

I've Been Everywhere

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While copyright might not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think about taking a travel adventure, copyright and adventure do go hand in hand. Many songwriters write about the incredible places they've been or want to visit. My ever-expanding travel-inspired playlist includes 130 songs and clocks in at 8 hours and 13 minutes. A variety of artists—John Denver, Jimmy Buffett, Katy Perry, George Strait, Neil Diamond, Will Smith, Miley Cyrus, Elvis Presley, Tony Bennett, Beatles, Paul Simon, Ed Sheeran, Wiz Khalifa, The Clash, Jonas Brothers, Shakira, and so many more—make up my list. These songs bring back memories of past adventures and inspire new ones.

One song, “I’ve Been Everywhere,” mentions more places than any other—nearly 100. My playlist has Johnny Cash’s version, which he recorded in 1996 with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers backing him. But it’s not the original. In fact, the North American version he recorded isn’t even the original version of the song. Australian songwriter Geoff Mack first wrote the song in 1959. Singer Lucky Star recorded that version listing Australian towns in 1962, and it peaked at number one on the charts in Sydney.

The same year, Mack’s music publisher offered the song to Canadian-born country musician Hank Snow. Snow thought the song could be a hit in Canadian and American markets if the places listed were adapted to North America. Mack’s publisher gave him a North American atlas and urged him to rewrite the song mentioning places on the continent. His new version included several Central and South American locations as well, and Snow’s recording hit number one on the U.S. country charts.

Other artists covered the North American version, notably Asleep at the Wheel, The Statler Brothers, Willie Nelson, and Kris Kristofferson. Bruce Springsteen sampled the song in “Light of Day” in his 1999–2000 reunion tour, and Rihanna’s hit “Where Have You Been” credits Mack as one of the songwriters, as the song’s lyrics interpolate “I’ve Been Everywhere.”

Singers and songwriters have adapted the song to other regions of the world. Australian singer Rolf Harris wrote a version with English and Scottish locations, and New Zealand’s John Grenell wrote one with his country’s locations. Lucky Star recorded another version with Great Britain and Ireland locations. He released an EP that included that version plus the North American, New Zealand, and Australian versions. Additional versions include locations in the Czech Republic, Finland, and Germany, and several versions include worldwide locations.

Commercials for hotels, airlines, tires, potato chips, and coffee shops have used versions of the song, as have movies, television, and radio. *The Simpsons* episode “Mobile Homer” included a version listing many of the fictional towns in the series. British comedian and actor John Finnemore performed a version listing only places in Dorset County, England, on the BBC radio comedy panel game *I’m Sorry I Haven’t a Clue*.

“I’ve Been Everywhere” is one of the many songs that inspire me to travel. So far, I’ve been to twenty places in the North American version, and thanks to Mack’s lyrics, I plan to visit many more. [C](#)

