Detectives Around the World

Majorca, Spain
Inspector Enrique Alvarez series

DEATH TAKES TIME by Roderic Jeffries
M JEF
An Englishwoman dies in a fall from her terrace while visiting the South of France. The police suspect foul play, but their only evidence is a rental car from Majorca. Enter the inspector who manages to solve the case in spite of his bossy sister-in-law and demanding superior. The brandy-loving Alvarez is low key and a believer in taking it easy. The plot moves at a brisk clip (despite the inspector's lethargic bent). Delving into this series will make you want to visit Majorca.

Bath, England
Peter Diamond series

THE LAST DETECTIVE by Peter Lovesey
M LOV
The body of a woman is found floating in a reservoir and Peter Diamond is charged with not only proving a woman accused of the crime innocent but finding the source of two Jane Austen letters along the way. Lovesey is famous for great puzzles, dry wit and interesting character development. He is a maverick who manages to get his fellow officers to aide him despite their misgivings.
STRIP JACK by Ian Rankin
M RAN
When much-loved politician Gregor Jack is discovered in a midnight raid on a discreet brothel, a surprising number of journalists are on hand—a situation that endangers Jack's political future. Jack's wealthy wife Elizabeth, a noted partygoer whose friends are equally well-heeled and hedonistic, can't be found. Her body is soon pulled from a nearby river, a fatality mirroring the recent murder of another, unidentified, woman. A drunk who brags of the first killing gives a false address and vanishes north of the city. Meanwhile Edinburgh Detective Inspector John Rebus, trying to trace a cache of valuable stolen books, finds himself talking again to the late Elizabeth's coterie of party friends. Rankin creates a living, breathing world in which his weary protagonist tackles his cases while involved in the intricacies of the day-to-day: pints and hangovers, stumbling romance, wet weather, damp clothes, tricky superiors and wide-eyed subordinates. – Publishers Weekly

IN THE WOODS by Tana French
M FRE
Much more than a gripping police procedural, Tana French's debut novel offers readers a stunning look into the dark recesses of the human heart and a brooding reflection on evils that are sometimes just a breath away. As a newly anointed murder squad detective in Dublin, Ireland, Rob Ryan solves mysteries for a living. Yet only a handful of people know that a generation earlier Ryan himself stood at the center of one of the most tantalizing unsolved cases in the recent annals of Irish crime.
Galway, Ireland
Jack Taylor series

THE GUARDS by Ken Bruen
M BRU
Still stinging from his unceremonious ouster from the Garda Siochana (Ireland’s police force) and staring at the world through the smoky bottom of his beer mug, Jack Taylor is stuck in Galway with nothing to look forward to. In his sober moments Jack aspires to become Ireland’s best private investigator but in truth Jack’s memories of the past are cutting deep into his soul and his prospects for the future seem nonexistent. Nonexistent, that is, until a dazzling woman walks into the bar with a strange request and a rumor about Jack’s talent for finding things. Odds are he won’t be able to climb off his barstool long enough to get involved with his radiant new client, but when he surprises himself by getting hired, Jack has little idea of what he’s getting into. Stark, violent, sharp, and funny, The Guards is an exceptional novel.

Venice, Italy
Commissario Guido Brunetti series

DEATH AT LA FENICE by Donna Leon
M LEO
Beautiful and serene, Venice is a city almost devoid of crime. That is little comfort to Maestro Helmut Wellauer, a world-renowned conductor whose intermission refreshment comes one night with a little something extra in it, namely, cyanide. For Guido Brunetti, vice-commissario of police and detective genius, finding a suspect isn’t a problem as he narrows the large group of the victim’s enemies down to one. The inspector’s family life plays a major role in this series giving us a glimpse into what it must be like to live in this wondrous city of canals.
Vigata, Sicily
Inspector Montalbano series

THE TERRA-COTTA DOG by Andrea Camilleri
M CAM
Andrea Camilleri’s Inspector Montalbano has garnered millions of fans worldwide with his sardonic take on the Sicilian life he describes in his imaginary city. His latest case begins with a mysterious tête à tête with a Mafioso, some inexplicably abandoned loot from a supermarket heist, and an illegal arms cache in a mountain cave. Montalbano solves this old crime with sly wit and a keen understanding of human nature. He is a detective whose earthiness, compassion, and imagination make him totally irresistible.

South of France
Benoit Courreges series

THE CROWDED GRAVE by Martin Walker
M WAL
Meet Benoît Courrèges, aka Bruno, a policeman working in a small village in the South of France. It’s spring in the idyllic village of St. Denis and for Bruno that means lamb stews, bottles of his beloved Pomerol wine, morning walks with his hound, Gigi, and a new crime to solve. When a local archaeological team turns up a corpse with a watch on its wrist and a bullet in its head it’s up to him to solve the case, a very complicated one indeed.
MAIGRET’S REVOLVER by Georges Simenon
M SIM
One day a nervous young man appears at Madame Maigret’s home while the inspector is at work and steals his revolver. The resulting chase is vintage Simenon rich in texture and suspense. The author, born in Belgium in 1903 has written over a hundred novels and short stories about Maigret, the police investigator known everywhere for his compassionate understanding of those accused of murder.

Dordogne, France
Mara Dunn series

DEADLY SLIPPER by Michelle Wan
M WAN, M.
Nearly twenty years have passed since Mara Dunn’s sister Bedie, an orchid enthusiast, disappeared while on a hiking holiday in southwestern France. Mara remains determined to find out what happened but her only real clues are pictures of wild orchids, including a mysterious new species called ‘Lady’s Slipper’, found in Bedie’s camera. Rich in lush descriptions of the Dordogne, and laden with savory details of French cooking, Deadly Slipper is full of surprising twists and turns.
Berlin, Germany (pre war)
Hannah Vogel series

A TRACE OF SMOKE by Rebecca Cantrell
M CAN
Even though hardened crime reporter Hannah Vogel knows all too well how tough it is to survive in 1931 Berlin, she is devastated when she sees a photograph of her brother’s body posted in the Hall of the Unnamed Dead. Her brother Ernst was a cross-dressing lounge singer at a seedy nightclub, a man of many secrets. Undaunted, Hannah delves into the city’s dark underbelly to flush out his murderer, but the arrival of a five-year-old orphan on her doorstep complicates matters. The endearing Anton claims that Hannah is his mother and that her dead brother Ernst is his father.

Berlin, Germany (post war)
Bernie Gunther series

THE ONE FROM THE OTHER by Philip Kerr
F KER
Set in 1949, Kerr’s excellent fourth novel finds the erstwhile PI Bernie Gunther managing a failing hotel about a mile from the site of the Dachau concentration camp. After the death of his wife, Kirsten he calls it quits and opens a private detective agency. A series of Nazi war criminal cases sets Bernie on a course that becomes increasingly complicated until he’s beaten to a near pulp, and is sent to a mysterious private estate to recover. There he’s drawn into a nightmare involving American occupation and the CIA, and soon his life hangs in the balance. Kerr’s stylish noir writing makes every page a joy to read. Perfectly plotted, the book builds to a satisfying conclusion.
Quebec Province, Canada
Three Pines series

STILL LIFE by Louise Penny
M PEN, LARGE PRINT, OVERDRIVE EBOOK, HOOPLA AUDIOBOOK
Still Life is the first of this engaging cozy mystery series featuring Armand Gamache of the Surêté du Québec and his team of investigators. In this story he is called to the scene of a suspicious death in a rural village south of Montreal. Jane Neal, a local fixture in the tiny hamlet of Three Pines has been found dead in the woods. The locals are certain it’s a tragic hunting accident and nothing more, but Gamache smells something foul in these remote woods, and is soon certain that Jane Neal died at the hands of someone much more sinister than a careless bowhunter.

Aegean Islands, Greece
Chief Inspector Andreas Kalidis

MURDER IN MYKONOS by Jeffrey Siger
M SIG
A young woman on holiday to Mykonos, the most famous of Grecian Aegean Cycladic islands, simply disappears off the face of the earth and no one notices. That changes when a body turns up under the floor of a remote mountain church. The island’s new police chief, the young, politically incorrect, former Athens homicide detective Andreas Kalidis shows up and finds bodies, bones, and suspects almost everywhere. Teamed with the local homicide chief, Andreas tries to find the killer before the media can destroy the island’s image with a barrage of world-wide attention on a mystery that’s haunted Mykonos undetected for decades.
Botswana, Africa
No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency series

THE NO. 1 LADIES DETECTIVE AGENCY by Alexander McCall Smith
M MCC
This collection of vignettes disguised as a novel is a great read. The main character is a gentle African woman, Precious Ramotswe, who decides to be a detective in order to help other people. She is a delightful character, combining humor with a big heart. Agency isn't like any other detective series; the characters are much more developed and the "mysteries" aren't the usual murders, whether cozy or hard-boiled. If you'd like a sweet trip to another culture, calmer and gentler than ours, this series does just that.

Beijing, China
China Thriller series

THE FOURTH SACRIFICE by Peter May
M MAY
Margaret Campbell has finally decided to leave Beijing and return home to the States. She had first come to Beijing to conduct a seminar on her specialty, forensic pathology, for the city police. The invitation turned out to be more than she had expected; she was thrust into the search for a murderer. This is how she met and fell in love with the Beijing police detective Li Yan. Although they began as enemies, the attraction between them was overwhelming until personal tragedies pulled them apart. Now the police need an answer to a series of gruesome murders and the pair are called in to investigate. All the victims were killed in what looks like ritual sacrifices. This second book in the China Thriller series is a testament to Peter May's ability to write captivating characters that move stealthily through Beijing's vibrant and dangerous setting.
Melbourne, Australia
Hal Challis series

THE DRAGON MAN by Garry Disher
M DIS
This award-winning author gives us a serial killer who is on the loose in a small
Australian town. Detective Hal Challis has to contend with the editor of a local
newspaper who undermines his investigation at every turn and also with his wife
who is being held in a sanitarium for attempted murder. In this series debut
Challis finds his Christmas season complicated by the killer who arrives with the
usual tourists arriving at this coastal peninsula near Melbourne. A loner, he must
work with his team who are vividly portrayed as a varied bunch. This novel's
character-driven pace moves along at a good clip as the cops become mired
in red herrings, stumble over new information in unlikely places and keep on top
of the normal mayhem.

North Korea
Inspector O series

A CORPSE IN THE KORYO by James Church
M CHU
Inspector O, a North Korean state police officer, is given an unusual assignment:
go to a certain part of a certain road at dawn and photograph a certain
vehicle. Little does he suspect that this seemingly inconsequential task will
escalate into a case that will lead him to risk his job and his life. The author, a
veteran intelligence officer, has intimate knowledge of Asian life and politics,
and it shows. He gives the North Korea setting a feeling of palpable reality,
depicting the nature of daily life under a totalitarian government not just with
broad socio-political descriptions but also with specific everyday details.
Inspector O is completely believable and sympathetic, a working cop who isn't
entirely sure he believes in the things his government tells him to. The writing is
superb and well above the level usually associated with a first novel.