

A Traveler's Guide to the End of the World: Tales of Fire, Wind, and Water

David Gessner

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In *A Traveler's Guide to the End of the World*, veteran nature writer David Gessner uses powerful examples of environmental devastation to show myriad ways in which climate change is altering areas across the United States.

The book begins with a specific mission: trying to envision how the climate crisis will have transformed the world by 2064, the year in which Gessner's daughter will reach his age at the time of writing. Drawing on research, it describes a version of the United States in which the air itself is difficult to breathe, in which populated coastal areas have been abandoned to the tides, and in which wildfires have become ever more commonplace. Gessner describes a country wherein the rich and poor alike will pay the costs of the country's inaction, and he uses current examples to set a troubling baseline upon which dangerous feedback loops build.

This is resonant work. Its prose is commanding, with vivid descriptions of contemporary destruction that are used to imagine what's yet to come. Gessner makes his projections personal, writing about places that he has intimate knowledge of, including Boulder, Colorado, where fires force longtime residents from their homes; Wilmington, North Carolina, where the iconic Cape Hatteras lighthouse had to be relocated further inland; and New York City, where hurricanes have become a real threat. In these and other locations, he reports firsthand on the damage and describes the challenges that people face as they try to rebuild their lives with the fresh awareness that it might all be taken away again.

Drawing on personal experiences and conversations with affected communities, *A Traveler's Guide to the End of the World* issues moving warnings about future dangers while bearing witness to the precarious present.

JEFF FLEISCHER (May / June 2023)

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