting thought of maneuvering my monstrous luggage through an unfamiliar city. Why Ireland? Well, for starters, four hundred dollars (my parents' generous, hesitant contribution) is enough to purchase a student work visa, something available in only a handful of countries, two of them—Australia and New Zealand—instantly ruled out because they are too far to find cheap airfare. Also, the rainy Irish weather appeals to me. If I am going to be miserable, I want the skies to match my mood. Last fall I took a course on Joyce, and I've been conjuring up long, dreary days wandering like Ulysses, rainy nights in cafés punishing myself with Finnegans Wake. This portrait appeals to my romanticized notion of melancholy, the kind I plan to undertake in Ireland, not at all like my current depressive state of pondering my postgraduate future, which consists of numbly attending lectures, sleeping twelve hours a day, and when I'm feeling really ambitious, staring blankly at the wall. Most of all, I just want to be somewhere else. When it comes to Ireland, it's not so much a matter of Why here? as Will it be far enough? It is not solely the post-graduation unknown that has unhinged me recently. It is also the fact that I was not expecting to be facing the abyss at all because I've had a very specific plan for my life since fourth grade. Up until recently, I fully expected to transition smoothly into the “real world,” riding into the gloriousness of my adulthood on the coattails of my one true calling: music. Viola, to

be specific, the instrument I devoted myself to since I was eight. I even spent my freshman year of college studying with the principal of the Boston Symphony. But somehow, everything fell apart that year, and I was no longer on my way toward being a professional musician.

Rachel Friedman's *The Good Girl's Guide to Getting Lost* is a Jewish journey, a personal narrative of facing fears, transforming internal ideas and metamorphosing into an adulthood grounded in the art of wanderlust. *Getting Lost* is part travelogue and part personal transformation. This memoir combines the author's personal journey and travel discoveries woven into her stories, along with her reflections about success, failure, life and the meaning of the aforementioned. Most people do not ever realize before traveling that is, that looking at a map of a foreign country in a language you don't understand will lead you eventually back to yourself. As Ms. Friedman says in her book, "After all these travels, I find I no longer have that fear. Life feels full of opportunity and possibility--and maybe even adventure." When I travel, I too find that the journeys to the far reaches of the world lead me back to myself - but a new, more insightful self.

3.5 stars It was a little hard to relate to the narrator, as she was young when she started her travels (fresh out of undergrad). However, it was like listening to a friend's daughter tell her travel stories who isn't annoying and realizes she has limitations, self doubt, and doesn't do everything perfect. There are a few parts where you want to slap her for being stupidly naive, but she is likable and I enjoyed reading about adventures she had that I may not go on.

I never thought when I picked up this modest little book would my life change; seemed like an entertaining read and I'm always hungry for memoirs. Within the first chapter, I was hooked. After the first adventure, I cried. Half way through, I cheered. Once I finished, I changed. This book will be the piece of story that gave me the courage to change my life. Rachel and Carly defy the conventions of normalcy and brave through doubts of society, earning their emotional/physical/spiritual strength. LADIES - these are the women we should be looking up to! Women who, yes might be afraid to let say bicycle down Death Road or learn a new language alone or fly across the world for the first time; they do it anyway aside from the fear but in hunger for the new. I look for female travel memoirs constantly, and after reading *The Good Girl's Guide to Getting Lost*, she has given me the courage, the strength and the inspiration to write my own; all I need now is a deep breath and a plane ticket, with my little yellow book beside me, like a portable best friend.

It starts off with a very annoying "voice" I stuck it out and ended up liking it just ok. It's almost as if she got more comfortable with the writing as she became more comfortable with her travels.

Sorry if the title is offensive to anyone, but my girlfriends and I call this book our bible because it resounds so deeply with us. We've even considered sending it back and forth to one another as a sort of "sisterhood of the travelling book" in the future because it speaks to all of us so well. We're all in our last years of college, about to graduate and the questions asked in *A Good Girl's Guide* are much like ours. Friedman's journey quieted those anxious voices that seem to be constantly yelling "what next?" Honestly, I didn't want it to end. This book left me empowered to seek out what really makes me tick, despite all the other expectant voices that try to put in their two cents. A must-read for anyone, but especially for those post-college, real-world inept, anxious-about-our-future gals out there.

A charming book with a unique voice, I found *The Good Girl's Guide to Getting Lost* impossible to put down. While this book would certainly hit home for readers in their early-mid twenties for obvious reasons, I (at 31) found it had an entirely different appeal. I can remember existing in that same strange place where you're independent for the first time in your life, but you haven't fully entered adulthood either, and you want to experience everything life has to offer. It also reminds me how important it is, no matter what age you are or at what juncture in your life, to stop and really live in the world around you. Friedman captures a particular moment in time that almost everyone can relate to, and boy, did this girl do it right. She is an incredibly gifted storyteller--her writing is funny and insightful--and you feel like you're sitting right beside her on a broken down bus in the as she tells you her story. This book is truly a gem!

Well written, readable. Lots of great travel narrative and self discovery. Quite a few chortle along the way. I would love to see what happened next.

Thank you for writing this book. I have just graduated with my masters degree and I feel completely lost (along with the pressures from parents, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc. to find a job as quickly as possible). I am taking a ONE MONTH trip to camp in Yellowstone and I can see their disapproving looks as they ask "what's next?...any job prospects?...". I see many years of travel and experiences ahead of me that many my age would never consider. I thank you for writing this book to show young women can travel, learn, and grow as well as come home and find success

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