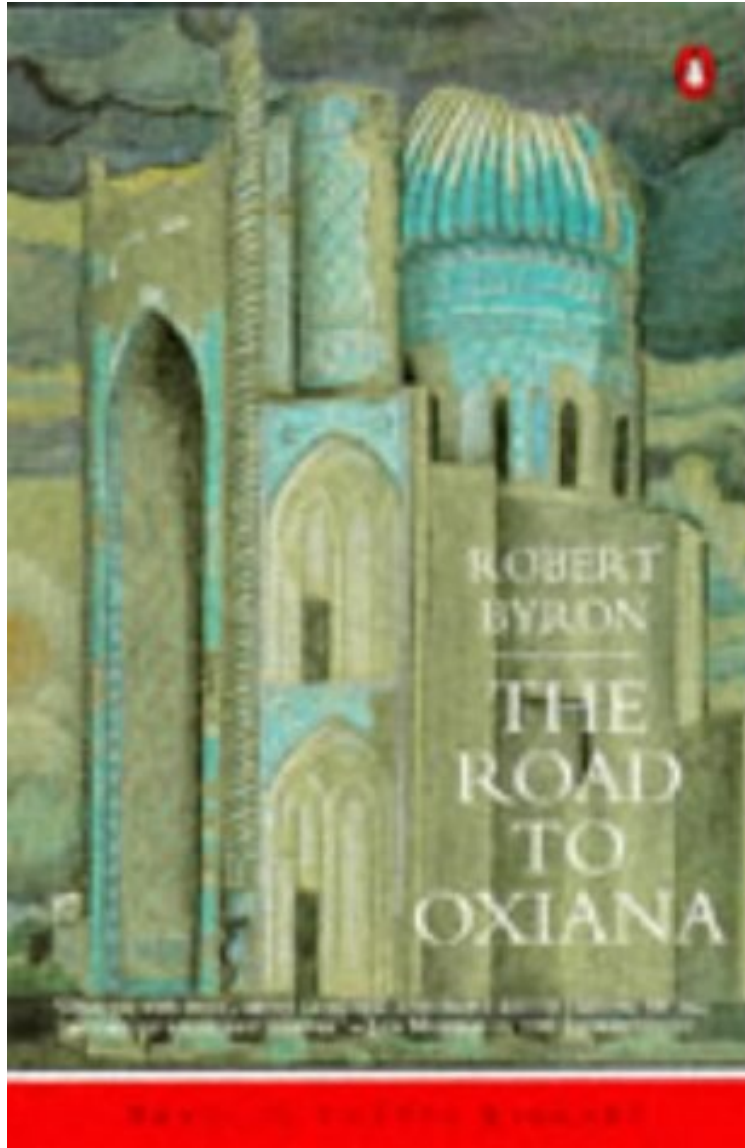


(Free and download) The Road to Oxiana (Penguin Travel Library)

The Road to Oxiana (Penguin Travel Library)

Robert Byron

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Robert Byron : The Road to Oxiana (Penguin Travel Library) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Road to Oxiana (Penguin Travel Library):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. fantastic..By John HarrisA one-of-a-kind book, fantastic....Never read anything remotely like it.12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Great writing, great landscape, great characters - read it!By William J. FeuerThis wonderful account by Robert Byron of his travels through Persia and Afghanistan is spare when it should be spare: "Lifar came to dinner. Bertie mentioned that all whales have syphilis" (a

complete paragraph from page 19) and effusive when it should be effusive: "Here the green resolved, not into ordinary grass, but into wild corn, barley, and oats, which accounted for that vivid fire, as of a life within the green. And among these myriad bearded alleys lived a population of flowers, buttercup and poppies, pale purple irises and dark purple campanulas, and countless others..." (from a paragraph on page 200). Never mind the country he was traveling through, I just love his prose. They are never trite, never cliché. It's almost as if when a hackneyed phrase would have done, he sought hard for something bright, fresh, new. But don't ever mind the country he explored (stony deserts, mountains, steppes, caves, rivers) or the people he encountered (generous peasants, officious police, frightened guides, accommodative local governors, obstreperous archaeologists, clueless tourists, declamatory larger than life ambassadors whose words are accompanied by appropriate dynamic markings...) - he makes them all fascinating. His dry British wit pervades much of the manuscript. And, oh, how he waxes eloquent on architecture, a subject which in the abstract seems excruciatingly boring to me, but is never so within this book, as he documents the features of mosques and mausoleums and ruined cities. In the 30's when Byron made this trip Iran was Persia and under the autocratic rule of the Shah (AKA Marjoribanks) instead of being strangled by fundamentalist clerics. Afghanistan was a poor underdeveloped country under (what in Afghanistan passes for) the benign rule of its royal family. Now that country has been destroyed by 30 years of internal strife, war with the Soviet Union, Taliban depravity, war with the US, and more internal strife. Whatever the consequences for the peoples of these countries, the time is long gone when an English speaking traveler could make their way from Persepolis to the feet of the Hindu Kush or the Pamirs. How sad. But at least one can read Byron's book. I'd also recommend Dervla Murphy's Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle. It's not as cerebral, but just imagine the idea of anyone, let alone (gasp) a woman, bicycling all the way from Eastern Europe, through Azerbaijan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan into India. That was in 1963. Wow!

This travel book was written in 1933-4 when the author travelled to Persia and Afghanistan. It is a record of his journeys, full of observation of people and places, and funny dialogue.

A brilliantly-wrought expression of a thoroughly modern sensibility, a portrait of an accidental man adrift between frontiers. -- Jonathan Raban
From the Inside Flap
In 1933 the delightfully eccentric Robert Byron set out on a journey through the Middle East via Beirut and Jerusalem.
About the Author
Robert Byron was born in England in 1905 into a family distantly related to Lord Byron. He attended Eton and Merton College, Oxford, and wrote several other travel books before his untimely death in 1941 when his ship to West Africa was torpedoed while serving as a correspondent for a London newspaper during World War II.