



Wings: How Traveling the World Freed My Soul to Fly

Kathy Wright

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Tracing a lifetime of illuminating travels along a steady path toward spiritual awakening, Wings is a lively memoir.

In her holistic memoir *Wings*, Kathy Wright makes a record of her external and internal travels.

Wright was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in her seventies, prompting her to reflect on the lessons she learned across a lifetime of travels and challenges—all of which gave her the skills to cope with her diagnosis and treatment. For example, nausea and queasiness—often side effects of travel—also arose in the course of her cancer treatment, and she already had the tools to confront them. Whether they're depicting a Caribbean cruise, a tour guide's suggestion that she'd end up becoming a bird, or Wright's inward efforts at self-discovery, the book's pages trace these illuminating steps on her steady path to spiritual awakening.

The book's progression is systematic. Each chapter centers a lesson learned during Wright's travels. Among these are rituals (during a trip to India, Wright visited Varanasi to see the most cherished of its cremation ghats; she learned to meditate on its steps, and made use of that practice later on), the process of honoring those who came before, and self-awareness. These disparate, cross-cultural topics are joined by metaphorical flourishes, as with wings, which are made to represent the soul's freedom, and which speak to Wright's habit of collecting feathers. Some such images become ongoing conceits: each lesson is said to add more feathers to Wright's wings, for example, enabling her to fly higher and with more joy.

The text is better grounded by its sensory observations, including notes about how each sense played a role in Wright's cancer treatment. For instance, in covering the northern Spain portion of the Camino de Santiago, it imparts the feeling of the warmth of the sun on Wright's face and the bright color of the sky. And in recording a trip to Venice, it incorporates the blended sounds of gondoliers' whistles and songs with the ringing of church bells. Some errors undermine its delivery, however: Africa is treated as a single culture, and Egypt as though it is separate from the rest of the continent, and the discovery of America is misattributed to sailors in the age of Christopher Columbus, without regard for Native American populations.

Written with a sense of adventure, *Wings* is an open-ended, testimonial memoir about the expansive power of travel.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (December 28, 2023)

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