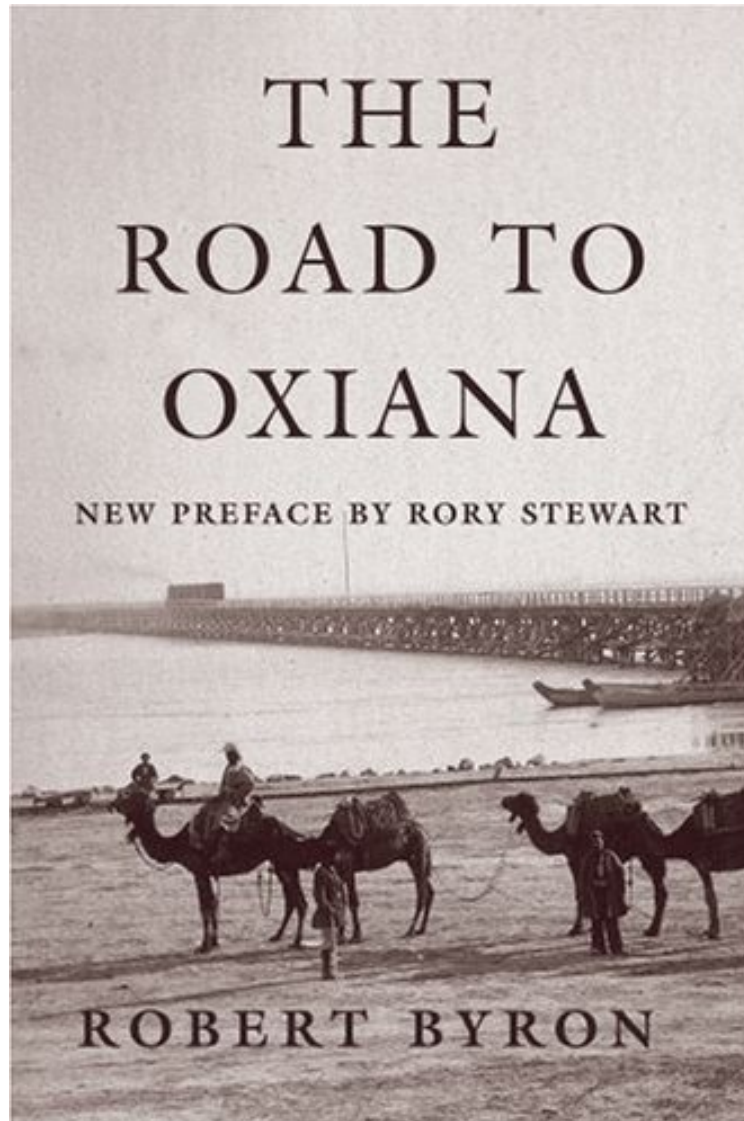


The Road to Oxiana

Robert Byron

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

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Breathtaking ride into 6th century persia.....and the everybit as remote pre-WWII Iran by English brahminsBy William V. DePauloExtraordinary story by man with deep knowledge of and appreciation for architectural history.....but you don't need to share that interest to enjoy the literate description of a world long since evaporated, of travelers who actually carried "letters of introduction".....in part absurd, in part

wildly entertaining.....the ride, by car boat rail truck camel footwhatever... is worth it for the company.....4 of 4 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 never 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! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Yes - a true classicBy Alan McNamaraThis is a true classic. Easy read full of personality and dry English humour. Travelling through Iran and Afghanistan between the world wars, Robert Byron describes places familiar from the news but inaccessible today. And travelling as only an Englishman abroad can do so. Byron's special interest was architecture and his descriptions of the many mosques and cities he visited are superb. But it is his word paintings of the various characters he encountered that enchant, from the Afghan ambassador to Byron's driver and donkeys.

In 1933, the delightfully eccentric travel writer Robert Byron set out on a journey through the Middle East via Beirut, Jerusalem, Baghdad and Teheran to Oxiana, near the border between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Throughout, he kept a thoroughly captivating record of his encounters, discoveries, and frequent misadventures. His story would become a best-selling travel book throughout the English-speaking world, until the acclaim died down and it was gradually forgotten. When Paul Fussell published his own book *Abroad*, in 1982, he wrote that *The Road to Oxiana* is to the travel book what "Ulysses is to the novel between the wars, and what *The Waste Land* is to poetry." His statements revived the public's interest in the book, and for the first time, it was widely available in American bookstores. Now this long-overdue reprint will introduce it to a whole new generation of readers. This edition features a new introduction by Rory Stewart, best known for his book *The Places In Between*, about his extensive travels in Afghanistan. Today, in addition to its entertainment value, *The Road to Oxiana* also serves as a rare account of the architectural treasures of a region now inaccessible to most Western travelers, and a nostalgic look back at a more innocent time.

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 travel books before his untimely death in 1941, while serving as a correspondent for a London newspaper during World War II.