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Science Snapshot

Dan Vergano

You can take these science books to the beach

Still looking for that perfect summer beach book? Science might offer the answer — pitch your umbrella, relax in the waves and delve into the latest from the frontiers of science.

•For a look today at the science you'll be reading about in the next two years, you could curl up with [The Lightness of Being: Mass, Ether, and the Unification of Forces](#) (Basic Books, \$26.95) by Frank Wilczek, the 2004 Nobel Prize winner in physics. A student of Richard Feynman, Wilczek leavens his enthusiastic explanations of why (from a physics standpoint, not just because of all those hot dogs and ice cream bars on the boardwalk) things weigh something. "Matter is not what it appears to be," he writes. "The mass of ordinary matter is the embodied energy of more basic building blocks, themselves lacking mass." Heavy, huh? Don't worry, the chapters are short, fun and larded with historical points that offer readers the payoff of understanding all the excitement in the scientific world over Europe's [Large Hadron Collider](#), just getting warmed up in its operations.

"We're at a special time in history, I'm sticking my neck out here, but I think we are going to find out a lot of beautiful things about our world," says Wilczek in an interview about his book. Normally, Nobel Prize winners write autobiographies after they take home the big prize. "But I'm too young for all that," he says. "Besides, I might want another prize."

One of the most skeptical physicists around when it comes to new theories, Wilczek feels optimistic that a flurry of new particles will be uncovered at the Swiss-French atom-smasher in the next few years, re-invigorating particle physics. "I think science has a lot to offer the world," he says. "And we'll see some glorious results in months, not decades."

With promises like that, we can look forward to reading lots more science books at the beach in summers to come as well.