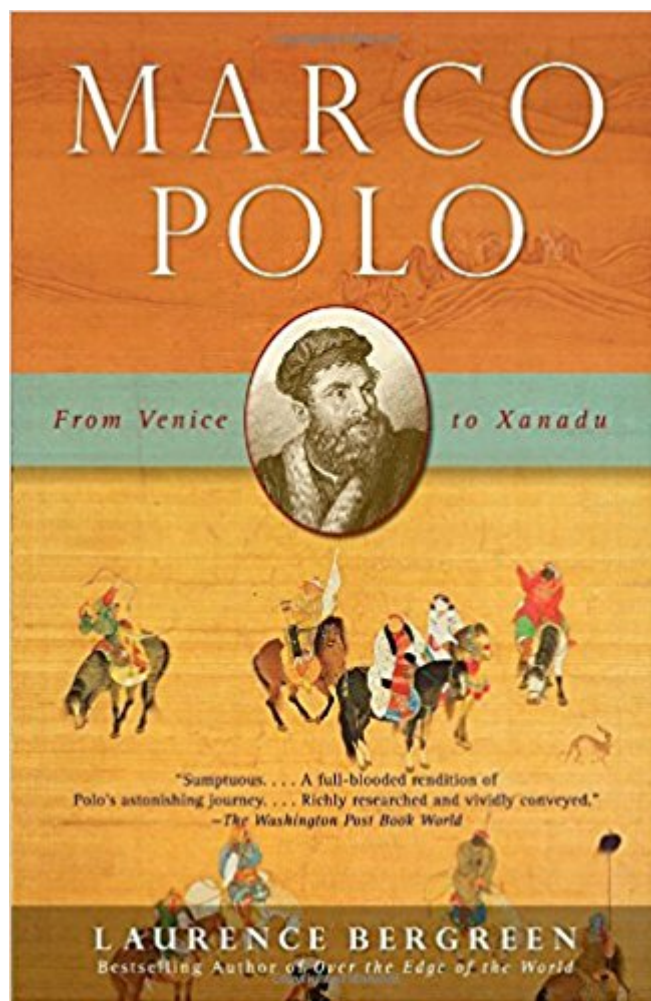


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Marco Polo: From Venice To Xanadu



Synopsis

As the first European to travel extensively throughout Asia, Marco Polo was the earliest bridge between East and West. His famous journeys took him across the boundaries of the known world, along the dangerous Silk Road, and into the court of Kublai Kahn, where he won the trust of the most feared and reviled leader of his day. Polo introduced the cultural riches of China to Europe, spawning centuries of Western fascination with Asia. In this lively blend of history, biography, and travelogue, acclaimed author Laurence Bergreen separates myth from history, creating the most authoritative account yet of Polo's remarkable adventures. Exceptionally narrated and written with a discerning eye for detail, Marco Polo is as riveting as the life it describes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Drawing on original writings and walking in the footsteps of Marco Polo himself, Laurence Bergreen's Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu is the most definitive biography of the legendary traveler to date, separating the man from his considerable myth. Look inside Marco Polo (Click on thumbnails to see a larger image): Marco Polo: a traditional portrait; Granger Frontispiece of an early published edition of Marco Polo's Travels, Nuremberg, Germany, 1477; Granger Kublai Khan, emperor of the world's largest land-based empire; Granger Marco Polo commanded a Venetian galley similar to this in the Battle of Curzola; Granger Stone carving on the Marco Polo bridge; Laurence Bergreen Marco Polo's vivid and occasionally misinterpreted descriptions of his travels inspired this medieval artist to depict dragons in China; Granger Marco Polo timeline (All dates given in the Julian calendar): 1215 - Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis

Khan and Marco Polo's mentor, is born. 1254 - Marco Polo born in Venice, although one tradition locates his birthplace in the Venetian colony of Dalmatia. 1260 - Kublai Khan becomes leader of the Mongols and in 1271 founds the Yuan ("Origin") Dynasty. 1271 - Young Marco Polo leaves Venice with his father Niccolo and uncle Maffeo, bound for the court of Kublai Khan. 1274 - Kublai Khan oversees a failed Mongol invasion of Japan, as the Mongols, masters of the Steppe, meet their match at sea. 1275 - The three Polos arrive in Shang-du, Kublai Khan's summer palace immortalized by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as Xanadu; Marco begins his years in the service of the Khan. 1276 - 1293 - Marco travels throughout Asia, reaching the coast of India, and possibly Zanzibar, gathering intelligence for Kublai Khan and serving as a tax collector for the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. 1281 - Kublai Khan's second failed invasion of Japan, a serious blow to his prestige. 1292 - The Polos escort Princess Kokachin to Persia to marry, their last formal service to Kublai Khan before departing. 1294 - Kublai Khan dies, freeing the Polo family, who undertake a dangerous return voyage by sea. 1295 - Marco, his father, and uncle, arrive in Venice after their 24-year absence. They have been away for so long that their fellow Venetians do not recognize them. 1298 - Marco is captured by the Genoese in the Battle of Curzola, according to some accounts, and confined to a cell in Genoa with a romance writer, Rustichello of Pisa, to whom he dictates his adventures in China, his reminiscences of Kublai Khan, his life among the Mongols. 1300 - Safely back in Venice, Marco Polo marries Donata Badoer; the couple has three daughters. 1324 - As manuscript versions of his exploits spread throughout Europe, Marco Polo dies in Venice, claiming that he did not reveal the half of his experiences in his remarkable Travels. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Even in his own day, the famed 13th-century travel writer Marco Polo was mocked as a purveyor of tall talesâ "gem-encrusted clothes, nude temple dancing girls, screaming tarantulasâ "in his narrative of his journey to the Chinese court of the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan. In this engrossing biography, Bergreen (James Agee: A Life), while allowing that mere facts... were never enough for Marco, finds him a roughly accurate and perceptive witness (aside from the romantic embellishments and outright fabrications concocted with his collaborator Rustichello of Pisa) who painted an influential and unusually sympathetic portrait of the much-feared Mongols. Bergreen follows Polo's disjointed commentary on everything from Chinese tax policy to asbestos manufacturing, crocodile hunting and Asian sexual moresâ "Polo was especially taken with the practice of sharing one's wife with passing travelersâ "while deftly glossing it with scholarship. Less convincing is Bergreen's attempt to add depth to Polo's lurid taste and over-heated imagination by

portraying him as both a prophet of globalization and a pilgrim and explorer of the spirit. Polo's spiritual trek didn't take him very far, since he ended his days back in Venice as a greedy, litigious merchant. Still, the result is a long, strange, illuminating trip. 16 pages of photos, 3 maps. (Oct. 25) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I really loved *Over the Edge of the World*. I was engrossed with it the whole time I was reading. But *Marco Polo* is so full of quotes from Polo's own writing, I feel like I might as well read the original. What I expect history books of this nature to do is tell me what happened and give it context. That way I can enjoy history without being a full time historian.

Know right off this isn't Marco writing- I thought it was and will have to go back and read the original too. All in all a good front to back work giving the additional details learned since Russia left Mongolia. Read the Genghis Chan books first to have a better idea of what Marco and his family members lived while on their marvelous travels.

An excellent book. If only history were taught in school the way Laurence Bergreen writes.

This is a very factual account of Polo's life. Lots of information. It's interesting at first, but the facts get into the way of the story. Bergreen seems intent on telling us everything about Polo's trip, without weaving in a sense of destiny, history, excitement.

My sixth grade teacher read us *Marco Polo* during rest times! I've always wanted to read it as an adult. So I bought this. It is an excellent compilation of all he wrote, but it sure gets boring after a while. You keep wondering, "Is this true." I finally got tired of wondering that page after page. I finally decided it wasn't worth my time.

I found the book very interesting. Stories of different cultures that Marco P experienced was very fascinating. There was never a dull moment in the story. The various sex stories seemed almost fictitious but obviously they were true. The portion of the story about kuala khan was best part of the book.

A well researched and fascinating story about the world's greatest traveller and adventurer. He lived

in a time of Wow. The author has an accessible, informative and fast paced style. A very insightful book about a little known era.

I read the book on Columbus and Queen Isabel before I read this book and despite the length of all three, I found the first two easier to read. The author definitely improved with experience. Marco Polo was a tremendous story, just a little harder to read.

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