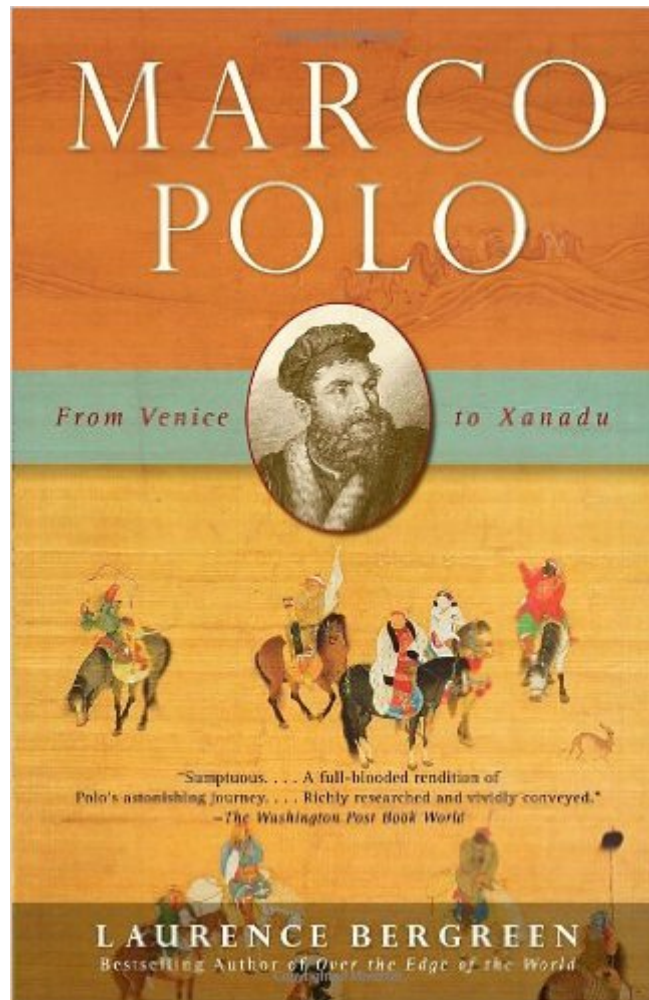


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Marco Polo: From Venice To Xanadu



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 the Audible Audio Edition edition.

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 the Audible Audio Edition edition.

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