

By Jennifer Weatherhead Harrington

<http://www.travelandstyle.ca/author/jennifer/> / February 21, 2019

# BooknBrunch: Is a Book Club + Brunch the New Travel Trend?

When three of our favourite things come together (reading, brunch and travel), we're in a happy place! See how BooknBrunch pulls all three into one amazing experience that will one day be a global community.



Photo courtesy of Katherine Holland.

## Tell us a bit about what BooknBrunch is...

**BooknBrunch**(<https://www.booknbrunch.com/>) is on a mission to reconnect the world. In real life. Through books and food. We envision a world where thousands of Brookie (what we call our community) experiences occur every week around the globe. BooknBrunch empowers others to start their own clubs and host their own meetings. Brookies organize book club meetings in different venues around the world to: make money, connect, share and create lasting social rituals, find their tribe, read more and connect with their book loving community.

## #ImaBrookie

## How did you get started with BooknBrunch? Where did the idea come from?

We all have moments in our lives where things feel dark and lonely. I was in one of those stormy places and felt disconnected and alone. I felt depressed. I needed new friends, and something to get excited about. I reached out to my sister for her thoughts and she suggested I get out more and do something I love. With my want and need to connect, and my love of books, I decided to start a book club. The original book club had 15 members and we met once a month in restaurants over brunch to chat about the chosen book.

Within 15 months the book club had ballooned to over 1,200 people and was gaining members by the week. I made lifelong friendships, met hundreds of incredible people and

brought new customers to local restaurants. At the same time, I had to turn people away as I couldn't save them a seat at the brunch experience.

That is when everything clicked. People are yearning, just as I was, for authentic, in person, real life interactions and they want to create their own community. I discovered people are looking for connection and to make new friends. With a book by your side, as the ultimate ice breaker, BooknBrunch makes it easy. A community that encourages discovery, ritual, connection and a sprinkle of surprise and delight, because we all need a bit more of that in our lives.

I felt urged to bring these feelings and experiences to the world on a larger scale. That's why we built it.



Photo courtesy of Katherine Holland.

### **What happens at the actual brunch part of BooknBrunch?**

The brunches range in length and style wildly. They tend to take on the personality of the host. Our venue partners create custom fixed price menus for Brookies so choosing a partner is easy for them. There's usually really delicious food, amazing conversation, laughs, new connections and some talk of the book ; )

### **How do Brookies pick out a book and brunch spot?**

The host of the event picks the spot. Sometimes they pick from our list of plug and play venue partners who have preloaded our marketplace with a set menu and other times hosts choose their own venue. The host decides on all fronts. Events are in public spaces, restaurants, cafes, lofts and private spaces – really anywhere. Events are also ticketed or free, public or private.

We help the hosts by providing a list of curated books of the month in our [Brookstore](https://app.booknbrunch.com/books). (<https://app.booknbrunch.com/books>). They can pick from there or choose any book that inspires them.

**How do you view the BooknBrunch community? Is it local, or do you see it being more of a global community? And how do you feel it fits in with travel?**

We are both a great way to connect with local community and a global group of book lovers. The BooknBrunch community is local when it comes to connecting in real life at an event and global when you think about the fact that we have members in a variety of countries already. We plan to scale globally definitely. BooknBrunch goes hand and hand with travel because you can join a BooknBrunch event in a new city that you are traveling to or a new city that you've just moved to. It connects you to new people through a shared love of books and food. It allows you to break bread with strangers over a book discussion and make true international connections.

**Where in the world can you find BooknBrunch meetups?**

You can currently find BooknBrunch events in Toronto and the greater Toronto Area. We are beginning to expand into the US this year. Look out for us in the coming months as we hit New York, Atlanta and beyond! We have community members in several countries, so our plan is to work to serve those members first and help bring the book club magic to all of our members around the globe.



Photo courtesy of Katherine Holland.

**When it comes to travel, brunch is *always* a good idea! Where are some of your favourite brunch spots in the world?**

My favourite brunch spots around the world are The Watsons Bay Hotel in Sydney, Australia; you take a ferry from the harbour and exit onto these beautiful grounds, enjoy some delicious brunch and make a day of it. I also love The Publican in Chicago; beautiful décor and the food is inspired by simple farmhouse fare.

**Where are some of your favourite brunch spots in Toronto?**

Some of my favourite brunch spots in Toronto are already our amazing venue partners such as [Café Neon](http://www.cafeneon.ca/) (<http://www.cafeneon.ca/>), [Otto's BierHalle](https://www.ottosbierhalle.com/) (<https://www.ottosbierhalle.com/>) and [Eastbound Brewing Company](https://www.eastboundbeer.com/). (<https://www.eastboundbeer.com/>) I also love,

Maha(<https://www.mahasbrunch.com/>), Souk (<http://souktabule.com/>)and The Federal. (<https://thefed.ca/>).

**Travel and books seem to go hand-in-hand. They can transport you to far-flung destination... what are some of your favourite books that relate back to travel for you?**

One of my favourite travel related books is *Kitchen Confidential*(<https://amzn.to/2WZABJy/>) by Anthony Bourdain. When I read that book, I immediately wanted to go to Tokyo to experience the food scene. I also loved *Eat, Pray, Love* (<https://amzn.to/2SMryfB>) by Elizabeth Gilbert. Her self-discovery while traveling the world, beautifully depicted Italy, India and Indonesia. I still need to check out India and Indonesia, but I ate my way through Italy this past November and enjoyed every moment.

**What was your first travel memory? Where did you go? How old were you?**

My first memory of travel was lying on the beach with my family in Varna, Romania when I was 5 years old.

**How did travel have an impact on your life growing up?**

Travel was a big part of my life. My mom instilled in us that the world is a big place and if you don't go and explore, you cannot pretend to know other people's culture and way of life. Every travel experience has opened my eyes and broadened my understanding of the world. To me travel, books and food are all intertwined. It's about storytelling. Chefs tell the story through their food, authors through words and travelers are lucky enough to have stories told to them through the food, culture, music, sights, language and people of the places they travel to. In my vision of the company I will one day have the opportunity to travel the world visiting our top hosts and attending brunches in every country. I feel lucky to be building a heart centered company that allows me to connect with people who love to read as much as I do.



Photo courtesy of Sarjoun Faour.

**What inspires you most when you travel?**

Stories and connections are what inspires me the most when I travel. I like to see how the other side of the world lives. When I travel, I like to explore every nook and cranny of the place. Learn about their history and culture. I love meeting new people and hearing their

stories as well. Of course, food always plays a big role and now I when I travel I find myself scouting great venues for BooknBrunch!

### **What spot in the world really surprised you?**

Halong Bay in Vietnam. I was not expecting the beauty and serenity of it.

### **What are you currently reading right now?**

I am a big fan of historical fiction and currently reading *The Girl They Left Behind* (<https://amzn.to/2TNiNij>) by Roxanne Veletzos. The novel starts in 1941 war-torn Bucharest and takes you through time to life behind the Iron Curtain during the Soviet Union occupation. It tackles the tension of life in the face of numerous bombings and political escapades but also tries to encompass the emotional drama of adoption. A family saga and love story.

### **Where was your most memorable brunch ever? Why was it so amazing?**

My most memorable brunch was at a local pho place in Hanoi, Vietnam. It was the best pho I have ever had. I loved the simplicity of the meal and getting to eat with the locals. Pho is most commonly eaten for breakfast in Vietnam.

### **What is your ultimate dream destination and why?**

My ultimate dream destination is to visit Japan. I am excited to learn about the Japanese culture and experience the food. I like the fact that you can go from a place like Tokyo with lots of tech, bright lights and busy city and step back in time visiting Kyoto where age old traditions and old temples surround you.

### **Three things you never travel without?**

1. *My Five-Minute Journal* (<https://amzn.to/2X1yfdA>). I never leave without it. I like to start and finish my day writing in it. It keeps me focused. I also take a book with me. If I don't have space in my suitcase, I will go to the local used book store and buy one.
2. My Uniqlo Ultra-Light jacket with a hood. The best waterproof, lightweight, warm jacket around. It rolls up into a mini sleeve that I use for lumbar support on the plane. You never know what the weather will do.
3. My skin care regimen. I have sensitive and acne prone skin. I take Graydon Foaming Face Wash and Graydon Green Cream everywhere I go.

### **Window seat or aisle?**

100% aisle seat. You get to have more space to stretch out, you do not bug anyone to go to the bathroom and you don't get the draft from the window.

### **What would you say your travel mantra is?**

"Go big or go home" Explore every aspect of the new destination because you never know if you will be back.

### **More From Travel & Style**

[Meet the Moteliers: The June Motel's April Brown and Sarah](http://www.travelandstyle.ca/meet-the-moteliers-the-june-motels-april-brown-and-sarah-sklash/)

[Sklash](http://www.travelandstyle.ca/meet-the-moteliers-the-june-motels-april-brown-and-sarah-sklash/) (<http://www.travelandstyle.ca/meet-the-moteliers-the-june-motels-april-brown-and-sarah-sklash/>).

[5 Reasons to Carry-On Your Luggage](#)