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[“Sacred Places of Goddess: 108 Destinations”, by Karen Tate](#)

[Reviewed by Geraldine Charles](#)

There is plenty of well-organized information in this book – I couldn’t help but be impressed by the incredible amount of work it represents. It’s a fascinating, although dense, read, one for dipping into and dreaming of faraway places and times. Indispensable if you’re thinking of travelling, but useful for anyone interested in Goddess, as Karen Tate has certainly done her research, reading what must be truckloads of books, and referencing scholars and experts for every one of the destinations. There are lots of photographs and maps, too.

So much written on Goddess concentrates on Old Europe and the Middle East – not that there’s anything wrong with that – but it is good to have a book that covers the whole world and leaves a lasting impression of sacred landscapes and sites everywhere, of a globe sequined with the sacred and the numinous. I got particularly fascinated by the way in which cultures have such rich variety of the feminine divine and how many differences there are, yet, paradoxically, there are as many similarities. It has left me pondering how much Westerners look at the different and “exotic” through our own particular lenses, and whether this is one of the reasons for the apparent similarities. It is so difficult to put aside the Judeo-Christian spectacles and see all this complexity without preconceptions.

Given concerns about the problems caused by tourism in many areas, the damage done to sites and lack of respect for people who hold the land sacred, it was good to read the “Gaia alerts” and balance that awareness against the desire to go everywhere. However, there are plenty of sites nearer home, with some fascinating examples given in North America and, of course, Europe – there is something close to everyone’s back yard.

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So many of the standard travel guides I've used are bland and lack real information – the writers avoid upsetting anyone by never coming down on either side of a debate, or even appear, like so many archaeologists, positively opposed to the idea of Goddess and will at best describe finds as “fertility idols”. Indeed, when I visited Malta a couple of years ago, I read in more than one tourist guide leaflet that the “fat ladies” found in the temples are quite possibly images of male priests.

I have one minor quibble – a pet hate of having small images placed in the centre of paragraphs so I have to read impatiently around them. But this is a tiny grumble compared to the comprehensive information and sheer usability of the book.

My favourite section was the one on Oceania, probably because I know so little about the area, and I was fascinated by the various locations in Australia and the living mysteries of “women's business”, at least, what is left of them. This information has been sensitively presented, too - one particular sacred women's site isn't specifically located to protect it – but visitors are “advised to look at the natural landscape.” Quite right too – as probably only those visitors able to do so and with the sensitivity to see what is clearly sacred in that landscape, should be allowed to visit!

This is a must-have if you are off on the grand tour, even if it is from the armchair!

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