ITMB PUBLISHING LTD.

- INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MAPS AND BOOKS
- ITM DISTRIBUTION

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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #7 OF 2026 – Early July

INTRODUCTION

The month of June seems to have flown past, with a lot happening in the world. FIFA has arrived with a bang, and millions of soccer fans are enjoying excellent matches in various cities around North America. The unwanted and stupid war initiated by Trump unilaterally seems to be coming to a close, or at least an armistice-like pause that will probably hold, much as the one signed in Compiegne 'ended' WW1, although fighting continued in Russia until 1922, and the peace treaty wasn't finalized until 1923. School is out and millions of parents are wrestling with what to do with active children until the fall, and that includes a vacation time somewhere. Our grandsons are off to Vietnam, then to Europe. ITMB is patiently updating another series of maps to go to the printer, and processing into our warehouse new titles that have just arrived. It's a busy month; lots happening!

NEW TITLES THAT ARRIVED DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE

ITMB works on a cycle. We either see a title that is likely to run out of copies in the near future, or one that has expended its inventory a bit sooner than unexpected, and Lan begins an updating process. Our production staff may be working on a dozen titles, off and on, as updating and checking artwork takes several months, so Mark, for example, might be working on Trans-Canada Highway in the morning, and South America Atlas in the afternoon. Eventually, map A reaches completion of updating, but that doesn't mean that it goes to press right away, because Map B is also almost ready, so Lan holds Map A until Maps B and C, and maybe even D are ready for printing, then sends all of them to the printer at the same time, by electronic transfer.

There is often a gap between when we run out of copies and the next edition arrives. Often, the new edition arrives just before the old edition runs out of copies. In all cases, we hold off on announcing the new edition for a three-month waiting period, to enable distributors and retailers around the world to have a fair chance to sell through existing inventory, although we will supply the new edition if we receive an order.

After Lan approves the titles that we intend to note in the Axis newsletter, I prepare the ordering description, and generally add a paragraph such as you are reading now to give you a 'heads up' as to what will be included in the New Releases segment of the newsletter. This writeup also forms the basis for press releases, which are sent out each Tuesday, noting one or two titles at a time. Every new issue gets its own press release, so important though the listing in the newsletter is, the press releases are crucial to noting all the information necessary to add the title to your data base for ordering (or ignoring, for that matter!) All new titles are also added to our web site page, so there is a third way to ensure that you are on top of all of our new releases.

Here is what we are announcing as available as of the end of June: **Alaska**, one of the few travel destinations in the USA that is still quite popular; **Chile**, and **Kenya.** We still have a dozen titles at the printer, so there will be some titles we can't supply at the moment, but keep ordering. You never know what might arrive unexpectedly!

HOW THE WORLD IS CHANGING!

The one-sided war in Iran is definitely having a dramatic and negative effect on world economies, with the European Central Bank raising interest rates, and American inflation topping 4.2% (and rising). Whether or not the short-term 'deal' Trump has made with Iran holds or not, travel to the Middle East has been severely disrupted, and will be for months to come. Unfortunately, this affects map sales, as the tourism industry for all of the Eastern Mediterranean has been severely impacted. ITMB maps every country in the entire region, so as airports re-open and Dubai in particular recovers, visitors will come again – and will need a map! ITMB has them.

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AS THE WORLD TURNS

Israel continues to pursue war objectives aggressively, and Trump is discovering just how little influence the USA holds over Israel. Brutal attacks continue to devastate Lebanon and Gaza. Again, war deters travel, and we are seeing less demand for maps of Israel and Lebanon, although ITMB has both countries available. Personally, I think that the most recent tentative ceasefire will hold, simply because both sides want it to do so.

Ukraine continues to pummel Russia, with recent successful attacks on Saint Petersburg and Moscow, striking mostly military targets, bringing the immediacy of war to the front door of the Russian people, and spooking Putin. Ukrainian successes in Crimea have resulted in severe fuel shortages in that region, and the retreat of Russian forces from some long-held positions. While the country remains vulnerable to retaliatory drone and missile attacks by Russia, most of Ukraine remains peaceful. Map sales of the country remain robust; don't know why, but they are. ITMB maps both countries, and sales of Russia are respectable, if not robust.

Cuba has just announced that it is going to abandon past economic policies, which have been a sore point with the USA, and institute Vietnam-like reforms to promote privatization policies that led to a growing prosperity for that Asian country. The fuel embargo remains in place for the moment, and tourism is suffering, but flights are still going to Cuba from Miami, and occasional flotillas of charitable assistance are keeping Cuba afloat.

Venezuela is abandoning its strict Socialist policies that flourished during the Chavas and Maduro regimes in favour of more moderate practices that are opening up the country to tourism, among other benefits. While the tourism industry is only beginning to emerge, signs are encouraging. ITMB's map of the country, recently released, is our contribution to a promising future for Venezuela.

Colombia has survived its latest election, with a conservative candidate winning by the most votes, but not by a majority. Bolivia, at the same time, is seeing a lot of protests. Neither situation is good for tourism.

Travel to the USA dropped significantly in 2025. Mexico showed an increase of 1.9% in visitors arriving, and Canada showed 1.2%. Considering that both countries were already robust travel destinations, such growth is noteworthy. The USA, however, grew by only 0.9%, and fell from the Number One North American travel destination to Number 3. ITMB publishes many maps of all three countries.

BIG BEN

London's iconic tower at one end of its magnificent parliamentary complex on the north bank of the Thames River is one of the best-known landmarks in the world. Many think that the name is that of the tower itself, which is incorrect. The tower had no name until 2012, when it was named the Elizabeth Tower in honour of Queen Elizabeth II. Nor is Big Ben the four-sided clock face or its unique winding mechanism that keeps time so accurately. Big Ben is the very large bell above the clock mechanism, at the very peak of the tower. It is actually the second bell to be installed, as the first one cracked shortly after being installed in the 1850s. A second bell was created by the same Whitechapel firm that made the Liberty Bell for installation in Philadelphia.

No one knows how the name 'Big Ben' came about; probably it came from the Director of Works in charge of the tower, who was often referred to by that name. The bell was raised into place by dragging it up the narrow staircase inside the tower, and shortly after being installed, it too cracked. Devastated staff eventually moved the bell a third of the way around and replaced the clapper with a smaller striking mechanism and hoped for the best. The sound was different, but it rang true, and is the sound we all can hear today, a hundred and fifty years later, chiming the hours. The bell did have to be silenced a few years ago while workmen cleaned the glass faces of the clock and removed a century's worth of grease and grime from the tower, but none of that affected the clarity of Big Ben, whose unique sound had been recorded by BBC, and opened every news broadcast throughout the renovations.

Although the bell kept sounding throughout World War 2, the British built a transmitter in the countryside to fool German bombers, who used the sound of Big Ben to clarify where they were, resulting in some poor farmer's field being the most-bombed site in Britain! Of course, no one said anything for many years after the war ended.

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The current Houses of Parliament were built in the 1850s, after a devastating fire destroyed the ancient Palace of Westminster, which had been a royal palace at one time. The Great Hall survived the fire, and is still used for major state functions. One German bomb did hit the part of the building housing the House of Commons, destroying it. A picture of Churchill viewing the damaged room has become one of the best-known photographs ever taken. The House was, of course, rebuilt after the war, in much the same crowded shape as the original, and is still in use today. It can be viewed when Parliament is not in session, and one can obtain tickets for sitting in the Stranger's Gallery, to listen to members debating (rather boringly, most of the time).

TRUMP'S WAR FIZZLES OUT

As expected, the ill-thought-out American war on Iran has proved to be such a debacle that the Americans have just thrown in the towel. This is humiliating, but the war should never have been initiated, and the war should have been wound down weeks ago, so ending it now is better than having it drag on indefinitely. The 'agreement', signed recently, is a temporary armistice-like document, valid for 60 days, not a peace agreement. It is fraught with provisos and 'what ifs' and would probably not stand up to legal scrutiny. Nonetheless, it is significant.

1. The USA and Iran both state that they will stop all military actions against each other, and against neighbouring states. This, in itself, makes the document worthwhile.
2. The Strait of Hormuz is to open, freely, to all commercial shipping, as soon as possible.
3. The US blockade of Iranian ports stops immediately, including all attacks on shipping using Iranian ports.
4. Iran can freely sell its oil to whomsoever it pleases.

These four points alone justify signing this 'memorandum of understanding'. Of course, there are many more issues that both sides will claim are included, or note as being subject to further negotiation. Israel's invasion of Lebanon and its attempts to assume control of large portions of that country definitely needs to be resolved, and the USA is the only power likely to be able to influence Israel. It will be necessary to win over Israel's acceptance if this attempt to reduce tensions is to succeed. Reparations to Iran for damages suffered will be contentious, but are necessary, as are the return to Iran of billions of dollars illegally seized by the Americans decades ago. The nuclear program needs to be addressed, and it won't go away any time soon. Air travel rights need to be confirmed to resume normal airline routes from Europe to Asia and Australia.

This is a good first step in addressing a whole range of festering issues that beset the Middle East, but tensions should start to reduce as time passes. The Strait of Hormuz does appear to be re-opening to normal traffic, and there has been only spasmodic fighting, except in Lebanon, since the agreement was reached. Trump will, no doubt, portray this stunning defeat as a victory, but who cares? The fighting is over and is unlikely to be resumed. The rest is a matter of negotiation.

MAPART PUBLISHING

As noted in last month's Axis newsletter, Mapart Publishing closed its doors suddenly and without advance notice at the end of April, 2026. Mapart was one of Canada's largest map and atlas publishers, operating out of Oshawa, Ontario, for many years, before selling their property a year ago and moving into new rented premises in Pickering, Ontario, just east of Toronto. Mapart itself has gone into receivership. Three months after closing its doors, with no signs of anything happening, one must conclude that Mapart is unlikely to emerge from closure. That leaves a huge gap in the Canadian mapping community, but help is at hand. Read on!

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There are still three major Canadian firms in the business of producing maps, and all three have agreed to collaborate together to ensure that the Canadian market is well-served with maps and atlases. All three are based in Vancouver, which is the pivotal hub for all mapping in North America. I'll note ITMB first, with its focus on Canadian provincial and major city maps and for its wide range of hundreds of international titles. GMJ Maps publishes an extremely wide range of city maps of both Canada and the USA and of American state maps, which ITMB is marketing internationally and can supply to Canadian and international customers, but the maps can also be obtained from GMJ directly as well. The third firm is Mussio Ventures, publisher of the well-known Backroads Map Books, and moves are afoot to ensure that their complete line is also readily available. As well, Michelin Maps, previously marketed by Mapart, are now being marketed by ITMB, as are National Geographic maps and atlases. Rand McNally atlases and wall maps are now being marketed by ITMB, but not their state or city maps, as these are actually GMJ maps under the Rand cover.

Mapart published some unique titles, such as St. John's Newfoundland, which will, in time, be released by one of the parties in the mapping alliance. In the short term, Canadian retailers are urged to order city, state, provincial, and regional maps as well as atlas requirements from whichever one of the three collaborating publishing houses that stock titles. Obviously, we're all scrambling to cover the gap in the market created by Mapart's demise. All Mapart titles will disappear as inventory depletes to zero, but we will take up the slack and do our best to serve the Canadian and international market with a full range of titles. I am preparing a list of what ITMB can provide, and will be sending it out separately from the newsletter.

DON'T GIVE UP ON AMERICANS!

America is going through a difficult time in their history, and it would be easy to say that the greatness we have always admired about their society is dead and gone. It isn't. It's changing, and like most fundamental shifts, it often seems to be in the wrong direction. Keep in mind that most Americans are the same decent, lovable goofs they've always been, and are fighting hard to defend basic human rights and democratic freedoms that the rest of the world has long idealized as defining America. Yes, there are set-backs. Congress has been ineffectual in safeguarding society from the excesses of government. The courts have been marvellous, but the Supreme Court is too influenced by the racist element of America to be effective. The Justice Department has been turned into the personal vendetta agency of one Donald J. Trump, and it would be easy to stand back and watch a great nation tear itself apart and say nothing. If we did so, that would be the ultimate worst thing that could happen. We need to stand with and vocally support the good people of the USA in their battle against those who want to transform America into a 'white' nation devoid of individuals from other parts of the world. The vast majority of Americans do not want a society where fear and hatred predominate, but millions of Americans disagree with the majority so vehemently that the ability to agree to disagree seems to have disappeared. It is not the writ of those of us who live in other countries to pontificate solutions to the American dilemma, but it is our responsibility to note it and counter it when it starts infecting our own societies with authoritarian 'solutions' to perceived problems.

NEW RELEASES TO THE END OF JUNE, 2026

Alaska Travel Reference Map 9th Edition 2027 on waterproof paper 1:1,500,000 ISBN 9781771290456 UPC 817712904560 $15.95cdn/us E/GBP 12.90 – Alaska is the only part of the USA seeing strong touristic interest, thanks to cruise ships sailing the Inside Passage to Whittier and back from both Vancouver and Seattle. The state is huge in area, the largest state in the Union, and offers a wealth of attractions for visitors. Many of its urban areas are only accessible by boat, making cruises popular, but Anchorage's airport is serviced by several airlines, and a weekly ferry operates between Seattle and Anchorage**.** 90,000 passengers are sailing to Alaska from Vancouver alone during the month of July; many of whom would appreciate having a good map of the state! **AVAILABLE**

Chile Travel Reference Map 5th Edition 2026 on waterproof paper ISBN 9781771291989 UPC 817712919892 $14.95cdn/us E/GBP 12.90 – Chile is a very long and relatively narrow country, best portrayed on a map in segments, to allow sufficient space to show detail. Side one shows the northern half of the country in side-by-side panels from the northern border to Puerto Montt. Side two encompasses the southern half of Chile, including the Magellan Islands and Tierra del Fuego. An inset map of Santiago de Chile, the capital, is included. **AVAILABLE**

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Kenya Travel Reference Map 6th Edition 2026 on waterproof paper 1:950,000 ISBN 9781771294218 UPC 817712942180 $14.95cdn/us E/GBP 12.90 – Kenya is one of the most popular travel destinations in Africa. Side 1 shows the southern portion of the country, with popular scenic sites such as Kilimanjaro and Arusha (in Tanzania), and Mombasa and Lamu on the coast. The second side concentrates on the northern portion of the country, with Mount Kenya and Marsabit national parks, Lake Turkana, and Mount Elgon (in Uganda). **AVAILABLE**

NEW RELEASES TO THE END OF May, 2026

Armenia & Yerevan Travel Reference Map 1st Edition 2026 1:420,000/1:9,000 ISBN 9781771299251 UPC 817712992512 $14.95cdn/us – This is a new title for ITMB, although the country has been portrayed in the past in combination with the maps of surrounding countries. It has recently sprung into public consciousness as a result of the recent European Security Conference that was held here. This map is long overdue for such an interesting and historic country, combined with its capital of Yerevan, and is the only such map available. Armenia came into existence as an independent country carrying the unwanted baggage of Josef Stalin's heavy hand, in that Stalin tried to break up the homogeneity of ethnicity by planting enclaves of Armenians inside neighbouring Azerbaijan, leading to decades of hostility following 1991. This has now been largely resolved, but relations with Azerbaijan remain limited. Relations with neighbouring Turkey also remain frigid, and although we show border crossings, the reality of life is that these tend to be closed, as Turkey still claims a large part of Armenia as being Turkish. That said, relations with Georgia seem to be fairly cordial, and tourism flourishes between the two countries. One can fly into Yerevan, but it is also possible to drive a rental car with Georgian plates into Armenia. Once there, the roads are good, the people friendly, and the scenery magnificent. Yerevan is an interesting city, with most of it being shown on our map of the city (which occupies side 2) Numerous hotels are noted, as well as points of interest. A Top Attractions list is included. Now that peace has returned to the region, road improvements are accelerating. By the nature of the borders of the country, a fairly large portion of Azerbaijan is included, but one should be wary still about driving in border areas. **AVAILABLE**

Hong Kong and Region Travel Reference Map 5th Edition 2026 1:9,000/1:55,000 ISBN 9781771293464 UPC 817712934642 $14.95cdn/us – Hong Kong is both a large city and an autonomous region of China, consisting of the island of Hong Kong, Kowloon, various islands, and the New Territories. This map covers everything to the Chinese border south of Shenzhen. Although HK has been a part of China since 1997, there is still a border separating it from China proper, mostly to control population flows. Side 1 covers the highly urbanized mainland tip, known as Kowloon, from Mong Kok to the harbour, along with the north shore of HK Island, from just west of the Macau Ferry Terminal to Quarry Bay in the east. This is the busy, densely-populated portion of HK centred on Victoria Harbour, showing the ferry routes, the subway network, and the tram line as well as the Peak Railway Cog line. Side 2 covers all of HK to the border with China Proper. The large international airport is on an island to the west of the city, with rail and road connections to Kowloon and HK Island. Much of the New Territories is agricultural, which always surprises visitors. The rail line to China Proper is shown. Canadians and some other country passport holders no longer need a visa to visit Hong Kong or China. **AVAILABLE**

Mexico: Baja California Travel Reference Map 8th Edition 2026 on waterproof paper 1:650,000 ISBN 9781771295031 UPC 817712950314 $14.95cdn/us – The western peninsula that juts down into the Pacific is a very different portion of Mexico. At one time, it was part of the Spanish possession known as California, then gold was discovered and the ensuing rush of American fortune hunters changed the history of this part of the world. The Mexicans were left with only a lightly populated desert-like land mass that the Americans didn't want. Today, it is divided into two states – Baja Norte and Baja Sur, with the large city of Tijuana at the far north and touristic Cabo San Lucas at the bottom, and with picturesque Ensenada and La Paz in between. Side 1 shows the northern half from slightly inside the USA to Santo Rosalia, and Side 2 shows the southern portion to its tip at Cabo. The map has several inset maps of urban areas and a lot of capsule comments in the ocean areas, giving historical and cultural pieces of information about such features as the Sierra de la Laguna mountain chain or a synopsis of the creation of Spanish missions from 1683. **AVAILABLE**

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Saskatchewan Travel Reference Map 2nd Edition 2027 1:900,000 ISBN 9781771297486 UPC 817712974860 $14.95cdn/us – The Canadian province of Saskatchewan is right in the middle of Canada, bordered by Alberta to the west, Manitoba to the east, and the USA to the south. It also borders the Northwest Territories, but there is no road connection to that entity, so it hardly matters. The province is largely agricultural in the south, with its capital of Regina. This occupies Side 1, with insets of Regina and Saskatoon. The northern portion fills side 2 and is mostly lakes (thousands of them) and rivers (more thousands). The northern part is lightly populated, with Flin Flon being the largest urban area, but the region has several large wilderness parks and hundreds of campsites. Historically, the province is important due to the Metis Rebellion of 1885, which is the closest Canada has ever had to a military uprising. The province was carved out of the vast Northwest Territories at the same time as Alberta and modern Manitoba in 1905, thanks to the millions of immigrants settling in the prairies. It is named after the Saskatchewan River that flows through it. **AVAILABLE**

South America Northern (or North Half) Travel Reference Map 6th Edition 2027 1:3,500,000 ISBN 9781771297462 UPC 817712974624 $14.95cdn/us E/GBP 12.90 – The very first map published by ITMB was South America North Half, of which this is the computerized 6th edition. Although ITMB also publishes a map of the continent of South America, obviously the advantage of a map covering only the northern half allows for an expanded scale and more room to show detail. Side 1 emphasizes the Amazon River and the three Guianas, as well as Brasil as far south as Recife. Side 2 covers all of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, as well as the upper reaches of the Amazon Basin. A portion of Bolivia is also included. The market for this map is the traveller visiting this part of the continent. ITMB also publishes individual country maps of each of the nations noted on this map, but this is the only map available of this area as a region. ITMB also publishes a separate map of South America South Half. **AVAILABLE**

Venezuela Travel Reference Map 5th Edition 2026 1:1,200,000 ISBN 9781771298797 UPC 817712987976 $14.95cdn/us E/GBP 12.90 - Well, Venezuela isn't at the top of anyone's bucket list right now, but at least it isn't in the dire straits it has been for the past several years. Virtually every publishing house discontinued maps of the country, which was understandable, given the brutality of its government and its growing poverty, but ITMB always seems to do maps of parts of the world no one else does, and Venezuela is as deserving of a good map as France or Japan, or any other country, so here it is! Side 1 covers the western portion of the country and includes a nice Top Attractions list of the best touristic attractions of the country as well as a detailed place names listing. Side 2 covers the eastern part of the country, with a bit of Guyana included. We all know the turmoil this country has endured over the past decade and more. It is still a lovely country and well worth visiting. Lan and I spent ten days in the country a few years ago and found it to be a very friendly country – except for the times people were shooting at us. That's all stopped now and this map is important simply because it exists. Venezuela will rise again! **AVAILABLE**

NEW RELEASES DURING APRIL, 2026

Accra & Ghana South Travel Reference Map 2nd Edition, 2026 1:23,000/1:525,000 ISBN 9781771290449 UPC 817712904492 $14.95cdn/us – AVAILABLE

Southern BC & Alberta Travel Reference Map 3rd Edition 2026 1:850,000 ISBN 9781771291187 UPC 817712911872 $14.95cdn/us – AVAILABLE

Colombia Travel Reference map 6th Edition 2026 on waterproof stone paper 1:1,300,000 ISBN 9781771291941 UPC 817712919410 $14.95cdn/us – AVAILABLE

Philippines Travel Reference Map 7th Edition 2026 on waterproof stone paper 1:1,000,000 ISBN 9781771296373 UPC 817712963734 $14.95cdn/us E/GBP 12.90 – AVAILABLE

Rwanda & Burundi Travel Reference Map 8th Edition 1:300,000 ISBN 9781771296748 UPC 817712967480 $14.95cdn/us – AVAILABLE

Tokyo and Region Travel Reference Map 7th Edition 2026 on waterproof stone paper 1:14,000/1:600,000 ISBN 9781771298179 UPC 817712981790 $14.95cdn/us - AVAILABLE