

Author Ann Miller enjoys sharing her experiences about traveling and learning about other cultures with children

# Traveling

## with Author Ann Miller

Sugar Land author takes children on a reading adventure with book series about Captain Bret, the Jet  
*Written by Jennifer Heath*



Photo by Jason Lehecka

In the past decade, children's book author Ann Miller has traveled to more than 20 countries. Her passport has been stamped from one ocean to the next, with visits to France, Italy, Egypt, and Greece. "So many kids don't get the opportunity to travel outside the U.S. into other countries," Miller says. "I thought, what about taking my pictures and writing the storyline to educate kids about countries around the world?" So in 2009, she began penning a children's book series about Captain Bret, the Jet, a friendly airplane that embarks on exciting adventures around the world.

## A Jet Is Born

Miller has always loved visiting different countries, and reading has been a passion of hers for as long as she can remember. After chatting with a bookshop owner about children's books and traveling, she realized she had found her market. "I just have a passion for travel - I love, love, love to travel!" she shares. "There's hundreds, probably thousands of books on travel, but I wanted to do something unique. I talked to a bookstore and found out they didn't have a lot of children's books about traveling."

With that, the idea for Captain Bret, the Jet was born. The first book in the series takes readers on an adventure throughout Germany's landmarks, castles, and medieval towns, among other interesting destinations. The book also includes learning activities, Miller's own personal photos, a passport, and a passport stamp to mark each reader's journey through Europe. "I wanted to come up with a character that would get us to additional countries," Miller recalls. "In my books, I try to use names of my family members, too. I tried different combinations to come up with something. I have a nephew who's named Bret, and I added the "Captain" and "Jet," and it worked."

Miller knew she wanted a high-quality book, with rich, vivid pictures and glossy paper. She ultimately wanted a product that was entertaining to children, appealing to parents to buy, and would still make her proud. "I combined photos with entertaining characters, and that became Captain Bret and his friends," says Miller. "You have to have boats, planes, and trains to help get around in the countries, and those are all his friends."

## The Road to Being Published

After the arduous process of penning a novel, many authors find getting published to be even more of a challenge. Miller did not agree with the publishing houses about the changes they requested for her book. So after much persistence and hard work, she realized that the best way to get her book published the way she wanted was to do it herself.

"I tried several different routes to getting published, and it was very, very difficult," recalls Miller. "I wanted my books to look great when I released them, so I ended up self-publishing to get everything I wanted. It was not an easy process."

## Touring the World

With the success of the first book, Miller began adding to the Captain Bret collection. She had the airplane and his friends

then travel through Italy, Greece, France, and Israel. "I didn't think the books would really take off," Miller says. "I didn't know what to expect. I set a goal for myself, and then just kind of moved in that direction."

Throughout the books, Captain Bret discovers with his friends the beauty and rich history of the countries they visit. Each book helps readers both young and old learn about the landscape, culture, landmarks, and history of the countries they visit. "Adults are reading the books, too," says Miller. "I know one lady who bought eight of the Germany books for all of her German friends. They loved the pictures, too."

Captain Bret hasn't put down his pilot's license yet. Miller has planned trips to Australia and the Czech Republic, so fans of the series can expect more exciting adventures to come.

## Flying into Schools

Miller has lived in Sugar Land with her family for more than 15 years and she wanted to give back to the community that has done so much for her. As a result she began offering free author readings of her books to schools in the area.

"At my very first school, 700 kids all started shouting for Captain Bret, the Jet," Miller says. "They were yelling it out at the top of their lungs. At another school, when I went into their library, there was a line of kids waiting to check out my books. My heart melted. I was making an impact."

Miller is continually finding ways to give back to her community. When she visits schools, she usually donates copies of her books to the library. "A lot of schools today don't have the budget, bless their hearts, and I have a very soft spot in my heart for schools and children," she says. "You gain so much more when they're there and learning about countries around the world. It's so worthwhile." **SLM**

*JENNIFER HEATH'S sons Landry and Ryan love reading books - usually the same ones over and over and over again.*

## Catch Captain Bret, the Jet's Other Adventures

- ★ Christmas Around the World
- ★ Journey to the Holy Land – Israel
- ★ Adventures in France
- ★ Adventures in Greece
- ★ Adventures in Italy
- ★ Adventures in Germany
- ★ Now Boarding to Egypt (ebook)

Ebooks coming soon:

- ★ Howdy Y'all: A Texas Road Trip with Tex and Friends
- ★ ABCs of Texas

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