



Around the World in 50 Years: My Adventure to Every Country on Earth

Albert Podell

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The *New York Times* Bestseller

This is the inspiring story of an ordinary guy who achieved two great goals that others had told him were impossible. First, he set a record for the longest automobile journey ever made around the world, during the course of which he blasted his way out of minefields, survived a serious accident atop the Peak of Death, came within seconds of being lynched in Pakistan, and lost three of the five men who started with him, two to disease, one to the Vietcong.

After that-although it took him forty-seven more years-Albert Podell set another record by going to every country on Earth. He achieved this by surviving riots, revolutions, civil wars, trigger-happy child soldiers, voodoo priests, robbers, pickpockets, corrupt cops, and Cape buffalo. He went around, under, or through every kind of earthquake, cyclone, tsunami, volcanic eruption, snowstorm, and sandstorm that nature threw at him. He ate everything from old camel meat and rats to dung beetles and the brain of a live monkey. And he overcame attacks by crocodiles, hippos, anacondas, giant leeches, flying crabs-and several beautiful girlfriends who insisted that he stop this nonsense and marry them.

Albert Podell's *Around the World in 50 Years* is a remarkable and meaningful tale of quiet courage, dogged persistence, undying determination, and an uncanny ability to escape from one perilous situation after another-and return with some of the most memorable, frightening, and hilarious adventure stories you have ever read.

Around the World in 50 Years: My Adventure to Every Country on Earth Details

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Author : Albert Podell

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Mainlinebooker says

I loved this book despite I would never want to meet this author. He is quite full of himself, chauvinistic with an out of this world ego, that would irritate the heck out of me. That said, his book is a fascinating romp whereby he tries to travel to every country in the world in his 50 years. With seemingly endless pocket money he travels everywhere often using the most circuitous routes. For a travel junkie, this is the hashish of voyeuristic journalism. Along the way, i learned fascinating obscure tidbits that made me put new countries onto my bucket list. His ostentatious bravado create disturbing drama and some white-knuckle adventures that made for a very enjoyable read..;

Nan Prener says

Everybody on God's earth should read this book if he wants to know what the world is like. Nobody else can tell you because nobody else knows. Nobody else has tried and survived a visit to every country on earth, including the most dangerous of: living conditions, wild animals, political violence, and man-made cussedness in general. Al Podell has gone where no man has gone before - to every single nation in the world; 196 of them. And he has lived as close to the people as he could. He never stayed in a luxury hotel. He did not eat in expensive American commissaries. He experienced the living conditions of the natives. But he was not a native. He was an extraordinarily perceptive, intelligent, adventurer, both mentally and physically. He can tell you what its like to bathe with leeches, and he can also tell you about the relationship of people to their husbands, their wives, their governments, their gods.

Every chapter is like hearing about life on another planet. In detail. The writing is superb, Al having been not only an author, but an editor, and one of the best craftsmen of the English language in America.

I am currently preparing a letter to the New York City Board of Education suggesting that they adapt this book, primarily by leaving out all the very interesting and quite surprising reporting on sex workers and sexual attitudes, all of which is a large part of every culture, whether we like it or not. This is the only book about the world that I have read that tells it like it is. And it is written with such exuberance that it is immediately and forever graspable.

Larry Sutter says

A good travel book should unite a number of elements, and I'm happy to see that my friend Al's book does them all. And seamlessly. There's adventure, information and analysis, and Al has gotten them all just right. There are plenty of hair-raising and death-defying moments, but Al doesn't just stop at his itinerary, but provides not only a lot of background information on where he is but a sophisticated political, economic and social commentary--as well. Plus the writing is consistently vivid and exciting. As Michelin says, Worth the trip.

Kristin says

I knew I was going to like this book, and I knew it wasn't going to be nearly long enough. Right on both counts, but in ways that I wasn't expecting.

There is just no way that anyone can write a travelogue that covers 196 (plus some now nonexistent) countries in a completely thorough manner. Do you talk about each country one at a time, or do you do an overview of subjects - food, religion, war, sex - with brief comparisons of standout countries? Podell does a little bit of each, alternating between chapters on specific countries (or more often regions), how he managed his travels logically, highlights of visits, and subjects like foods of the world (one of my favorite sections). And it was great, but I did want more. More more more! This extends to accompanying materials as well. I did read an ARC, and it was obvious that some pictures were missing (the captions were included), but I loved the ones that were there. Too many travelogues rely on the words, and Podell's words do speak for themselves, but the images really add something, particularly when they're so well chosen. On the other hand, I would have loved a map or two - or 20!

Podell begins by saying that his book will include countries that most people won't see in their lifetimes, but this ends up largely equating to one continent: Africa. There were a few mentions of the Middle East and South America, and nations like China were mentioned in passing due to subjects like food, but on the whole it felt very unbalanced. I think a bit more on European and North American countries would have lent an interesting study in contrasts - and really, how many Americans are likely to travel to Finland or Latvia? There were a few great inclusions of non-African nations like Nauru and Mongolia that were fascinating, but again... I wanted more!

Another example of my longing for more story is his visit to Yemen. He hints at interesting personal experience with qat, but skips right over it (in stark contrast to Horwitz's entertaining descriptions in *Baghdad without a Map* and *Other Misadventures in Arabia*), but then he tells this fabulous story about his "invention" of sushi to the excitement of fellow (Taiwanese) tourists. Perhaps the best sections were those on Cuba and North Korea, since Americans have been banned from Cuba and fewer than 1000 Americans have visited North Korea since the end of the war. Podell's thoughts on the communist governments of each country were really intriguing as well. While he didn't directly contrast them, an engaged reader will definitely find some thought-provoking ideas in contrasting them herself.

And speaking of Podell's thoughts - what a guy! He's a great storyteller and just seems like **such** a character. He's had multiple successful careers (ad man, journalist, lawyer, etc.) and more girlfriends than I could wrap my head around. (Tantalizing hints of his personal life are sprinkled in where they can't be avoided. He traveled with lots of girlfriends - 34 female traveling companions thanked in the acknowledgements! - and tries to pick up college girls in Brisbane when he's over 70. Then comes home in 2012 and marries a woman 49 years his junior. I love this dirty - and yet somehow classy - old man!) He can be very funny, sometimes goofy and sometimes dry. (Goofy example - he make a pun involving poetry and lemurs that ends with the invention of the "lemurick.") Every now and then I felt his humor bordered on non-PC (and in the acknowledgements he thanked someone for making him cut things more offensive than those he included), so that might turn off some readers. Anyway, he's also very intelligent and insightful, on subjects from the aforementioned communism to global warming to overpopulation and its relationship to rice. (Another note: he's a very liberal, educated, atheist Jew from New York, and his ideas reflect that - be warned, conservative readers.) And of course, he is enterprising, brave, adventurous, and - let's be honest - just plain ballsy. And

maybe a little bit crazy. But **awesome**. His would be some excellent coattails to grab onto to see the world.

And I would **love** to see more books by him, perhaps more detailed stories of his travels broken down by region (Podell on Oceania) or subject (Podell on World Religion). So to conclude this enormous review, I highly recommend this one - if you go into it knowing that it's going to whet your appetite but leave your hunger raging in the end!

The fine print: received ARC from NetGalley.

Aaron says

I knew by chapter 2 that this book was getting a 5 star rating. This book is storytelling at its finest. Follow along with Albert Podell as he pushes toward his goal of setting foot in every country on Earth. Told with humor and insight, the reader begins to realize just how much of the world is not just different and foreign, but completely unknown or unknowable.

Pick up this book! You will not be disappointed.

Clare O'Beara says

Editing travel magazine Argosy, the author teamed up with a reporter and photographer and decided to take the longest land journey that could be managed around the world, in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. This was in 1964 and all kinds of troubles and wars were under way; one photographer was killed by the Viet Cong in Cambodia. Pakistan declared war while the team travelled through the country and all foreign journalists became suspect as possible spies, so that the author was almost lynched.

The bugs, leeches and minefields posed their own problems, reminding me of Len Beadell's books about carving Australia's great long roads out of the outback. The people were by turns devious, thieving, hardworking and keen to buy women travelling with the team.

This book details only the more remote and hard to enter countries that the author has visited during his life, scattered over many years, as he claims to have visited every country in the world, seven of which no longer exist. The stories come so thick and fast that it is hard to take them all in at one sitting, so I recommend reading the book over a few stages in order to appreciate not only each journey, but the kind of life that would result from this constant travelling. I recommend this read to any armchair traveller or anyone with a thirst for adventure.

Jentry says

This book was a disappointment. There were parts of it that were really interesting, but as a whole the book is not great. The author has a tendency to list a lot of things when describing his travels. He does it frequently. It gets very repetitive and starts to lose any meaning at a certain point. It also suffers from the fact that the author is openly sexist and creepy throughout. It earns the 2 stars for the chapters with God (the author's tour guide in Africa) in them, which were delightful and I wish the whole book was written by or about him instead.

Joannah Keats says

At times laugh-out-loud funny, Albert Podell's story of his worldly travels is both informative and enjoyable to read. It took me longer than average to finish this book because it is rather long and does drag occasionally. I wish he had included more of his mainstream travels rather than primarily the most dangerous and poorest countries on earth, but I understand the purpose of the omission.

I highly recommend this book to anyone with a taste for adventure, especially anyone considering undertaking the same challenge.

Ints says

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karadarb?ba ?eks?ša p?c ?sti neattaisnojas. T?pat autors sagr?va manus priekšstatus par klus? oke?na sal?m. Man tagad ir saraksti?š ar sal?m, kuru apmekl?jumu es esmu izsv?trojis no potenci?lajiem galam?r?iem. Taj? ietilpst ar? mana b?rnu dienu sap?u zeme Nauru. Uz to aizkulties ir tikai ne tikai nej?dz?gi d?rgi, bet vistrak?kais ir fakts, ka no vi?as tu prom tiec tikai p?c ned??as, un ar? tas nav garant?ts. T?pat es pl?noju izvair?ties no ?frikas valst?m. Esmu cinisks re?lists, es negatavojos maks?t naudu, lai brauktu skat?ties k? viet?jie iedz?vot?ji mirst badu, sl?gst bezcer?b? un ubago naudu iztikai. Vietas, kur baltais cilv?ks tiek uzskat?ts par staig?jošu bankom?tu, mani tracina. Vis?m p?r?j?m valst?m gan v?l ir cer?ba, ka es tur iegriez?šos.

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Ruth says

Thank you to St. Martin's Press and Netgalley for the ARC!

If you enjoy rollicking travel adventure stories told by an opinionated older man, then this book is for you. Personally, I particularly enjoyed the chapter in which the author went into minute detail regarding what constitutes a country--and according to whom. I hadn't realized there were so many opinions to be had on the subject. Unfortunately, some of the strong attitudes expressed by the author clash quite strongly with values that I hold, so that dampened my enjoyment of the read somewhat.

Side note: Mongolia rises higher and higher on my list of countries I'd like to visit soon.

Jason Sydejko says

It was a fun read. There was a lot of good advice, fun stories, and enjoyable humor. Some parts were a little 'really man?', i.e. 'I pay my tax dollars so you should help me' to a US embassy, and a few other parts that made him seem like he thought he was 'above everything'. Beyond that, worth a read.

Laura Bedingfield says

I loved this book--but the author is a pompous, chauvinistic pig who overwrites and uses the thesaurus way too much. Nonetheless, the story--of how he visited all 196 countries--is fascinating and the book is chock full of crazy travel tales, including strandings at airports in the south pacific, eating supremely odd local food, and having to employ armed bodyguards to get around certain middle eastern countries. If you can overlook the superior attitude taken by the author, it really is a great read, especially for anyone who likes to travel.

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

Shades of Bill Bryson meets Phileas Fogg.

Podell has put together an interesting amalgamation of his tales in his quest to visit every country in the world over the last 50 years. Some he has to revisit as a result of splits such as Yugoslavia, and some have ceased to exist such as East Germany.

Written in a humorous style, but not to same quality as Bill Bryson and his wry observations, Podell has concentrated on the more dangerous and interesting parts of his travels so much of the book is Central African and Middle East based.

Be warned that his commentary will not be to all tastes, especially his views and participation in the sex trade in Thailand, however he writes with compassion about other subjects such as third-word child-mortality rates.

Although this book does have some amusing sections, I felt it slightly overly long and as a result does drag occasionally. However, it does have some interesting snapshots of some very obscure parts of the world well off the regular tourist trails.

Holiday in Nauru anyone? !

Beth Peninger says

Thank you to NetGalley and Thomas Dunne Books for this free copy. In exchange I am providing an honest review.

I got to about page 85 before I gave up. It's not that the book is poorly written or dull but it wasn't keeping my attention and I was preferring to do other things beside read it. So as a nod to "so many books, so little time" I decided to move on.

Podell managed to touch down and visit every country in the world in 50 years. That takes a lot of planning, time, money, and in some case with some countries courage and persistence. He had companions along the way and he went solo at some times. Yes, I managed to get all of this from the first 85 pages. His stories and adventures recounted were interesting but not enough to keep me reading.

Paulette Noble says

I totally agree with the advance reviewers.

Author Harold Stephens calls it "the best travel-adventur book written in this young century., author Will Lutwick raves that " it sets a new standard for travel-adventure books.". And Tony Wheeler, the founder of Lonely Planet books, who revolutionized the industry, applauds that "it's like Crocodile Dunder produced by Monty Python and edited by Woody Allen."

I agree with all these guys, but I also have something to add as a women and the author of 20 books.. Despite all the thrilling adventures and hair-raising escapes and revolting foods and arduous conditions, and despite

the fact that Mr. Podell is a former editor of Playboy, this is also a book for women. The author writes with comprehension and compassion about how poorly women are treated in most of the undeveloped world, about female genital mutilation, about the lives of women in the sex trade, about third-world child-mortality rates, , and about many other subjects of particular interest to women. If you want to fully understand your world, this is the book to read. .
