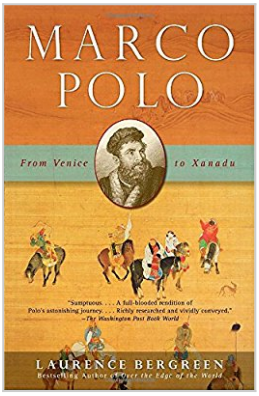

Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu

By Laurence Bergreen

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Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu By Laurence Bergreen

As the first European to travel extensively throughout Asia, Marco Polo was the earliest bridge between East and West. His famous journeys took him across the boundaries of the known world, along the dangerous Silk Road, and into the court of Kublai Kahn, where he won the trust of the most feared and reviled leader of his day. Polo introduced the cultural riches of China to Europe, spawning centuries of Western fascination with Asia.

In this lively blend of history, biography, and travelogue, acclaimed author Laurence Bergreen separates myth from history, creating the most authoritative account yet of Polo's remarkable adventures. Exceptionally narrated and written with a discerning eye for detail, *Marco Polo* is as riveting as the life it describes.

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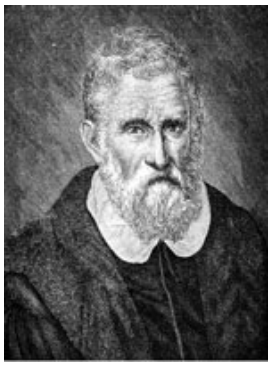
Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Drawing on original writings and walking in the footsteps of Marco Polo himself, Laurence Bergreen's *Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu* is the most definitive biography of the legendary traveler to date, separating the man from his considerable myth. Look inside *Marco Polo* (Click on thumbnails to see a larger image):



Marco Polo: a traditional portrait; Granger

Frontispiece of an early published edition of Marco Polo's Travels, Nuremberg, Germany, 1477; Granger

Kublai Khan, emperor of the world's largest land-based empire; Granger

Marco Polo commanded a Venetian galley similar to this in the Battle of Curzola; Granger

Stone carving on the Marco Polo bridge; Laurence Bergreen

Marco Polo's vivid and occasionally misinterpreted descriptions of his travels inspired this medieval artist to depict dragons in China; Granger

Marco Polo timeline (All dates given in the Julian calendar): **1215** - Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan and Marco Polo's mentor, is born. **1254** - Marco Polo born in Venice, although one tradition locates his birthplace in the Venetian colony of Dalmatia. **1260** - Kublai Khan becomes leader of the Mongols and in 1271 founds the Yuan ("Origin") Dynasty. **1271** - Young Marco Polo leaves Venice with his father Niccolo and uncle Maffeo, bound for the court of Kublai Khan. **1274** - Kublai Khan oversees a failed Mongol invasion of Japan, as the Mongols, masters of the Steppe, meet their match at sea. **1275** - The three Polos arrive in Shang-du, Kublai Khan's summer palace immortalized by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as Xanadu; Marco begins his years in the service of the Khan. **1276 - 1293** - Marco travels throughout Asia, reaching the coast of India, and possibly Zanzibar, gathering intelligence for Kublai Khan and serving as a tax collector for the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. **1281** - Kublai Khan's second failed invasion of Japan, a serious blow to his prestige. **1292** - The Polos escort Princess Kokachin to Persia to marry, their last formal service to Kublai Khan before departing. **1294** - Kublai Khan dies, freeing the Polo family, who undertake a

dangerous return voyage by sea. **1295** - Marco, his father, and uncle, arrive in Venice after their 24-year absence. They have been away for so long that their fellow Venetians do not recognize them. **1298** - Marco is captured by the Genoese in the Battle of Curzola, according to some accounts, and confined to a cell in Genoa with a romance writer, Rustichello of Pisa, to whom he dictates his adventures in China, his reminiscences of Kublai Khan, his life among the Mongols. **1300** - Safely back in Venice, Marco Polo marries Donata Badoer; the couple has three daughters. **1324** - As manuscript versions of his exploits spread throughout Europe, Marco Polo dies in Venice, claiming that he did not reveal the half of his experiences in his remarkable *Travels*.

From Publishers Weekly
Even in his own day, the famed 13th-century travel writer Marco Polo was mocked as a purveyor of tall tales—gem-encrusted clothes, nude temple dancing girls, screaming tarantulas—in his narrative of his journey to the Chinese court of the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan. In this engrossing biography, Bergreen (*James Agee: A Life*), while allowing that mere facts... were never enough for Marco, finds him a roughly accurate and perceptive witness (aside from the romantic embellishments and outright fabrications concocted with his collaborator Rustichello of Pisa) who painted an influential and unusually sympathetic portrait of the much-feared Mongols. Bergreen follows Polo's disjointed commentary on everything from Chinese tax policy to asbestos manufacturing, crocodile hunting and Asian sexual mores—Polo was especially taken with the practice of sharing one's wife with passing travelers—while deftly glossing it with scholarship. Less convincing is Bergreen's attempt to add depth to Polo's lurid taste and over-heated imagination by portraying him as both a prophet of globalization and a pilgrim and explorer of the spirit. Polo's spiritual trek didn't take him very far, since he ended his days back in Venice as a greedy, litigious merchant. Still, the result is a long, strange, illuminating trip. 16 pages of photos, 3 maps. *(Oct. 25)*
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Laurence Bergreen, the author of books about Louis Armstrong, Irving Berlin, James Agee, and Ferdinand Magellan, traveled Marco Polo’s route across Mongolia and China to conduct research for *Marco Polo*. Part biography, part travelogue, and part scholarly analysis, the book offers a glimpse of an exotic Asia that few knew at the time—and that Bergreen, with his rich research and stories, mostly corroborates. Bergreen posits Polo as an early promoter of globalization, an open-minded traveler who adopted some of Kublai Khan’s philosophies and carried them back to Europe. If Bergreen sometimes succumbs to speculation (Polo’s egotism is well recorded, though his time in China is not), *Marco Polo* will immortalize the famed traveler—again.
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Users Review

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Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the coastal world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try point that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition info. Even you love Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu, it is possible to enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout men. What? Still don't have it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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