

# Planning a Trip? Think SCBWI!

BY LINDA E. MARSHALL

RESERVATIONS MADE, CLOTHES set, books-to-read selected. You're ready for your trip. Will you bring along your novel-in-progress, a short story, illustrations, or ideas for a picture book? Or perhaps you'll use your trip to relax, to quietly gather ideas? Either way, you might want to add SCBWI to your travel plans. *Say again?*

Think about this: Wherever you go, whatever you do, there's a chance you'll be near another SCBWI member. Check the directory. You'll find SCBWI members and events around the globe. And that could be useful.

To help understand why, here's an example: I live on the East Coast and one of my daughters (with her husband and two adorable granddaughters) lives on the West Coast. When I visit, it's usually for a week or more. Sure, I can bake cookies with the kids, shop, visit their schools and help in classrooms. But because it's nice to have my own life, too, I contacted the regional SCBWI chapter. Now when I visit, I have a community of children's writers and illustrators as well as occasional events to attend.

A friend of mine, a snowbird, heads to Florida each winter. There, she participates in Miami SCBWI events. As with my west coast experience, she, too, gains a different perspective from being with other writers in a different part of the country.

In addition to having fifty-one chapters in the US, the SCBWI community is international. There are chapters in: Australia, Belgium, British Isles, Canada, Caribbean, France, Germany/Austria, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, as well as International Central and Bologna Book Fair Chapters. Why is this useful? Read on for more examples.

Several years ago, I was visiting a cousin in Paris when a volcano in Iceland erupted, causing flight cancellations around the world. I was forced (forced, I tell you!) to extend my stay in Paris for (gasp!) an additional week. Determined to settle in, I logged onto the SCBWI website and messaged members in Paris. Soon I received an invitation to a warm, welcoming SCBWI *bienvenue*—complete with French wine, *bien sûr!*

More recently, while preparing for a trip to Italy, I recalled that the illustrator of my first picture book lives in Rome. I contacted her, asking if we might meet. She wanted to but was embarrassed by her lack of English and feared communication would be difficult, if not impossible. And, *mamma mia!* My Italian was almost non-existent. What to do? I logged onto [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org), searched for members in Rome and “met” an



American SCBWI member living in Rome who facilitated a meeting between author and illustrator—and translated for us, too. Once again, it was SCBWI to the rescue!

So the next time you're planning a trip, consider your bags, books, projects and SCBWI. As the website states, “As a member of SCBWI you are always welcome at any other region's events around the world. This means wherever you are, there will be fellow children's book writers and illustrators there to greet you!”

*Bon Voyage!*

*Cultural anthropologist-turned-children's writer, Linda E. Marshall is the author of picture books, early chapter and middle grade novels. Her most recent picture book, The Passover Lamb (Random House, 2013) was honored with a Sydney Taylor Notable Award for 2014. Linda's meeting in Rome with Francesca Assirelli, illustrator of Linda's first picture book, inspired Linda to write a second book, Talia and the Very YUM! Kippor, forthcoming with KarBen/Lerner, again illustrated by Francesca Assirelli. Linda's website is [www.lindamarshall.com](http://www.lindamarshall.com).*