



Courtesy Martinique Lewis

THE LATEST

# What It Took to Write a Modern Day 'Green Book' for Black Travelers

*'The ABC Travel Green Book' goes on sale August 23.*

BY SHAUNA BENI

August 21, 2020

Growing up in a household with parents who enjoyed traveling a lot, Martinique Lewis caught the travel bug at any early age. It's why she's made a career of it, wearing multiple hats as the creative lead for the **Nomadness Travel Tribe** and as a diversity and travel consultant, while also

serving as one of the founding members of the [Black Travel Alliance](#). Now, she's adding author to her resume with the release of her first book, *The ABC Travel Green Book*, a modern-day version of Victor Hugo Green's *Green Book*.

Though times have changed since the segregation era, when the *Green Book* was essential for the safety and wellness of Black travelers, racism and injustice remains ever-present both in the U.S. and abroad—yet there's still little content out there that speaks directly to the concerns of Black travelers today. Lewis' book seeks to remedy that, with global city guides that highlight Black-owned businesses and communities where Black travelers are more likely to feel safe. We spoke to Lewis, who is currently based in Oakland, about what it took to put the book together, and why it's essential for all travelers to understand that the Black diaspora is everywhere.

### **Why was it important for you to write this book and release it now?**

I ended up winning an *Essence* pitch competition for their new voices campaign in 2018, and that's when this started for me. Originally I wanted to release it in December 2019, in time for Christmas, but then decided to wait for Black History Month in February 2020. Then COVID-19 hit. Then George Floyd was murdered, and there was this equality burst. I always told myself I'd know when the time was right, and I wanted to strike while the iron is hot, while people are celebrating Black culture, amplifying Black voices, and looking for literature and resources to be able to identify these communities and companies. Even if we can't travel to some of the places in the book right now, if you live in the areas that I listed, you can still patronize your dollars there.

### **Tell me a bit more about your journey to creating the book.**

I wanted to be able to celebrate Black businesses globally, that has been my passion. I started working in the Black travel space at the end of 2016 and the positive effects of social media for the Black travel community were tremendous. I started seeing more about Black travel movements and influencers in all these beautiful places. I would visit those places and realize that there were Black communities, and I wanted to share that with the rest of the world. In Honduras, for example, there's a pocket of Garifuna people, and there are endless [Black History tours in Amsterdam](#). It's mind-blowing that I don't see any of these communities advertised in the in-flight magazines.

I [also] feel like Victor Hugo Green does not get enough credit in our society. When I learned about his *Green Book*, it was probably three years ago. I was like, *Why didn't I know about this?*

There's something wrong with the fact that we do not know about this as a whole. The *Green Book* was as crucial as an encyclopedia.

### **Did you come across any difficulties when writing *The ABC Travel Green Book*?**

I got discouraged when researching Africa and finding out that, of the businesses I wanted to show, foreigners or white people owned 90 percent of them across the continent. It was a low blow for me because after the Year Of The Return campaign, many people are traveling to the continent to connect, and there aren't many places owned by people born and raised there. A few CEOs from different businesses told me my book would shed light on many of the ugly truths and inequalities within the continent. You have people who come [to Angola] from Portugal, and they'll build hotels on the land but won't employ any Angolans. Not all of Africa is like this, though—Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal are filled with Black-owned businesses. Hopefully, this book will encourage people to buy back the continent and help us to be our own entrepreneurs.



*The ABC Travel Green Book* is out August 23

## **How did you go about choosing the places that made it in the book?**

I had to be okay with the fact that I don't know everything and that I am putting in as much stuff as I have access to. The first thing I did was join Facebook groups for Black people in different places: there are Black communities in Oman, Kuwait, South Korea; brothers and sisters in **Brazil**. From there, I began searching for Black-owned businesses.

I knew that Google wouldn't be able to tell me everything, but if I knew where the Black community was in, say, **Bolivia**, then I could search for restaurants around there and see if they had social media. I would just reach out to them and ask, *Is this a Black-owned restaurant? Is this a Black-owned accommodation?* It was challenging when I got to places in Africa because they have so many different languages, so I would reach out to an influencer from the country for help. Nomadness played such a massive role in this as well, and it took a multitude of different research techniques.

## **What place in the book you are most excited to visit?**

One of the first places I'll be visiting is **Ireland** because I had no idea that the Black Irish community was so bountiful. There's a President Barack Obama square there, and so many welcoming accommodations that I just had no idea about. **Switzerland** is another place; they have the African Film Festival and art shows. There's also a soul food restaurant in **Taiwan**. It's fascinating to see how expats go to places and open up businesses.

## **Do you feel that travel plays an important role in transforming people and communities?**

Absolutely. Travel just has a way of educating your mind about new territories and helping you receive experiences you will never get anywhere else. I always say this is not only a book for Black travelers; this is a book for the whole industry. It'll serve as a wake-up call to many. It is a book for my white colleagues, my Asian colleagues, and my Mexican colleagues, to go to these places and find the Black history. Many people are clueless about the types of oppression and systematic racism we went through as Black people and that we still go through. Once their eyes open up when they visit some of these places, they'll realize this is real.

It's also essential for those who call themselves allies. You can prove it by giving back to these communities, visiting these places, and educating others about it. I'm excited for people to get these experiences and see how much Black people and Black culture has shaped the world. I want people to realize that Black people not only went to places because of slavery. We got to places because we were also **explorers**. Our culture and history are so rich, and it's been left behind or buried. This is one way to revive it.

**Buy now: \$10, amazon.com**

*All products featured in this story are independently selected by our editors. However, when you buy something through our retail links, we may earn an affiliate commission.*

TOPICS POP CULTURE

---