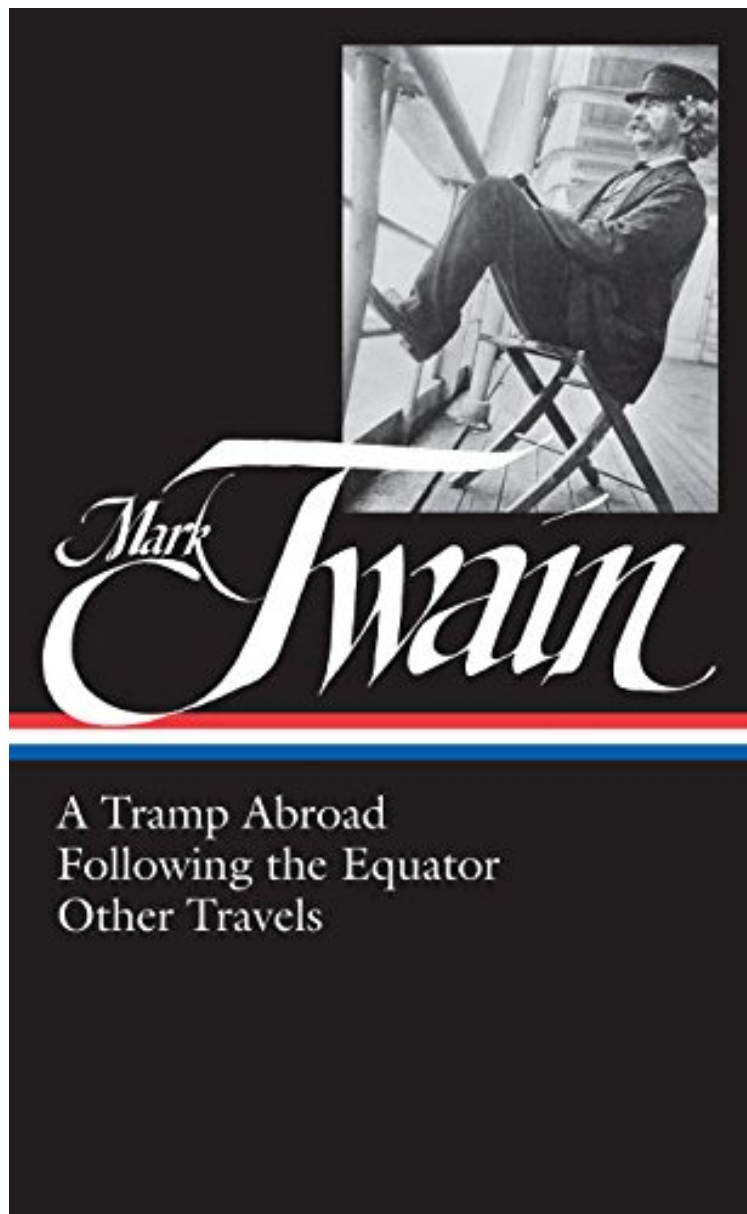


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## Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, Other Travels (Library of America No. 200)

Mark Twain

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**Mark Twain :** Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, Other Travels (Library of America No. 200) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mark Twain: A

Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, Other Travels (Library of America No. 200):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Good reading for the admirers of Twain  
By Montana Skyline  
It feels odd to comment with only modest enthusiasm about writing by a humorist and author, not to say "character," whom I much admire. I do so only to offer the thought that this is a collection of writing from Twain's travels that most likely will be appreciated by admirers of Twain, but might strike others as tedious. Yes, there are many instances of Twain's wit and sharp powers of observation, both of individuals and social circumstances, e.g. whether on ships in transit or in places distinct as Australia, India, and Burma (slight attention to China and Japan). If you can't get enough of Mark Twain, you probably will enjoy this collection, as I mostly did. But there often is a labored, world-weary tone about it. My understanding is that Twain wrote these travelogues essentially to make some money (no shame in that) during a time of great personal stress and loss, and perhaps that affects the tone. Still many insights to be appreciated, and interesting simply as traveler's reflections of the times and places that he visits. But if you are looking for the mood of "Innocents Abroad", the literary excellence and social critique of "Huckleberry Finn", or the light humor of some of his shorter works, probably this collection won't be that rewarding.  
5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.  
Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it  
By H. Schneider  
This LoA volume includes two of Mark Twain's best known travel books, plus several shorter travel texts. Mark Twain developed a special kind of travel writing, mixing 'real' reports on actual sounds and sights with satirical and anecdotal inserts and a dosis of autobiography. He also liked to insert material from others, like excerpts of other books, or like poems. He traveled extensively in Europe, and then he did a world tour, which included speaking engagements. The man was famous, which has some influence on his experiences. A Tramp Abroad: Mark Twain's account of his 1878 European tour is a delightful mixture of real information and twainish nonsense, e.g. a totally out of place chapter on the language of the jay. On the information side, even a local guy like me can still pick up one or the other info of touristic value, after more than 100 years. In case that you didn't know: Germany is full of places worth a visit. As is France, Switzerland, Italy. Twainish nonsense has been the ancestor of much great modern comedy. Do you remember Monty Python's school of debate? 'That is not an argument.' 'Yes it is.' 'No it isn't.' 'Yes it is.' 'No it isn't.' Ad infinitum. And it is straight from MT's Baden-Baden bath chapter. How much must I pay for the drink? As you please. How much? As you please. How much? As you please. And if they haven't dehydrated, they are still squabbling. On the other hand, the master was at times quite able to ride a joke to death. He makes up a vastly exaggerated mountaineering expedition in Zermatt, but deflates his funny idea by over stretching it. The other book included here is 'Following the Equator' from the mid 1890s. The trip started in Europe, from where MT returned to the US for a cross continent speech tour. The actual narration starts after that with a Pacific crossing from Victoria to Down Under. Some summaries of history, like Australia as a penal colony, or the great mutiny of India. A look at South African politics before the second Boer War. Much lovely nonsense, as in a chapter about Australasian wildlife. Most wonderful lies. Did you know that the wombat is the only game bird in Australia, and protected by the government? And a nice little essay on the glories of the platypus in the Darwinian scheme of things. MT was of course not just a joker, he was a political man. Among other issues, he takes a stance in the question of 'recruitment' of Pacific island natives for work in plantations in Queensland or New Caledonia. Practices of this 'labor traffic' were close enough to slavery to be revolting. His chapters on subjects of racism, which he calls race-aversion, are written with bitter sarcasm. He would also surely have been a tree-hugger, like all decent men: 'there is nothing like surface mining to snatch the graces and beauties out of a paradise, and make an odious and repulsive spectacle of it.' Mark Twain was a humanist who spoke up. Modern day language would call him liberal, and he would bear the distinction proudly. The dozen shorter travel texts included in this volume span the years 1873 to 97. They are newspaper articles not previously included in collections of MT's writing. So says the note on the text, and it may be true. However, several of these texts are also included in the LoA volume called Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, Essays 1891-1910. I am not too pleased with that, but it is a minor matter.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By timgood  
book

It was as a humorous travel writer, in *The Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It*, that Mark Twain first became widely known, and at the height of his career he returned to the genre in the works collected here. Like those earlier books, the frequently hilarious *A Tramp Abroad* (1880)-based on his family's 16-month sojourn in Europe from April 1878 to August 1879-blends autobiography and fiction, facts and tall tales. Twain's send-up of Old World customs as well as his critical dissections of Wagnerian opera and the German language are often interlaced with American reminiscences, whether in the form of an extended discourse on the language of blue jays or the recollection of an elaborate practical joke in Hannibal, Missouri, involving a printer's devil and a skeleton. *A Tramp Abroad* is presented here with the author's original sketches. Written at a time of financial trouble and personal loss (the death of the author's beloved daughter Susy), *Following the Equator* (1897) is a darker and more politicized account of a lecture tour around the world, with Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Ceylon, India, Mauritius, and South Africa among the stopovers. Using humorous but often biting anecdotes as well as keen journalist reporting, the book details bush life in Australia and the culture of the Maoris in New Zealand, while lashing out at social inequities such as the Indian caste

system, and racist imperialism connected with European settlement and gold mining in southern Africa. Twain rounds out the volume with extensive historical accounts ranging from the Black Hole of Calcutta to the events in South Africa that would lead shortly to the Boer War. This volume also includes 13 shorter pieces, most of them uncollected by the author, including a lengthy firsthand narrative of the shah of Persia's 1873 visit to London, an 1891 description of Richard Wagner's operas performed at Bayreuth, an 1897 account of Queen Victoria's jubilee in London, and an 1898 analysis of vitriolic Austrian parliamentary proceedings. The texts of several of these "other travels" are presented in newly corrected and fully restored versions.

"An encompassing and essential voyage to the dark side of the moon of American literature." -- Jonathan Lethem "Hoo-ahh. The first volume [is] a treasure trove. The second [is] an astounding collection of modern horror." -- Kurt Busiek  
About the Author  
Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Missouri, in 1835, and died at Redding, Connecticut in 1910. In his person and in his pursuits he was a man of extraordinary contrasts. Although he left school at twelve when his father died, he was eventually awarded honorary degrees from Yale University, the University of Missouri, and Oxford University. His career encompassed such varied occupations as printer, Mississippi riverboat pilot, journalist, travel writer, and publisher. He made fortunes from his writing but toward the end of his life he had to resort to lecture tours to pay his debts. He was hot-tempered, profane, and sentimental and also pessimistic, cynical, and tortured by self-doubt. His nostalgia helped produce some of his best books. He lives in American letters as a great artist, the writer whom William Dean Howells called the Lincoln of our literature.