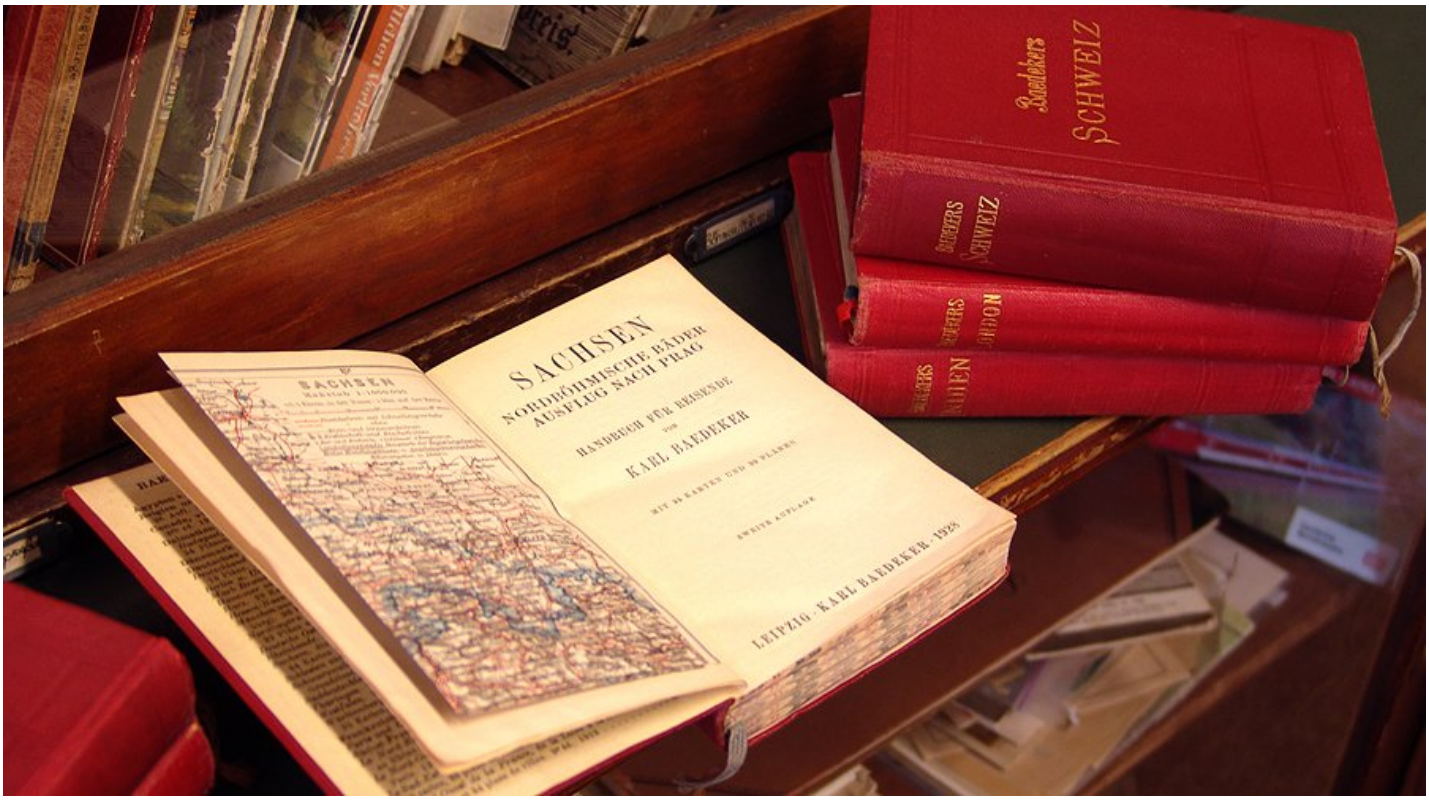
CLASSIC DRIVER

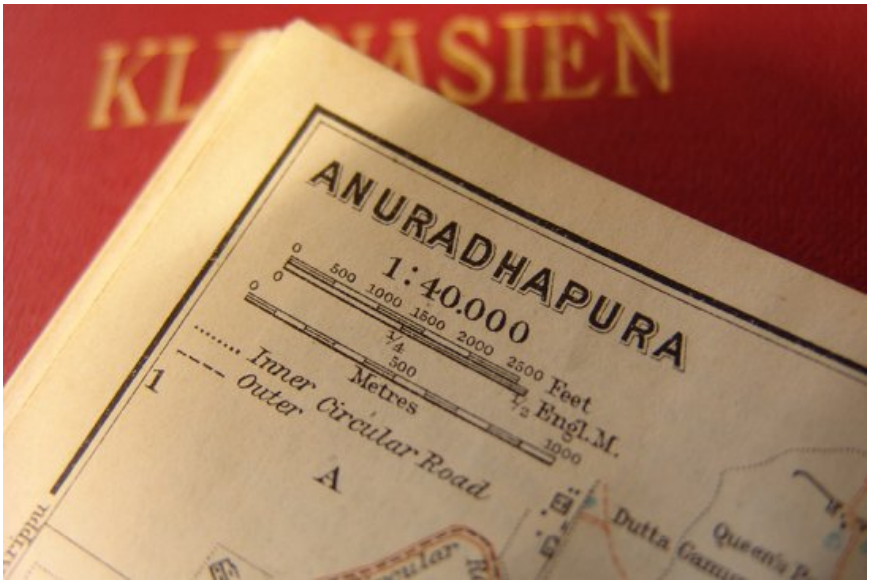
Have Baedeker, will travel

Lead
We have all become so used to Apps running on mobile phones the size of a cigarette case, offering encyclopaedic knowledge of every conceivable subject, that the good old guide book, well-thumbed with cryptic annotations such as ‘pastry’, or ‘partridges’ in the margin, is almost a thing of the past.

It might well be, but, like cigarette cases, it can also be a thing of beauty and often very collectable. Alongside the famous French *Guide Michelin*, the similarly red-bound travel books from German publisher Baedeker set the standard in their day for thoroughness, entertaining writing and the ability to prompt travellers to discover pastures new.

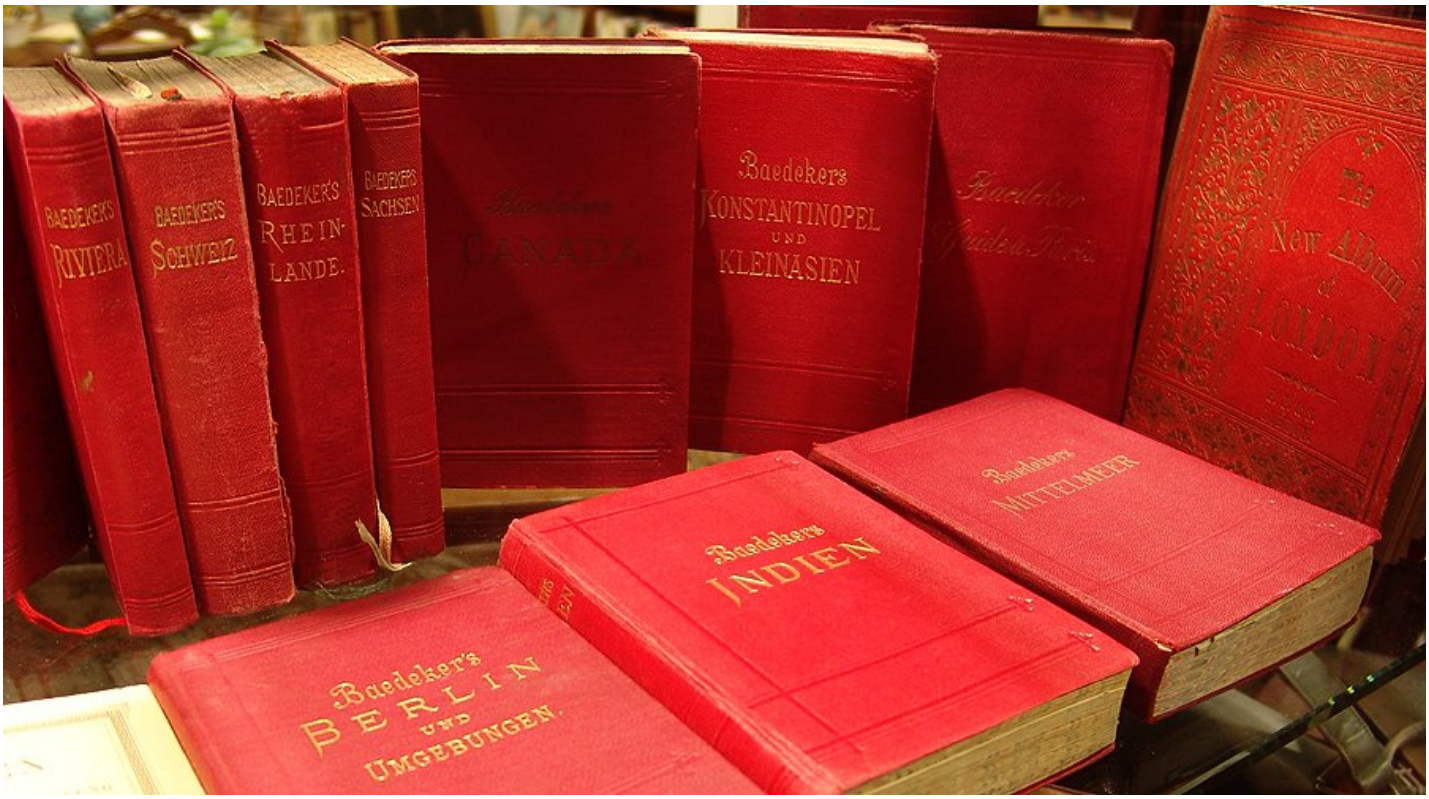
Born into a family of printers in 1801, Karl Baedeker started his publishing company in Koblenz in 1827. With the purchase of another company in 1832, the rival’s work *Rheinreise von Mainz bis Köln* (travelling on the Rhine from Mainz to Cologne) formed the basis of the very first in a series of guides that were to assist travellers worldwide from then until the present day.

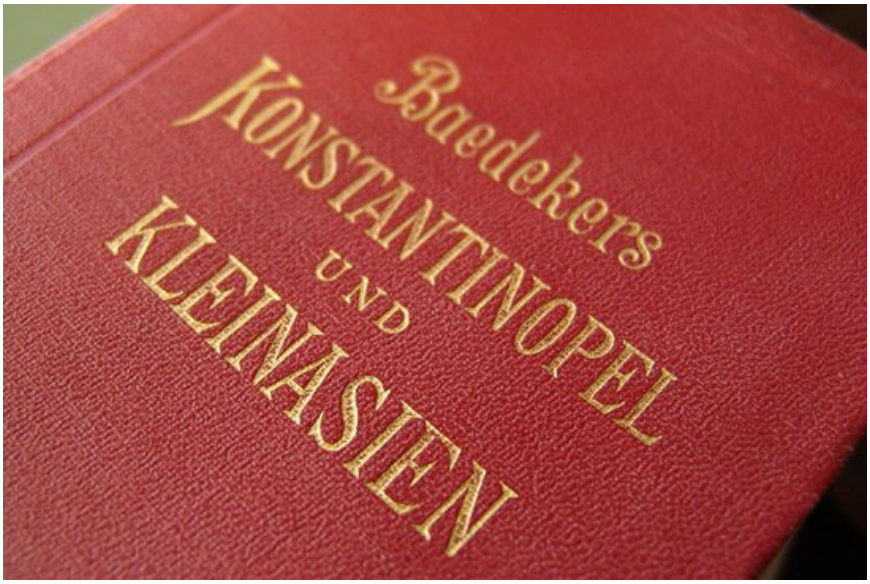


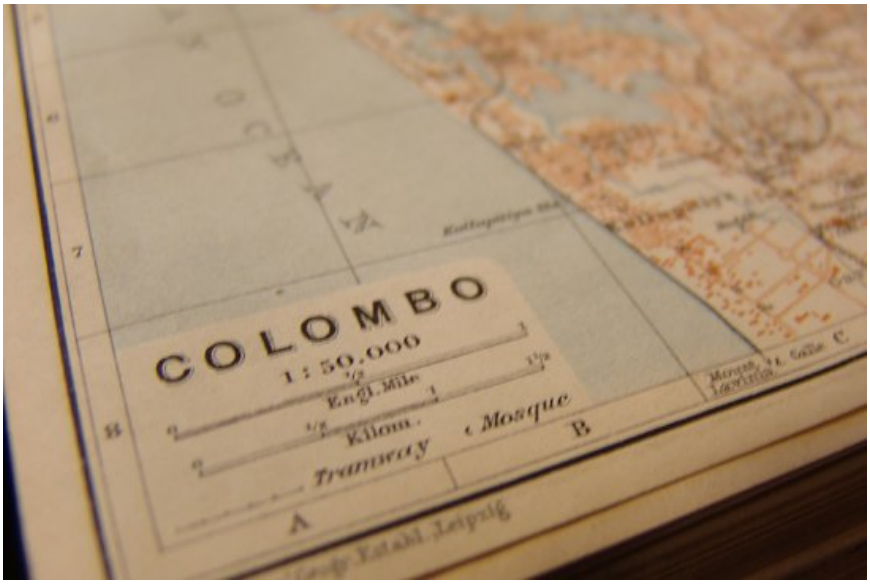


The golden age of ‘Baedekering’ was from 1900 to the 1950s. With motor cars, ships and aeroplanes giving the well-to-do tourist mobility unimaginable in Karl Baedeker’s day, the classic red guide, with its gold impressed lettering, was an essential assistant in matters of overnight accommodation, restaurants, places to see and route-planning.

Nowadays, while it’s still possible to purchase a new Baedeker travel book, it’s the older ones that attract the eye of the collector. The volumes you see here are for sale in an antiquarian bookshop in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Germany – although the internet has many sites offering 1000s of variations of title and edition.







And, for those wondering, yes, Classic Driver's own Jan Baedeker is the great-grandson of Karl Baedeker,

maintaining the family’s tradition of accuracy and informative writing.

Photos: Mathias Paulokat

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