



# Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit

*Joyce E. Chaplin*

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**Highly acclaimed, this first full history of around-the-world travel by Joyce E. Chaplin brilliantly tells the story of circumnavigation. A witty, erudite, and colorful account of the outrageous ambitions that have inspired men and women to circle the entire planet.**

In this first full history of around-the-world travel, Joyce E. Chaplin brilliantly tells the story of circumnavigation. For almost five hundred years, human beings have been finding ways to circle the Earth—by sail, steam, or liquid fuel; by cycling, driving, flying, or going into orbit; even by using their own bodily power. *Round About the Earth* is a witty, erudite, and colorful account of the outrageous ambitions that have inspired men and women to encircle the planet.

## Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit Details

Date : Published November 19th 2013 by Simon & Schuster

ISBN : 9781416596202

Author : Joyce E. Chaplin

Format : Paperback 560 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Travel, Science, Geography

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Joyce E. Chaplin**

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## **From Reader Review Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit for online ebook**

### **Keith Gerlach says**

I love history and this is an excellent book! Chock full of interesting tidbits on every way, shape, or form of circumnavigating our globe! From Magellan to Space Stations and satellites!

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### **Kristi Thielen says**

A novel idea: write a book about everyone and everything that ever went 'round the world, detailing the experience, the challenges and the results.

The early chapters are about sea voyages and for that reason seem more compelling because the circumnavigation is such a dramatic, life-threatening undertaking. Later chapters about balloons, aircraft and hardy souls on foot, bicycle or motorbike are interesting if not as dramatic. Final chapters about the space program struck me as less captivating only because I was more familiar with this history.

Chaplin makes interesting points about the changes that have come over not just the circumnavigators themselves, but what they expect of the cultures they encounter - and how these cultures view the world traveler.

The author's prose isn't always a smooth read: she enjoys tangled sentences with analogies that are sometimes opaque and call for a slow, second take. Still, an enjoyable book.

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### **Kim Zinkowski says**

B-. The book is pretty much as advertised in its subtitle. Disorientation at the international dateline, and the chapter on bicyclists were interesting.

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### **Roadkill1313 says**

Started out as very informative but degenerated into a "green" rant about mankind destroying the earth. Author seemed to admire most those intrepid individuals who sought to circumnavigate the planet using "non-polluting" forms of propulsion. Pity she never bothered to dig a little deeper to explore the amount of pollution used to manufacture the "clean" vessels used by her ecologically-minded travelers. Author went into exacting detail about early circumnavigators, but glossed over very quickly sections on flight and space travel, and her last chapter was a confusing mish-mash of opinionated drivel. Overall, an entertaining read, but the author was far too interested in her agenda of climate change and man's brutality against the planet. Readers would be better served if she just came out and stated that as her purpose for the book.

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## **Scriptor Ignotus says**

I received a free copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

It is a fine account of the numerous round-the-world voyages that have been made (mostly by westerners) from the time of Magellan to the modern space program. I found the book most engaging in its narratives of the voyages themselves; particularly the first one about Magellan. Chaplin also provides some stimulating insights on the impressions that the concept of "encirclement" made on the modern intellect. An entertaining, if occasionally dry read.

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## **Joe Pace says**

I have always been fascinated with circumnavigation, due in part to an early and enduring appetite for nautical exploration tales in general and Captain James Cook's career in particular. Imprecise maps, unknown shores, intrepid commanders. Not just straight history but fictional and quasi-fictional too: Bligh, Hornblower, Aubrey.

Chaplin's overlong and underdrawn tome is ambitious in scope, to her credit, but the result bogs down the narrative. Too many stories are breezed through, leaving me at least feeling unfulfilled by her brief treatment of some portions of the story. It is well-researched, and nicely written, but left me wanting more in too many places.

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## **Steven says**

I can't believe it took me nearly a month to read it. Usually, a long reading time means I'm not really that into a book -- but that is NOT the case here. Phileas Fogg still could have read this 2.8 at time at the same rate I did before he got back to London.

Noting that a comprehensive account of the history of global circumnavigation had never been written, Chaplin set out to do so. Starting with the early European maritime explorers and working through to our orbital age, she describes the different methods we humans have used to get around the globe, noting the many firsts -- first non-Westerner, first woman, first animal, first east-to-west, first west-to-east, first person to do it twice, first by bicycle, first by balloon, etc. In addition to factual circumnavigation, she also explores the way traveling around the world has influenced literature and been used as a literary device.

Some of the themes she returns to are circumnavigation as a Western privilege and as an outgrowth of colonialism and overseas empires, and of the effects circumnavigation has on the environment. A fun and interesting account of humanity getting to know our home by going around it.

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## **Vera Marie says**

This is a big book. No surprise there, since it is about traveling around the world and every significant round the world trip from 1519 (not counting mythical creatures) to the 21st century.

In *Round About the Earth*, Joyce Chaplin divides human efforts to circumnavigate our planet into three emotional states we have passed through. At first fear predominated since most of what was “out there” remained a mystery and the tools of transportation and navigation were primitive. Next, confidence, as man learned how to make ships more seaworthy and voyages safer for the sailors. Finally doubt, as we see more of the globe and understand more of earth’s workings and lose our 19th century hubris about domination of the Earth.

The book is encyclopedic in its coverage of the subject, and if you need to brush up on the explorers and straighten out some of the untruths that filled your geography books, you’ll find this a terrific source. But not only that, the author has a healthy sense of humor. She relies on records kept by shipboard travelers in a time when fewer than half of the sailors returned home and the majority of the tiny wooden ships that set out were reduced to splinters along the way. Speaking of the record from the first voyage to go all the way around the world, she says

[i]Given that the Magellan/Elcano expedition had been a war of attrition against the vastness of the globe, it is amazing that whatever else it had run out of on its long, tortured way, it never ran out of paper. Tattered he may have become, reduced to eating rats, but Antonio Pigafetta had packed so much paper that he had about half a ream to spare as gifts to dignitaries in Brunei.[/i]

All these adventures also spawned early travel writing, with travel books proliferating starting in the very early 17th century. In 1625 an early travel writer coined the word “circumnavigation”—a much more agreeable coinage than “staycation,” wouldn’t you agree?

This is the beginning of a review I published at

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### **Lcitera says**

An excellent book...four stars rather than five as I read only the half of the book that focused on circumnavigating the earth via seas...had to interest when the book shifted focus to flight. This book is very well written, not dry (sorry, bad pun) and disabuses the reader of some of the myths of "discovery" that were perhaps learned in fifth grade. I started this book the days after rereading Verne's *AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS*...and *ROUND ABOUT THE EARTH*...began by examining Verne's classic. I took such as a very positive sign that I was fated to read this book, at least the first half. Atlantic Ocean (manageable in size), Pacific Ocean (really, just much TOO big), the Panama Canal, the various Horns, the ships, the Maoris in their "canoes"...I found the book most interesting with wonderful illustrations and maps. A very good read for anyone interested in modern day ocean travel...providing much background as to the evolution of life upon the seas.

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### **Johanna says**

My first love and what got me hooked to history were travel stories of Cook and his fellow explorers. This is a comprehensive, well told overview of circumnavigation. In addition to ships we have trains, bikes, planes, air balloons and space ships. I know some reviewers have been miffed by the underlining green philosophy and author's thoughts about owning or fearing the planet Earth. But that's right up my alley and I loved it! This goes right in my favourites shelf.

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## **Steve Walker says**

Excellent and thought provoking history of Circumnavigation and the impact these voyages have had on history. Whether you are an armchair traveler or a historian you will gain insights into how world travel impacted history, literature, the arts, and science.

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## **Alex Telander says**

There have been many books written about the notorious explorers from history, like Columbus, Magellan, Cook and even Darwin. There are also now a fair number of people who can make the claim that they have circumnavigated this globe. Joyce E. Chaplin presents readers with the first full history on those who have traveled around the world and told their story.

Divided into sections, Chaplin presents the series of historical tales starting with Magellan, giving the ups and downs of the journey. She points out that it wasn't until the twentieth century that these round-the-world trips actually returned to their starting point with most of the crew still alive. All the greats make it into this book, such as Francis Drake, William Dampier, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, and James Cook. When sea travel became safer, people like Charles Darwin made the journey, as well as some notable women like Lady Brassey.

With the advent of encompassing railroad travel and exotic cruise ships, round the world journeys became much more achievable and common for a lot of people. And with the advent of the space race, a new concept of circumnavigating the globe came into play, with an elite few achieving it. Chaplin has fun exploring these many journeys and why people seem driven to accomplish it. While her writing can get a little dry and long-winded at points, Round About the Earth still represents an interesting foray into this unique group of travelers.

Originally written on February 11, 2013 ©Alex C. Telander.

For more reviews, check out the BookBanter site.

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## **Maynard Handley says**

This sort of book, which uses some theme as an excuse to run off in a hundred different but interesting directions, is difficult to pull off; most that I've encountered have been a disappointment.

Ms Chaplin's entry is very strong right up to about the last 20%, where we start to encounter manned space flight. The first 80% is mostly history, but history of a very wide-ranging sort that's likely to interest almost everyone. Unfortunately once we reach the mid-20th century we're encountering the quotidian, the obvious, and there's just not much Ms Chaplin can do to try to make it worth reading about. IMHO skip the last 20% and you'll be left with a much better memory of the book.

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## Matthew Gilmore says

Fascinating subject, hobbled by the academic perspective of the author; it resembles the ships years before copper-sheathed hulls--loaded with barnacles. These barnacles are the anachronistic preoccupations of today's academic left (a redundancy perhaps). We invited to consider Phileas Fogg's carbon footprint; various (in fact most) circumnavigation efforts are criticized for not being diverse. Western imperialism, which aided and abetted circumnavigators is roundly condemned. Her own formulation of "paper internationalism"--civilized conduct among nations during the 100 year peace 1815-1914--is given credit for allowing freedom of travel. This all makes this book in some ways profoundly ahistorical and anachronistic. It brings together many stories of 500 years of circling the globe--and sources with which to do further research.

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## Todd Martin says

*Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* is pretty much what the subtitle claims it to be, a recounting of the various trips throughout history around the globe beginning with Ferdinand Magellan's voyage of circumnavigation in 1519 (in which he was killed, but some of his crew survived) to the Apollo space program. Obviously, this 500 year period was marked by great technological changes, from sailing ship, to steam ship, to airplane and rocket ship. With each change in technology, circumnavigation starts out with high mortality rates, then as the technology matures, becomes easier, less hazardous and more comfortable (in fact, commercial space flight is now on the horizon).

Chaplin's book is well researched and draws on historical and personal narratives of those who have gone around the globe by boat, bicycle, plane, submarine, car and on foot. She also spends time discussing fictional world travelers (most notably Phileas Fogg, the main character in the 1873 Jules Verne novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* and their influence on culture and exploration. If I had one criticism it would be that the book is overly long and somewhat repetitive.

So what have we learned from these perambulations? Most importantly, that the Earth is a finite sphere with limited resources. Travel has given us a global consciousness that the natural processes on which all life depends can be disrupted by human activities. Specifically, it is understood that climate change is a global problem and that the activities of a country on the other side of the planet can affect our weather at home. Similarly, it is a problem that must be solved globally. It has yet to be seen whether circumnavigation has drawn the planet's people close enough to work together to create a solution.

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