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Around the Okanagan with a book

By [Heather Allen - Penticton Western News](#)

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Tomorrow is World Book Night. More than 20,000 book lovers are gathering in London's Trafalgar Square to meet big name authors such as Alan Bennett and Margaret Atwood. Throngs of people will cheer on authors in a frenzy to get their hands on thousands of free books.

I can't make it across the pond for the big party, but to show solidarity I'm having my own low-key armchair soiree. With a glass of bubbly, I'll curl up with a new favourite: a book that reflects my home focus and at the same time, is truly worth celebrating. This choice is *Grandma Wears Hiking Boots* by Kelowna author Laurie Carter.

There's no doubt that the world is full of more dramatic or historically important places than the Okanagan. But still, our valley is special in its own right. In *Grandma Wears Hiking Boots*, Carter pens a collection of personal journeys around the valley, exploring everything from the best place to hike with kids to best lunch spots and places to brush up on Okanagan history.

Carter's often humorous experiences go beyond peaches and beaches: She skydives, picks mushrooms, snowshoes, sips tea and visits the Okanagan's best pumpkin patch. The book is accompanied by beautiful photos, directions and maps, but it's the personal touch in each of these short entries that sets the book apart from other travelogues.

In the Let's Eat section, Carter recounts a time she and her husband grumbled aloud while rattling the locked door of their favourite Indian restaurant in Oliver. About to give up, a voice called from above. "Perched high on a ladder a bearded man in a green turban smiled down at us," writes Carter. He climbed down, opened the restaurant and prepared them a home-cooked meal. "Talk about service and beyond!"

My daughter once left her favourite toy at this restaurant. When we went to pick it up, the owner had it set aside with a box of homemade sweets.

In *Grandma Wears Hiking Boots* I enjoyed reading about many familiar places. But even for us locals, there's much in these pages that's new.

Carter originally thought the book would appeal only to baby boomers like herself. She has been pleasantly surprised. "It's beyond what I expected or hoped for," she said. "The book is appealing to the generation beyond the boomers, who are using it more for armchair travel. Young parents with kids love the short entries and people new to the valley are reading the stories as a way to get in and learn about their new home."

Carter is obviously someone who enjoys conversing with and learning from all sorts of people. I imagine her flitting like a songbird from one branch of interests to the next. "The book was really a chance to bring together an awful lot of information I've gathered over the years and put it in one place," she said.

Whether you're a local or a tourist in town for the weekend, you'll find something here to cheer about.

Heather Allen is a writer and reader who lives in Penticton.

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