



Notes from Nature Girl: Reports from a Year on the Road

Patty Hodgins

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With a yen for adventure and an eye for the variety and beauty of the natural world, Patty Hodgins chronicles her year-long solo travels -- begun at age 67 -- in the guise of Nature Girl. Finding a treasure trove of agates on an Oregon beach, walking among bears in an Alaskan wilderness, or dipping suitless into the Pedernales River, Hodgins is a careful observer who carries the reader easily along. She writes compellingly, with quirky, self-deprecating humor, as she sets out from her home in Denver heading north, then east, then unexpectedly back to the west, her route altered by friendship and a longing that would eventually change her life. During her year on the road in her small RV, Gypsy, Hodgins finds herself shedding old habits, like balancing her checkbook and paying attention to the news, and developing new ones, most notably a comfortable curiosity about what will happen next. She takes deep delight in simple experience -- "Many of my happiest moments have come driving down some dirt road in the middle of nowhere, saying 'Wow!' to myself and Gypsy at the sight of an impressive cloud or especially interesting mountain whose name I do not know." But it is on the Oregon coast, its wintry waves booming against the rocks, that she ultimately comes home to herself. This is beguiling -- and inspiring -- reading, both for those inclined to take such a trip and for those who simply enjoy a good story. The photographs illumine the author's subjects with an artist's eye for color and composition; many are coffee-table-book gorgeous. It's a pleasure to travel vicariously with this adventurous and appreciative woman bent on "spending more time enraptured by beautiful places."

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