

# THE KNITTING road trip

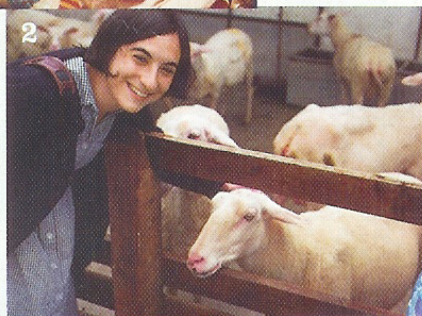
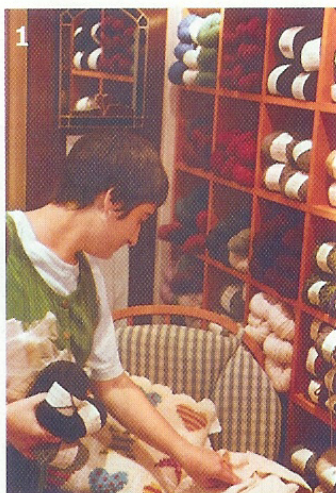
By Joanne Seiff

When you're as obsessed with knitting and fiber as I am, you never really take a vacation from yarn. Trips throughout the United States and beyond—including Australia, England, Iceland, and Ireland—are opportunities to see yarn shops, farms, carding mills, even B&Bs with sheep. There's no telling how far I'll travel to see some really good yarn.

Luckily, my husband accepted—and even shared in—my fiber-hunting habits early in our relationship. Before we were married, he bought me the last ten balls of yarn from a shop going out of business in Cambridge, England, not realizing that was not enough yarn for his XXL sweater. After searching for matching yarn for a year, Lady Luck dropped me in a shop in Oxford, England—and what did I find in the sale bin? Several balls of the exact yarn in the same dye lot!

I knew my husband was the right traveling buddy for me when he made a cheerful detour on our honeymoon to take us to “The Big Sheep” in Devon. It's a sheep amusement park, with sheep races, sheep shearing, spinning, cheese making, and everything else sheep. I found a gorgeous fleece and mailed it home. The cost of the fleece was low, the shipping outrageous, but the memory of that day? Priceless.

Later in our marriage, my husband took a summer course in Sante Fe, New Mexico, giving me another chance to see great fiber. Gorgeous rugs, ancient



textile techniques, and the lusciousness of Navajo-Churro wool greeted me at the farmer's market. A visit to LaLana Wools in Taos—famous for its celebrity clientele (I might have touched yarn felt by Goldie Hawn or Julia Roberts!)—had me practically drooling on the one-of-a-kind naturally dyed skeins.

There is no reason to take a long car trip unless you can knit (assuming you're not driving, of course) and take knit stops along the way. We once stopped in Raphine, Virginia, at Orchardside Yarn Shop and nearly stayed. Orchardside, in business for 35 years, comes complete with a “Pick Your Own” berry farm, an annual festival, and resident dog. I left the shop with needles and a variety of gorgeous mismatched skeins. I

planned a winter hat...but to this day, I have just the skeins to recall Raphine's bucolic views.

On every trip, I carry an extra duffle—the “just in case” bag—which comes home filled with fiber goodies. After all, what fun would a trip be without a souvenir bag of yarn to cherish on the way home? What? Doesn't everyone do this?

*Joanne Seiff is a writer and knitwear designer. Learn more about her forthcoming book and check out her designs and articles at her Web site: <http://www.joanneseiff.com>.*

1. Joanne finds the yarn that will finish her husband's sweater at this Rowan shop in Oxford, England.
2. She visits with the sheep at “The Big Sheep” in Devon, England.
3. In 2004, she saw these gorgeous handknits, made by retirees, for sale in Auckland, New Zealand.