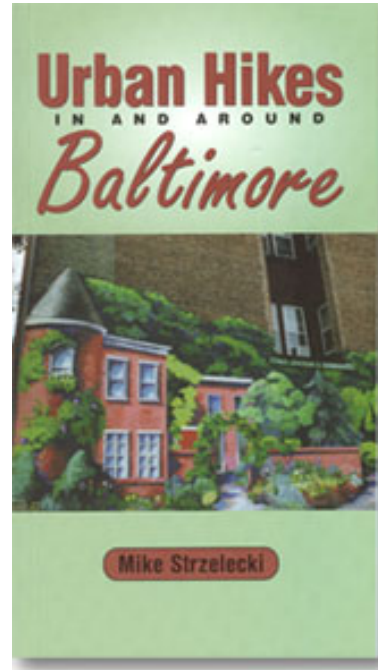


Urban Hikes In and Around Baltimore

Mike Strzelecki

From the Introduction

Urban Hikes In and Around Baltimore is the result of two very different people entering my life a few years ago. One was Bruce Chatwin, the British travel writer and world wanderer. While browsing a used book store, I picked up a beaten and dog-eared copy of Chatwin's masterpiece, *In Patagonia*, which tells of his journey through Argentina, the "uttermost part of the earth." It was the most beautifully written and engaging piece of travel literature I ever laid eyes on. Chatwin's stylish and well-chiseled prose inspired me to put pen to paper, and his persistent infatuation with the concept of nomadism and exploration unleashed in me a desire to rove.



Then along came my daughter Zi Li, whom we adopted from China in 1997 when she was five months of age. Zi Li entered my life at a time when I was running long distances, logging many miles on mountain trails, country roads, and city streets. As the diligent parent of any infant knows, time-consuming personal hobbies like distance running defer to more mundane child-rearing chores such as diaper-changing and lunch-packing. So instead of running the streets of Baltimore, I downshifted to a walking pace and included Zi Li on my back in a child carrier. We hiked two, sometimes three times a week, each time covering five to fifteen miles through the Baltimore area's interesting neighborhoods. We called our treks "walkabouts." And what we discovered was a fascinating city with an unusual and rich suffusion of character, architecture, culture, and ethnicity. A city ripe for hiking.

Urban Hikes In and Around Baltimore is the end product of all those walkabouts with Zi Li. It's a compendium of our favorite hikes. It features ten urban treks ranging in distance from three to over eight miles. They are through neighborhoods that are interesting, safe, and culturally rich. For each hike I provide commentary on natural and cultural history, geography, architecture, and attractions; detailed hiking directions; and a map.