

A Better Travel Guide for Geeks

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Pretty much anywhere you go, you can find some pretty scenery, a charming hotel, some decent restaurants, a couple of interesting museums. And the goal of most travel guides seems to be to tell you about these things. The result is a rather boring sort of tourism in which everywhere feels pretty much like everywhere else.

What I want is a travel guide that highlights the things that are absolutely different about this place than anywhere else you might go — the things you can't see anywhere else. For my hometown of Cambridge, it might be the window displays on Main St. that explain how to sequence DNA, or the architectural marvels of [Stata](#), [BCS](#), and [Simmons](#). In Boston, maybe it's the [Athenæum](#) or the [Globe factory tour](#). In West Virginia, maybe it's going to see mountaintop removal or some back-to-the-land communes.

And maybe the right thing to do is to head somewhere else. Normal guidebooks are separated out by city and state, so if the coolest thing in Boston is actually to commute up to Providence, you'd never hear about it. But you'd put this guidebook on the Internet, so you'd give it your location and it'd tell you what was awesome nearby no matter what political jurisdiction it happened to be in.

Anyone know anything like that?

Related things: Ben Goldacre's list of [Nerdy Day Trips](#) in the UK. jgc's [Geek Atlas](#) lists cool science and technology places. [Atlas Obscura](#) lists curiosities. [WikiTravel](#) lets you add places of your own. I'm told Lonely Planet has some stuff like this. [Smile When You're Lying](#) is an amusing account of the distortionary forces on the average travel guide.