

PREPARE FOR DEPARTURE

NOTES ON A SINGLE MOTHER, A MISFIT SON,
INEVITABLE MORTALITY AND THE ENDURING
ALLURE OF FREQUENT FLYER MILES

Media Kit

About Mark Chesnut



Mark Chesnut is a New York City-based journalist, editor and public speaker with more than 20 years of experience. The 2019 winner of the NLGJA Excellence in Travel Writing Award, Mark has written for Fodor's, Forbes Travel Guide, HuffPost, the Miami Herald, Travel + Leisure Mexico, the New York Times bestseller *1,000 Places To See Before You Die* and the inflight magazines of Aeromexico, American Airlines and Avianca.

Mark writes about Latin America in his travel blog, LatinFlyer.com, and contributes regularly to travel industry media outlets including Travel Weekly, TravelAge West, TravelPulse, Successful Meetings and Meetings & Conventions Magazine. He also speaks at a variety of travel industry and publishing events and is the author of *The Gay Vacation Guide*. *Prepare for Departure* is his first creative nonfiction book.



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Life is a Trip.

A touching and darkly humorous exploration of identity, coming out, aging and death, set against a backdrop of travel and the pursuit of a dream.



If David Sedaris, Michelle Zauner or Samantha Irby were travel addicts, they might relate.

Prepare for Departure is a memoir about a mother, a son and the journeys that families sometimes must take together.

For award-winning travel writer Mark Chesnut, overwhelming wanderlust was the result of a misfit childhood and an indulgent upbringing by a single mother. At an early age, Mark learned to dodge discomfort by jumping on the nearest plane, bus or car. That tactic proved especially useful when his mother made it clear that there was no room for discussion about his gay identity.

Now, as 89-year-old Eunice Chesnut moves to a New York City nursing home to spend her final weeks near her son, Mark embarks on the most emotional journey of all.

Prepare for Departure showcases what happens when

a permissive mother and a travel-obsessed son face death while revisiting life — from airport shoplifting to avoiding Southern Baptist salvation, from acting like Hillary Clinton in a nursing home to hanging with a dragged-out grandfather, from creating an imaginary airline to flying away and finding a place in the world.

It's what might happen if Augusten Burroughs and David Sedaris were hanging out in a nursing home with Mitch Albom, with Paul Theroux and Dave Eggers stopping by to provide some snarky flavor.

More than an end-of-life memoir, more than a collection of childhood memories and travel stories, Prepare for Departure takes readers on a trip — through time, through loss and through forgiveness and acceptance.



DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Coming out and how it's changed from the 20th to 21st centuries
- How to deal with the emotional challenges of caring for an aging parent
- How to deal with grief after losing a parent
- How to craft and market a memoir and tell your story to the world
- How to find and work with an independent book publisher
- How to follow your passion and create the career you love
- Must-see places in Latin America for your vacation bucket list
- What you need to know about international travel during the pandemic
- How to find LGBTQ-friendly travel experiences in Latin America and around the world
- How personal branding can succeed, even for weird adolescents
- The transformative power of travel
- How to fart on an airplane without getting caught
- How to steal stuff from airports

BOOK DETAILS

Full title: [Prepare for Departure: Notes on a single mother, a misfit son, inevitable mortality and the enduring allure of frequent flyer miles](#)

Page count: 288

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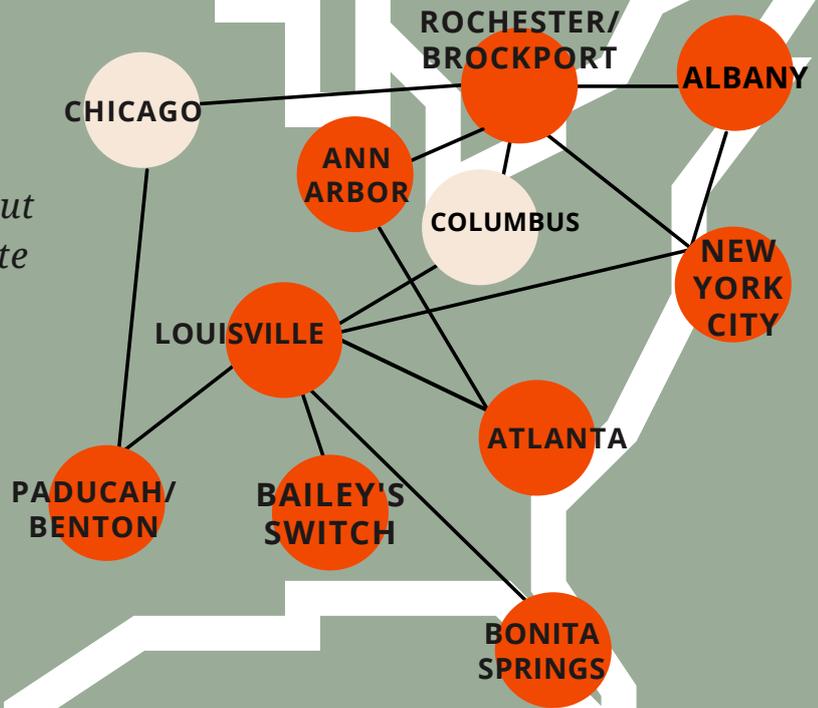
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PREPARE FOR DEPARTURE

The Routes of a Family

"You can lose just about everything, but you can never lose your personal route map."



Q&A with Mark Chesnut

How did you get the idea to write *Prepare for Departure*?

I wrote this book because I had to. My mother's illness and physical decline made me really step back and look at my life and hers, and I was compelled to tell her story and mine in order to make sense of our lives and her impending death. It was therapeutic, and as I started sharing parts of my story, I realized it could resonate with a lot of other people who've gone through similar experiences, too.

You address some personal and difficult topics. What did you learn as you were writing?

I learned to view my own life from a more objective point of view, since I was sharing my work with others in my writing class, writers group and with a few literary magazines.

I also learned that many other people go through similar hardships, and that's when I realized that this book might mean something to others, and even help them by showing how you can come to believe in yourself and follow your life's passions while coping with difficult situations, including the decline of a parent.

Even when you're dealing with heavy topics, you use a lot of humor — often dark humor. Why is that?

I got my sense of humor from my family — especially my mother and my grandfather. Humor can be used in a lot of positive ways. It can alleviate stress, reduce conflict and improve health. What's the point of suffering if you can't joke about it at some point? Gallows humor can work wonders!

You were a teenager in the late 1970s and early 1980s and came out long before there were positive role models in mass media. How much have things changed?

There has been a massive shift in the past couple of decades. LGBTQ people enjoy more visibility and acceptance and we see positive role models in all types of media. I'm really happy to see how things have changed!

You've been a travel writer for more than 20 years. How does it feel to share your personal life rather than travel tips?

I'm really exposing myself now. I want readers to get something from my story, to relate to it, laugh at it or learn something from it. It's really cool to see how much we all have in common.

Excerpts & Praise

Had my mother evolved since she figured out her brother's sexual orientation? I wasn't even sure if she was more disappointed that he was gay or that he was an astrologer. Oh Don, why couldn't you have beamed down some answers from wherever celebrity astrologers go after they die?



***Pour yourself a drink, fasten your seatbelt, and get ready for the trip of a lifetime.** Prepare for Departure is a book filled with laughter and poignant experiences that will inspire you to pursue your dreams and appreciate life to the fullest. Above all, it's about unconditional love and the special bond shared between a son and his mother.*

— **Robert Adams, editorial director, Passport Magazine**

*Packed with tight, elegant prose, Mark Chesnut's charming memoir explores a childhood, youth, and travel writing career through the prism of his mother's caring, her eccentric rules, her fears for his future as a gay man, her parade of quirky relatives, and mostly through the lens of her final years in nursing homes. This is a story of a child who preferred designing his own airline to doing homework, and who understood that hotels and traveling could lead to adventures, passions and contentment. It is a story of unashamed love, and an unashamed thirst for travel that results in both success and fulfillment. **The reader will enjoy the ride: its wit, its candor, its foibles, its joys, its tears. I know I did.***

— **Geoffrey Weill, travel publicist and author, ALL ABROAD, A Memoir of Travel & Obsession (University of Wisconsin Press)**



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Mark was born with a traveler's eye, one that sees below the surface, and a writer's voice, to share what he sees in ways that enlighten others.

— **Arnie Weissmann, editor in chief, Travel Weekly**



EXCERPT

The aircraft gently tilted its wings as if it were waving goodbye before shrinking into the cloudless blue sky. In years past, we'd watched planes from airport departure gates before embarking on our own adventures. Now, we observed the jet-fueled action from behind the walls of a nursing home.

More Praise



I hadn't lived this close to my mother in more than 30 years. And now I was responsible for her life, health and death. For the first time, I left my cell phone on all night. I knew I probably wouldn't turn it off again for a very long time.

The relationship between mothers and sons has certainly been explored before, but never like this. In Prepare for Departure, Mark Chesnut takes us on an often hilarious, always touching journey that tackles complex topics ranging from coming out to religion and death, from nursing home etiquette to the transformational power of travel. Like David Sedaris, Chesnut weaves dark humor (as well as a healthy dose of 1970s nostalgia) into his clever prose as he describes his misfit childhood, eccentric relatives and his mother's emotional final months. Tears may be shed, but they're never far removed from the next chuckle that this book will surely elicit. We may not fully understand Chesnut's fantastic obsession with all things travel; not many authors, after all, have pretended to be a flight attendant on an abandoned school bus or stolen departure signs from airports. But we can all relate to his universal themes of love, loss, laughter and forgiveness.
— Lisa Takeuchi Cullen, author, *Remember Me: A Lively Tour of the American Way of Death* (HarperCollins)

A warm-hearted, funny memoir about growing up different. Yes, he works as a travel writer, but Mark Chesnut reminds us that life itself is a journey, with our family as our constant traveling companions. Mark's delightful voyage with his irrepressible mother, Eunice, is poignant, humorous, and deeply moving. With its vivid characters, awkward life lessons, and valuable travel tips, Prepare for Departure is filled with trials, triumphs, and laughter. It's a trip you won't want to miss. Buckle up! It's going to be a bumpy – but also extremely entertaining – ride!

— Ann LeSchander, writer/director, *The Park Bench*



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Travel writer and self-confessed aviation nerd Mark Chesnut presents a different kind of guidebook. Sharing moments culled from a lifetime's worth of experiences, Chesnut examines the highs and lows between a mother and son and the complicated path as the child becomes the caretaker. With writing that is often achingly beautiful, weirdly hilarious and always brutally honest, Chesnut shares his family's history over the course of decades, ranging from his Southern roots in Kentucky to his childhood in Upstate New York, all while interweaving stories from his successful career traveling the world. Ultimately, the journey along this road arrives at a greater acceptance of the fragility of life, and the faults and courage that make us human.

— Kenneth Shapiro,
publisher/editor-in-chief,
TravelAge West

EXCERPT

Having a masculine role model doesn't necessarily mean that dressing in drag is verboten.