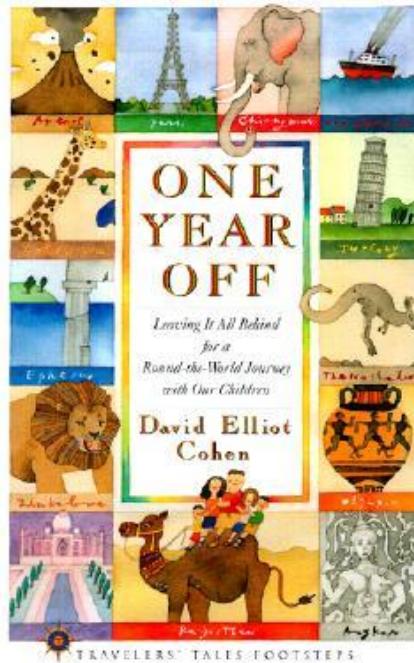


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One Year Off: Leaving It All Behind for a Round-the-World Journey with Our Children

David Elliot Cohen

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A year off from work. A meandering, serendipitous journey around the globe with the people you love most. No mortgage, no car payments, no pressure. Though it sounds like an impossible dream for most people, one day David Cohen and his family decide to make it a reality. With his wife and three children, Cohen sets off on a rollicking journey, full of laugh-out-loud mishaps, heart-pounding adventures, and unforeseen epiphanies. Readers join the Cohen family and trek up a Costa Rican volcano, roam the Burgundy canals by houseboat, traverse the vast Australian desert, and discover Istanbul by night. Through it all, the family gets the rare opportunity to get to know each other without the mundane distractions of television and video games, discovering the world through new eyes and gaining fresh perspective on life and priorities.

One Year Off: Leaving It All Behind for a Round-the-World Journey with Our Children Details

Date : Published April 25th 2001 by Travelers' Tales (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9781885211651

Author : David Elliot Cohen

Format : Paperback 302 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Parenting, Adventure



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From Reader Review One Year Off: Leaving It All Behind for a Round-the-World Journey with Our Children for online ebook

Jayanthi Venkataramani says

It starts off really well and incredible that someone actually did this. However I lost interest through the mid of the book only because it becomes more and more a personal tale and I did not find any deep insight. I think what put me off most (not at all any reflection on the book or the author and his adorable family) was that he seemed to have a lot of disposable cash to kind of get around all the things that I would've found frustrating even in a single journey, forget a round-the-world trip! He also has a baby sitter for the whole length of the trip that goes with them - isn't that nice.

Overall though, the writing is interesting and we need more books like these! Maybe I'll go back and finish reading it.

Anne says

Like the author, we have abandoned our life as we knew it, for a year, with our 4 young children (one still in diapers) and moved abroad. Unlike the other, we moved to a developing country for the entire year, instead of moving constantly country to country. I think I prefer our approach. We have found a great house to live in, getting to know locals on a personal level through church and the kids' schools, struggling with language, and the transitions that kids face in a new home. At times we are REALLY feeling the pains of being foreigners, but mostly we are loving our experience. I did enjoy comparing our year experiences and I appreciated the author's honesty (about the good the bad, finances, mistakes, lessons learned, etc.).

Madrezenith says

I am really interested in travelling the world with my husband and 4 children, so I looked forward to this book quite a bit. It was a gift from a well-meaning friend. I was so disappointed! The author's tone was a bit arrogant, major details were omitted (like they spent 6 months in Australia!! They put their kids in school there! Tell me more!!). Also, they took a nanny and spent a lot of time on planes and in hotels while I was hoping for some low-budget tips. I appreciate and applaud their trip but for me, I hope there are other books to address family RTW trips.

Barbara says

Plot Summary: A midlife crisis prompts a successful San Francisco book editor to quit his job, sell his house and possessions and take a one-year trip around the world with his wife, three young children and a nanny. Thrilling and at times harrowing, Cohen's tale, written as a series of email updates to friends, takes you along to experience the sights, sounds and tastes of more than 20 exotic locales, from Costa Rica to Laos.

Appeals: humorous travel memoir; traveling with children; midlife crisis; email format; adventure around the world

Thomasin says

You're in your early 40's, have wife, 3 kids, successful job...what else to do but sell your house and cars, pack a bag for each family member, and head-off on a year-long adventure around the world?!

I enjoyed Cohen's humorous accounts of his family's exploits (from their pre-trip jitters to the animal attack in Africa to learning the difference between Sards and Italians).

Quick fun read which will make you wish you too would decide to ditch your "old" life and start afresh in foreign lands!

Maria Elmvang says

Really interesting book, and I loved living vicariously through the Cohen family. It's the next best thing to being there myself, and I liked how David didn't sugar coat anything. Things were the way they were - the good as well as the bad.

A shame that David's emails home became less and less detailed as the time went on - their time in Costa Rica and Europe was wonderfully elaborate, but after that weeks and even months disappeared with no real mention. If it hadn't been for that, I'd have rated it a full 5 stars, but though very understandable, it was a tad frustrating.

Still, he mentioned a lot of places I wanted to go (or go back!) which made for fascinating reading, and all in all I've definitely caught the travel bug!

Bridget says

Very interesting to think about doing this - selling your house and packing up everything to travel around the world for one year. The author and his family had a fantastic time.

Morgan says

I'm not a fan of nonfiction books so I guess this wasn't terrible. I didn't particularly enjoy it though I thought it was interesting.

David Cohen was once adventurous. And now married with 3 children living the normal American lifestyle he begins to miss the adventurous life he once had. So he and his wife, Devi, decide to take a trip around the world. They don't know how long (it ends up being a year long obviously) but they're excited to take a year off life. Although it takes a little longer to plan than they thought they're soon on their way to begin their trip. With their 8 year old daughter Kara, 7 year old son Willie, 2 year old son Lucas, and their nanny Betty

they begin their trip around the world. On the trip they may have some mishaps, go through some self discovery, and learn many lessons along the way, but they definitely manage to have and unforgettable trip. I wasn't absolutely amazed by this book, but it was pretty cool that they managed to have such a great time. I didn't enjoy this a lot, but that may have something to do with the fact that I don't like nonfiction. If you do like nonfiction and traveling books you will like this book!

Jennifer says

I really enjoyed reading this family's story in preparation for our sabbatical next year. I'm definitely not ready for a whole year off, just a month, but it was great to read of a family including their small children. Very brave. Well written and enjoyable. I'm just sad that 6 years after their adventure that they were divorced.

Ellen says

The author of this book somehow managed to extract himself entirely from his life as a coffee table book publisher and spend a year traveling around the world with his three children, ages 8, 7, and 2. This is the somewhat straightforward tale of their adventures in Costa Rica, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. I admire the Cohens' adventurousness and their desire to give their children a taste of the wider world. The story is told from the father's point of view exclusively, and it's interesting to read what he perceives as his children's reactions to various aspects of the trip.

I really liked the last chapter of the book, where the family visits a dark cave full of hundreds of carved Buddha statues. The father forgot to bring a flashlight, so he lights matches to illuminate the statues for just a few seconds at a time. He writes:

"Then it struck me that life was like that, too. You light a match, and you're just a child. Light another, and you're married with children of your own. A few more brief, bright flares, and your babies have left home. A few more after that and your pack is used up. That might be why, at the end of our journey, we found ourselves standing in the Buddha caves of Pak Ou. To learn that we only have one pack of matches. To understand that we have to be in the best possible place when we light each one. To know that we must make each brief combustion a bright, shining moment that pierces the darkness and illuminates a thousand gods."

Becky says

I've travelled to eleven different countries, not too shabby for someone my age, but right now I'm definitely an armchair tourist. This trip-around-the-world tale was good fun - I even laughed out loud a few times at the adventures (and misadventures) of the mid-nineties Cohen family. Fun fact: they were in Hong Kong the day it was relinquished by Britain.

Stephanie says

This has always been a back-of-my-mind fantasy: to take the kids out of school for a year, quit our jobs, sell our house and travel the world, letting the museums, historical sites and natural wonders be our classrooms.

This author did just that, with his wife and 3 kids aged 3, 7, and 8. Reading his narrative of the year abroad makes me really want to travel the world even more, but makes me want to travel it with my kids a bit less! While it sounds great in theory, I don't think I could manage to stay cheerful with my nearest and dearest, 24/7 amidst jet-lag, strange food, navigating unknown lands, no schedules (or rather, conforming to the kids' schedules) and just letting go. I'm way too type-A.

Nonetheless, it was humorous, cringe-worthy, and downright fascinating to read this book. I don't give it the full 5 stars because of the author's tendency towards pretension. I consider myself fairly educated and well-read and when there are a full 12 words I need to look up in the dictionary, it's a bit much. sybaritic? pulchritude? anyone?

Saving my pennies until my around-the-world trip in 2024...

Todd N says

This is a book about a suburban family guy who hits 40 and then decides to leave his job, sell his house, and spend a year traveling the world with his wife and three kids. It's an interesting idea, but you need to know up front that he's not a regular guy -- his family was able to send him to Yale, and he became a millionaire around 30 when he sold his book publishing business. They can afford to bring a nanny along, and his wife is fluent in four languages.

So while I identify with the suburban angst and the desire to chuck it all and hit the road, I also understand that these are pretty high-class problems to have. After reading this book I'm not entirely sure that he does.

That said, this book is an interesting read. His kids are mostly bored by the cathedrals and museums of Europe, but they are completely fascinated by Africa. The parents' plan to home school their kids breaks down almost immediately, so they make it up by enrolling their kids in a school in Australia. It's also interesting to read about how some plans just go horribly wrong, which at the beginning of the trip leads to bickering, but later in the trip leads to a more fatalistic view.

This book also shattered my stereotype of the overprotective parents of Marin County. They take their kids camping in Africa (albeit with a guide), and a water buffalo is killed by a pride of lions right by their camp at night. They also wind up missing an outbreak of government violence in Cambodia by less than a day.

Early in the book Mr. Cohen brags that since he graduated from Yale he can never become a bum -- only an eccentric. But I was surprised at how conventional most of the locations they chose and the way they traveled were. The only book he mentions reading during the trip is *On The Road*, which again seems very conventional.

After reading this book I am a lot warmer to the idea of traveling the world now, which is probably why my wife checked this book out of the library for me. However, I don't think I would enjoy a trip like the one described in this book. Except for the several month stay in Australia and some time on a houseboat, it just seems like a long slog of arriving at a location, seeing the sites, and then jetting off to the next location.

If I were to travel for a year I would pick 12 locations and stay a month in each. It would probably be cheaper, and it would leave more time for hanging out and soaking in the culture a little more. (I also would rent my house instead of selling it. What the hell was he thinking doing that?)

I would be interested to read more about the practical aspects of traveling around the world with a family -- how to access money, the bare minimum of what to pack, how to get kids to behave, how to stay in touch with people back home, etc. Bringing along a nanny so you aren't cock-blocked by the kids for a year is a very good tip.

One last note: I was very distracted while reading this book because I kept wondering how Mr. Cohen was able to get a wife who is so amazingly hot and intelligent. This book doesn't exactly cast him in the best light, and his attempts at being self-deprecating aren't particularly convincing. If this were a fiction book, it would completely prevent the suspension of disbelief. (Unfortunately, I did a search for their family after finishing the book to see what they are up to. I didn't like what I found. Don't do it until after you have read this book.)

Suzanne says

If you're planning a trip abroad with children, this book is invaluable for research. But if you enjoy travel literature (such as Paul Theroux), this book will fall short.

Originally written as a series of emails, the book contains breezy updates from the father of a family who decided to sell their house and travel around the world for a year. While the author (an editor of photography coffee table books) is funny, he is not a shrewd observer of people or places -- or if he is, lacks the writing chops to convey them. He also can't help but show off, in a middle-class way, his familiarity with foreign languages and cultures and overall his rather privileged view on life. The emails-slash-chapter lack the development of overall themes, and he rather abruptly at the end summarizes some conclusions in a "what I learned on my summer vacation" sort of way.

That said, I did enjoy reading about how the parents weren't afraid to travel like locals and bring their children on adventures -- the chapters on traveling through Africa were riveting. The author may write like a dilettante, but put his philosophy into practice and it sounds like the whole family benefited from the trip.

On a side note, the author commented on how the strength of his relationship with his wife, but some brief internet research shows that they've since separated. Since the book never plumbs the depths of the author's relationships with anyone, it's difficult to understand how likely that is.

Malin Friess says

Cohen had the courage (and convinced his wife and kids to join him) to quit his job, sell his house and car and most of his possessions and travel the world for a year. It sounds impossible, but they packed their stuff into a few suitcases and with passports Some people thought they were crazy, others thought they were brilliant--everyone wanted to know how it turned out.

A few tips from the Cohen family-

- The cathedrals, churches, and castles in Europe all start to look the same-- the kids much preferred going on Safari in Botswana to the Vatican-
- Find a nice beach-- indeed they did in Perth Australia- and they stayed their 3 months and schooled their kids for free in the public schools
- Save you money (food and lodging is expensive)- and they didn't stay in Hostels.
- Avoid expensive pre-scheduled tours-- you can work things out once you get there
- There can be something like "too much family time"
- find the unique--one of their favorite activities was renting a houseboat and traveling the locks and canals of Amsterdam for several days
- Don't try to drive across Australia-- it's 9 straight days of nothing but desert

4 stars.
