

A Starter Kit for Drifters: Five steps to a drift or *dérive*

1. Knowing why.

It's not a stroll in the park, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Drifts are for opening up the world, clearing eyes and peeling away the layers of spectacle, deception and that strange "hiddenness in plain sight" that coats the everyday.

The disruptions that set a drift or *dérive* apart from other kinds of walk are there to shake up things (and you) so that rather than wandering ankle deep through the sediment of discarded images and illusions, you can explore the whole whirling snowglobe.

2. Knowing where.

You can drift anywhere. But to begin with, start somewhere you know well, next to somewhere you don't. Start in the familiar and straightaway head off into the unknown. Remember, you don't have to get anywhere, there isn't a set destination. It's all about the journey.

Generally, keep out of shops, museums, art galleries. Go to places you wouldn't normally visit – courtrooms, waste tips, fairgrounds, industrial estates, morgues, stadium car parks, ornamental gardens, bad zoos. Avoid suburbia and countryside on a first drift. Slip down alleys, chase any intriguing detail, follow instincts not maps.

3. Knowing who.

While drifting alone is fine, start with a least one other. Above six or seven you'll probably split into smaller groups. Even if you organised the meeting place and the time and maybe a starting idea, you don't need to be in charge. Let the group develop its own instincts and make its own discoveries. Drifts do not have guides or leaders. Remember, your focus is on the place you're passing through, let it shift from self and others for a while – that leaves a space for 'our (dis)placed selves'. Drift with friends, with friends of friends. The 'drifting group' should be a web of friendship and acquaintance.

You do not need to be a history buff or an architectural boffin to make mythogeography. In fact, experts may have to be tamed (distracted, really) and prevented from turning drifts into guided tours. Any group of people will have different skills, stories and sensitivities that can be shared in teasing out the mythogeography of the journey.

4. Knowing how.

You need to free yourselves from your usual walking habits. Maybe start at a time that is odd for you – 4.30am, 9.15pm, noon... Make sure you have at least half a day – the drift is not a stroll. Find a way to get you off your beaten tracks. Jump on any bus at random and get off at the 7th stop. Order a cab, close your eyes and ask the driver to drop you “somewhere anonymous”.

Start with some kind of theme – look for traces of rebellion or snuffed-out difference, for wormholes, for powerful symbols, for voids, for where things are interwoven. If the drift diverts you onto another theme, that’s fine. The drift may begin to tell a story and you can look out for things that will develop the narrative. You might set out to collect things or take things to leave as memorials or surprises or plan to seek particular types of place: the tops and bottoms of buildings, rooms without windows.

5. Knowing what.

Sensible shoes, maybe – needs vary. Maybe something to leave behind. Small torch. Some chalk. Notebook and pen. Camera. Water. Food to pass round. Something a little luxurious or unusual – a treat. Not maps usually. You’ll notice what you miss the first time, so take it on the second.

Après dérive: make some memento of your drift to share with your fellow drifters or show to others. They may become your next companions.

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- *This Starter Kit is taken from www.mythogeography.com*
 - *Visit the website to learn more about drifting and mythogeography. There are texts, images, music, stories and ideas to explore.*
 - *The website has details of Phil Smith’s new book **Mythogeography: A Guide to Walking Sideways**.*
 - *See also the site’s **MythoArchive** for accounts of drifts undertaken by Phil and others.*

