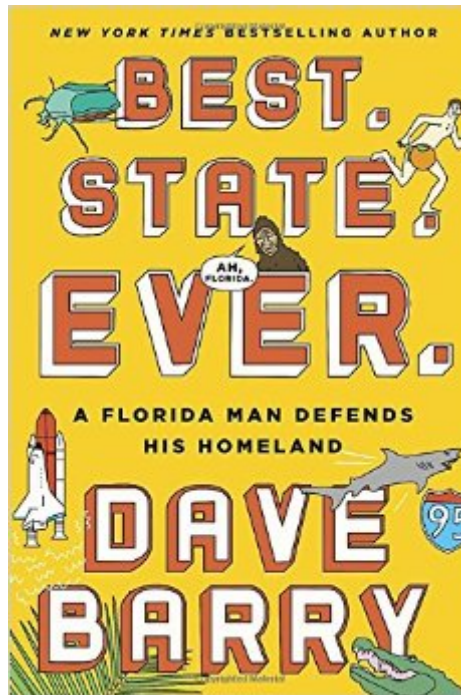


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# Best. State. Ever.: A Florida Man Defends His Homeland



## Synopsis

A brilliantly funny exploration of the Sunshine State from the man who knows it best: Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times "bestselling author Dave Barry. " We never know what will happen next in Florida. We know only that, any minute now, something will. Every few months, Dave Barry gets a call from some media person wanting to know, "What the hell is wrong with Florida?" Somehow, the state has acquired an image as a subtropical festival of stupid, and as a loyal Floridian, Dave begs to differ. Sure, there was the 2000 election. And people seem to take their pants off for no good reason. And it has flying insects the size of LeBron James. But it is a great state, and Dave is going to tell you why. Join him as he celebrates Florida from Key West at the bottom to whatever it is that's at the top, from the Sunshine State's earliest history to the fun-fair of weirdness that it is today. It's the most hilarious book yet from the funniest damn writer in the whole country (Carl Hiaasen, and he should know). By the end, you'll have to admit that whatever else you might think about Florida "you can never say it's boring.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are familiar with Dave Barry's humor, then you have a good idea what to expect from this book. As someone who has been a fan of his for decades, I was expecting some familiar jokes and phrasing, but Barry seems to have upped his game since the last book of his that I read. The turns of phrase and juxtapositions of thought (serious to absurd) are still there, but they feel more incisive and sharper than the past. It's possible that the reason for this is that his focus on something as concrete as a state and all of the facts that relate to it allow him to finely tune his thoughts rather

than write about a broader, more ambiguous topic. Whatever it is, it works quite well. I think that this book may also just be a tad sharper and less goofy than some of his other works. There seems to be less fear in making fun of institutions or angering certain entities. This makes for better humor, but I will say that Barry manages not to be mean-spirited or cruel in his words. In many cases, he's mocking himself or the things he personally loves as much as things he mock plays in an adversarial position to his interests. I think the fact that he genuinely has affinity for his chosen state allows him to talk about it humorously with a good deal more charm than someone who is looking to adopt a more superior take when speaking humorously. This is such an easy read that you can sail through it pretty quickly, but I tried to string it out a bit to savor it. I enjoyed this book immensely and found it funny, though it probably doesn't hurt that Barry's wit and humor are already something I enjoy. If you've read his columns and liked his material before, you won't be disappointed by this offering.

4.5 stars Dave Barry is hilarious. In *Best. State. Ever.*, he focuses his brilliant comedic mind on his home state of thirty years, Florida. In order to write this book, he travels around the state, sometimes alone and at other times with a friend, seeking out Florida's most interesting locales. As the book begins, Barry states that he believes Florida has gotten a bad rap ever since the 2000 election and the whole "hanging chad" incident. As a result, he decided to write this book to help change people's opinions about Florida by taking readers to the various highlights of the state. My favorite story by far was the one about Cassadaga, a town known for its ghosts and spiritual encounters with the nickname *The Psychic Capital of the World*. The way Barry relays his visit to that town from the hotel in which he stayed to the two psychics he visited to the spirits that visited his room is a riot. His visit to Judy the medium is hysterical, and his subsequent visit to Rev. Janet, the psychic, is equally funny especially as he continues to reference her predictions regarding his dog and mother. I also enjoyed *The Villages*, his essay about the huge retirement community in Florida, and *Weeki Wachee and Spongeorama*, the section he wrote about an amusement park with swimming mermaids that preceded Disney World and is still trapped in the 1950s and Tarpon Springs, the U.S. Sponge Capital. The photos included by Barry really enhance his stories. It was great fun to see the notes the psychic gave him, pictures of the various eccentric individuals he met, the hotel in Cassadaga, and the houses at *The Villages*. The other great addition to the book is his rating system using *Mold-A-Matic* machines. After encountering the machines at various tourist stops (usually in non-working order), he adopts a rating scale for each place he visits and includes a graphic with the proper number of *Mold-A-Matic*

machines based on his rating for that venue. It was very clever. I highly recommend Best. State. Ever. Thanks to NetGalley and G.P. Putnam's Sons for this advance copy in exchange for an honest review.

Love me some Dave Barry! Don't read this book all at once; each chapter stands on its own. After the opening set piece (which is worth the price of the book right there), Mr. Barry travels his home state to visit the quirky places that visitors to Florida rarely encounter -- Spongeorama, Skunk Ape headquarters, Gatorland, even The Villages, a well-known retirement community in which dancing, imbibing and other "recreations" rule the day. I think my favorite chapter in the book is "Lock and Load Miami," where he recounts the day he and a cousin go to a shooting range that specializes in machine guns. They're like kids in a candy store: "When Nick explains a gun to me, I'm nodding thoughtfully, but my brain is screaming, OHMIGOD I'M ABOUT TO SHOOT A MACHINE GUN OHMIGOD I'M ABOUT TO SHOOT A MACHINE GUN..." Unlike other writers who specialize in this genre of travel writing -- I don't even know what you call it -- Mr. Barry never makes fun of people, no matter how bizarre their passions or personalities. His curiosity knows no bounds and his eye for the absurd never dims. Writers like Bill Bryson are too quickly bored and become grumpy in their travels. They make subtle fun of their subjects, to make sure the reader gets how much more sophisticated they are than these common mortals. But even in his dedication to the book, Mr. Barry aligns himself with the wacky and wonderful people he meets in his travels: "To my fellow Floridians: Don't ever sober up." It looks like St. Martin's Press had the same idea as Mr. Barry's publisher. They've recently published Craig Pittman's book, *Oh, Florida!: How America's Weirdest State Influences the Rest of the Country*. It looks like another fun read!

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