Grab your baedeker and go!

At an elephant’s leisurely pace, you enjoy the cool humidity beneath the jungle’s canopy. You close your eyes and feel the buzz of life pulsing within and around you. You feel the tiger watching, crouching on a thick branch just above your head; you feel the wild boar bumbling along, digging up shrubs to his liking; you feel the rhinos snore, the insects hum, the feathers of birds whispering to the wind, and beyond the jungle, you feel the river run its course, steady and swift as a summer rain. Outside of this jungle you want to explore the culture of the place—the people and their traditions, the food, and the sights. You have your luggage, your money, your passport, and plane ticket. You think you must have remembered everything…but wait…where’s your baedeker? This is your guidebook and key to all on your travels.

A baedeker is just that: a guidebook. It derives from Karl Baedeker, a German publisher of guidebooks. By 1914, his ‘Handbooks for Travellers’ had described all of Europe and North America, and much of Asia and Africa. The man himself was fluent in a dozen languages, born to a line of printers and booksellers in 1801. His books became the ultimate travel guides and, after his death in 1859, the term baedeker started to become synonymous with guidebook.

In the foreword to his guide to Germany and Austria, Baedeker wrote:

*“Its principal object is to keep the traveler at as great a distance as possible from the unpleasant, and often wholly invisible, tutelage of hired servants and guides (and in part from the aid of coachmen and hotelkeepers), to assist him in standing on his own feet, to render him independent, and to place him in a position from which he may receive his own impressions with clear eyes and lively* *heart.”*

(”Deutschland,” eighth edition, 1858)

His goal was to give readers insight beyond hotels, restaurants, and sight-seeing. Baedeker wanted to show his travelers the experience of a lifetime and give them the ability to confidently explore the world on their own. It was a must-have for the frequent traveler, the epitome of what a guidebook should be. Wherever your next journey may be, make sure to visit a local bookstore and browse for the baedeker you need.

Sources:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/baedeker>

<http://www.ctrarebooks.com/pi_faq.html>