



## The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes

By Carl Hoffman

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### The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes By Carl Hoffman

Indonesian Ferry Sinks. Peruvian Bus Plunges Off Cliff. African Train Attacked by Mobs. Whenever he picked up the newspaper, Carl Hoffman noticed those short news bulletins, which seemed about as far from the idea of tourism, travel as the pursuit of pleasure, as it was possible to get. So off he went, spending six months circumnavigating the globe on the world's worst conveyances: the statistically most dangerous airlines, the most crowded and dangerous ferries, the slowest buses, and the most rickety trains. The Lunatic Express takes us into the heart of the world, to some its most teeming cities and remotest places: from Havana to Bogotá on the perilous Cuban Airways. Lima to the Amazon on crowded night buses where the road is a washed-out track. Across Indonesia and Bangladesh by overcrowded ferries that kill 1,000 passengers a year. On commuter trains in Mumbai so crowded that dozens perish daily, across Afghanistan as the Taliban closes in, and, scariest of all, Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., by Greyhound.

The Lunatic Express is the story of traveling with seatmates and deckmates who have left home without American Express cards on conveyances that don't take Visa, and seldom take you anywhere you'd want to go. But it's also the story of traveling as it used to be -- a sometimes harrowing trial, of finding adventure in a modern, rapidly urbanizing world and the generosity of poor strangers, from ear cleaners to urban bus drivers to itinerant roughnecks, who make up most of the world's population. More than just an adventure story, The Lunatic Express is a funny, harrowing and insightful look at the world as it is, a planet full of hundreds of millions of people, mostly poor, on the move and seeking their fortunes.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Travel and technology journalist Hoffman (*Hunting Warbirds*) had two motives for penning this tour of the world's most life-threatening modes of transportation, including trains in India, buses in South America, and trucks in Afghanistan: to expose the "parallel reality," obscured by the tourism industry, of millions for whom "travel was still a punishing, unpredictable, and sometimes deadly work of travail"; and for thrills. By the first measure—showing how much of the world gets from place to place—Hoffman is commendably fascinating: his depiction of the horrors people endure just to see family members or get to work is unforgettable. Unfortunately, Hoffman's secondary motive dominates much of the ruminating prose, and it's hard to sympathize with his middle-aged family-man angst when he's subjecting his teenage daughter to a 24-hour ride across South American mountains in a bus with no bathroom. Elsewhere, a powerful description of the Indian train system segues into a tepid quasi-love affair. Readers with the patience to avoid some self-indulgent side-tracks will find much to reconsider during their next tough commute.

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From [Booklist](#)

You have to wonder who in their right mind would voluntarily fly on an airline with one of the world's worst safety records, or ride on a commuter train on which passengers die on an alarmingly regular basis. The answer is obvious: for most of the world's travelers, Hoffman tells us, travel is no luxury. The majority of today's travelers are not tourists; they travel because they must—usually for work—and they are routinely forced to endure incredibly unpleasant circumstances. Hoffman, being an adventurous travel writer, thought it might be instructive to take a few months and travel the world the way most of its nontourist population does: on the least safe airlines, the most crowded buses, through some of the most inhospitable and dangerous places on the planet. The result is a thoroughly fascinating book, full of shocking stories and plenty of things to make your skin crawl (cockroaches, anyone?). This is one travel book whose audience is restricted to armchair travelers; let's face it, would we really want to follow in the author's footsteps? -- David Pitt

Review

"This book is fabulous. The lean description, the weave of old and new perspective, the personalities, the real-people wisdom, and that the danger is as real as we don't want to think it is. *The Lunatic Express* is refreshing, liberating, and a paean to true Travel. Hoffman opened my eyes to the off-the-grid traveler, clearly most of the world, and made me cry. The last pages struck home; the duality of escape and harbor are the blessing and curse of life." -- Keith Bellows, Editor-in-Chief of *National Geographic Traveler*

"Reinvented the travel log as the supreme theater of paradox...a search for an unholy grail—something freakish; something dangerous; something authentic... Take this ride." --Richard Bangs, Producer/Host of the Public Television series, *Adventures with Purpose*

"There are two possibilities: we move through the world, or the world moves through us. Carl Hoffman's clever, funny, fearsome book does both. It takes us into the frantic fear and pitiless extinctions that punctuate the simple struggle to get from home to anywhere, for so many of the world's people. But it also takes us into the heart of the writer: and that journey, with its beauty and compassion, its conscience and courage, is so thrilling that we hope the ride never ends." -- Gregory David Roberts, author of *SHANTARAM*

“Carl Hoffman, a courageous and interestingly untroubled man from Washington, D.C., has done a great service by reminding us, in *The Lunatic Express*, of this abiding truism: that the world’s ordinary traveler is compelled to endure all too much while undertaking the grim necessities of modern movement...Mr. Hoffman spent a fascinating year going around the world precisely as most of the world's plainest people do—not on JetBlue or United or American or Trailways, modes of transport that look positively heavenly by comparison, but in the threadbare conveyances of the planet's billions....He learns along the way a great deal about the habits of the world's peripatetic poor, and he writes about both the process and the people with verve and charity, making this book both extraordinary and extraordinarily valuable....It is a wise and clever book too, funny, warm and filled with astonishing characters. But it also represents an important exercise, casting an Argus-eye on a largely invisible but un-ignorable world. It is thus a book that deserves to be read widely. Perhaps in some airport in a blinding rainstorm in the Midwest, while waiting for yet another infernally delayed American plane.” – Simon Winchester, *Wall Street Journal*

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **David Tillery:**

The reserve untitled *The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes* is the publication that recommended to you to read. You can see the quality of the e-book content that will be shown to you. The language that writer use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The writer was did a lot of analysis when write the book, to ensure the information that they share to your account is absolutely accurate. You also can get the e-book of *The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes* from the publisher to make you far more enjoy free time.

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#### **Carla Helton:**

*The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes* can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. We recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to get every word into delight arrangement in writing *The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes* although doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one among it. This great

information can easily drawn you into new stage of crucial contemplating.

**Michael Major:**

Reading a book make you to get more knowledge from that. You can take knowledge and information from your book. Book is composed or printed or illustrated from each source that will filled update of news. On this modern era like now, many ways to get information are available for you. From media social just like newspaper, magazines, science e-book, encyclopedia, reference book, story and comic. You can add your knowledge by that book. Isn't it time to spend your spare time to spread out your book? Or just searching for the The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes when you necessary it?

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