

Memoirs About Australia

Alison, Jane. ***The Sisters Antipodes***. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009.

Alison was living with her family in Canberra when her parents divorced and switched partners with an American family strangely similar to theirs. Uprooted, she grew up in the US, absorbed by and jealous of the mirror image family on the other side of the world. This unusual, beautifully told memoir is filled with psychological insights.

Bryson, Bill. ***In a Sunburned Country***. Broadway Books, 2000.

Bryson travels around Australia, regaling us with tales of the largest, longest, deadliest, and strangest things he finds. For fans of Bryson's travel memoirs, this is a winner.

Conway, Jill Ker. ***The Road From Coorain***. Knopf, 1989.

Conway spent her early childhood on a 30,000 acre sheep ranch in the outback. When she was 11, after the death of her father and older brother, she moved to Sydney, with a mother suffering from alcoholism and depression. Conway's struggle to find her own way adulthood has become a classic among women's memoirs.

Davidson, Robyn. ***Tracks: A Woman's Solo Trek Across 1700 Miles of Australian Outback***. Vintage, Reprint, 1995 (1980).

Not one to do things the easy way, Davidson arrived in the town called Alice Springs with \$6.00 in her pocket and a plan to buy camels, train them herself, and head out into the desert with camels and dog for company. Davidson doesn't soft pedal the racism and hostility she encounters or her own ambivalence about her journey in this memoir that has become a cult classic.

Facey, A.B. ***A Fortunate Life***. Viking Press, 1984.

Born in 1894, Facey was an orphan by age two, hired out at eight as an itinerant farm worker. He survived the battle of Gallipoli in World War I only to face many setbacks in the following years. Despite a life of unthinkable hardship, he considered himself fortunate. This riveting memoir is a classic in Australia for the author's unflinchingly courageous, beautifully told life story, which encapsulates much of Australia's modern history. It's currently out of print in the US.

James, Clive. ***Unreliable Memoirs***. W.W. Norton & Co., Reprint 2009. (1981).

James pens a hilarious account of growing up in Sydney in the 1940s and 1950s, son of a widowed mother who despaired of ever seeing her son make something of himself. His childhood was filled with mischief and over-the-top exploits at school and in the neighborhood. A laugh-out-loud coming-of-age story with a strong sense of place and time.

Irwin, Terri. ***Steve and Me***. Simon Spotlight Entertainment. 2007.

The real life story of the "The Crocodile Hunter," the remarkable Steve Irwin, told by his wife Terri, is filled with the stuff of legends. Steve began handling crocodiles at the age of nine and devoted his life to wildlife conservation. Their crocodile-trapping honeymoon became the first episode for a television series; their happy life together was filled with animal rescue work until his untimely death.