

# Book reviews Rosemarie Milsom

## Food that's worth missing the boat for



**Vroom By The Sea.**  
Peter Moore.  
(Bantam, \$24.95.)

TWO years after riding his temperamental 1961 Vespa "Sophia" from Milan to Rome in

search of la dolce vita and documenting his journey in the best-selling *Vroom With A View*, Peter Moore is living in London, married to Sally (who he met in the first book) and preparing for impending fatherhood.

The nervous first-time father decides to head back to Italy five months before his baby is due for one last hurrah, a summer journey through the sunny parts of the country including Sardinia, Sicily, Capri and Naples – with his wife's blessing. "She said it was better that I got it out of my system now rather than waiting until after our daughter was born," he writes. "I'd spent my entire adult life living like a student. I lived in share households. I spent most of my money on CDs. And when I scraped up enough money, I'd disappear and wander around the world a bit. I never went hungry but there were times I got close... Now I was meant to be the responsible one."

I'm sure a lot of men will be filled with envy as Moore boards a plane for Pisa to be reunited with friends and Sophia in the nearby town of Livorno. But, as with all good trips, even the best-laid plans take a detour when he discovers his beloved Sophia is out of action due to a hard-to-find engine part.

And so we meet Marcello, Sophia's racy younger male relative, a 1971 Rally 200 in the "same shade of orange as Donatella Versace with white go-fast stripes down each side".

It's love at first sight and, unlike his predecessor, Marcello is reliable and powerful, which is essential given that Moore heads away from the larger cities and towns to explore some fairly isolated spots, particularly in Sardinia.

His tone is warm and conversational and, while he isn't a particularly stylish writer, Moore's observations and insights are easy to relate to.

His affection for Italy and its people shines through, as does his obsession with Vespas (Sally calls him a "Ves-bore" when he gets all train-spotterish about them).

Not surprisingly, the Italians embrace Marcello and, as a consequence, his rider, who they often mistake for an Italian. The racy scooter, named after the famed actor Marcello Mastroianni, gets him into social situations largely off limits to

the packs of tourists who swarm to the coast in search of a deeper tan, not a deeper understanding of Italian culture.

Marcello also enables Moore to get to places off the beaten track and it's this aspect of the book that is most appealing. He simply arrives in a place and follows the lead of the locals in terms of which beaches and sites to visit.

"You must go!" commands the young girlfriend of a barista he gets talking to in the Sardinian town of Santa Teresa di Gallura. "Many Italians go to the Caribbean but the Maddalena are more beautiful."

And so, Moore changes his plans and jumps on a ferry bound for La Maddalena, the main island in a nearby archipelago, where he spends his time beach-hopping sans helmet and crowds.

Naturally, food plays a large role in Moore's journey – this is Italy after all. At one point he misses the only daily vehicle ferry between Trapani on Sicily's west coast and the island of Favignana because he is enjoying the best seafood couscous he has ever tasted.

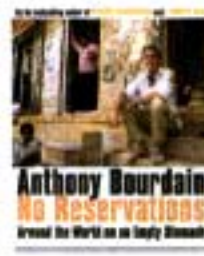
"I saw the guy in blue overalls wave the last passenger on. But I kept eating. The couscous had a hold over me, rooting me to my chair... I'd booked and paid for a ticket."

He enjoys a second helping. Moore is nothing if not passionate.



**Beaches Of Batemans Bay And The Eurobodalla Coast.**  
Peter and Manuela Henry.  
(Hyams Publishing, \$29.95.)

DISCOVERING the villages, beaches and inlets of the south has filled me with the same enthusiasm as exploring another country. Relatively untouched by the level of development that has marred Coffs Harbour and Byron Bay, the South Coast of NSW has much to tempt those in search of a relaxing break. On a trip to Broulee, a sleepy village bordered by national park, I came across this publication and it proved invaluable. Featuring easy-to-read maps, photography that captures the 60 beaches in all their blue and green glory, tidbits and a potted history, boat ramp locations and walking trails, this well-researched book has taken up permanent residency in our glove box. If only we could afford to do the same in one of the stunning spots we came across. Also available is *Beaches Of Jervis Bay And The Shoalhaven*. A guide to the Sapphire Coast is under way. To order, see [www.hyams.com.au](http://www.hyams.com.au).



**No Reservations: Around The World On An Empty Stomach.**  
Anthony Bourdain.  
(Bloomsbury, \$35.)

AT A lunch with Bourdain during a visit to Sydney, I asked him what his favourite meal was. He hesitated for a moment, then said: "A bowl of Vietnamese pho." Yes, he appreciated the mastery of award-winning chefs such as El Bulli's Ferran Adria and even Sydney's Peter Doyle but he couldn't go past the simplicity and flavour of a bowl of beef and noodle soup eaten while perched on a plastic chair in a bustling Hanoi street. Bourdain relishes the opportunity to venture beyond his Manhattan restaurant, Les Halles, in search of memorable food experiences. Here, we get the author's insightful commentary and his crew's candid snapshots across 28 countries including Namibia, Uzbekistan and Tahiti. This foodie has a wonderful way with words: "A true, properly poured pint of Guinness (available nowhere but Ireland, to my mind) snuggles into the hand like another appendage." Bourdain fans will relish this.