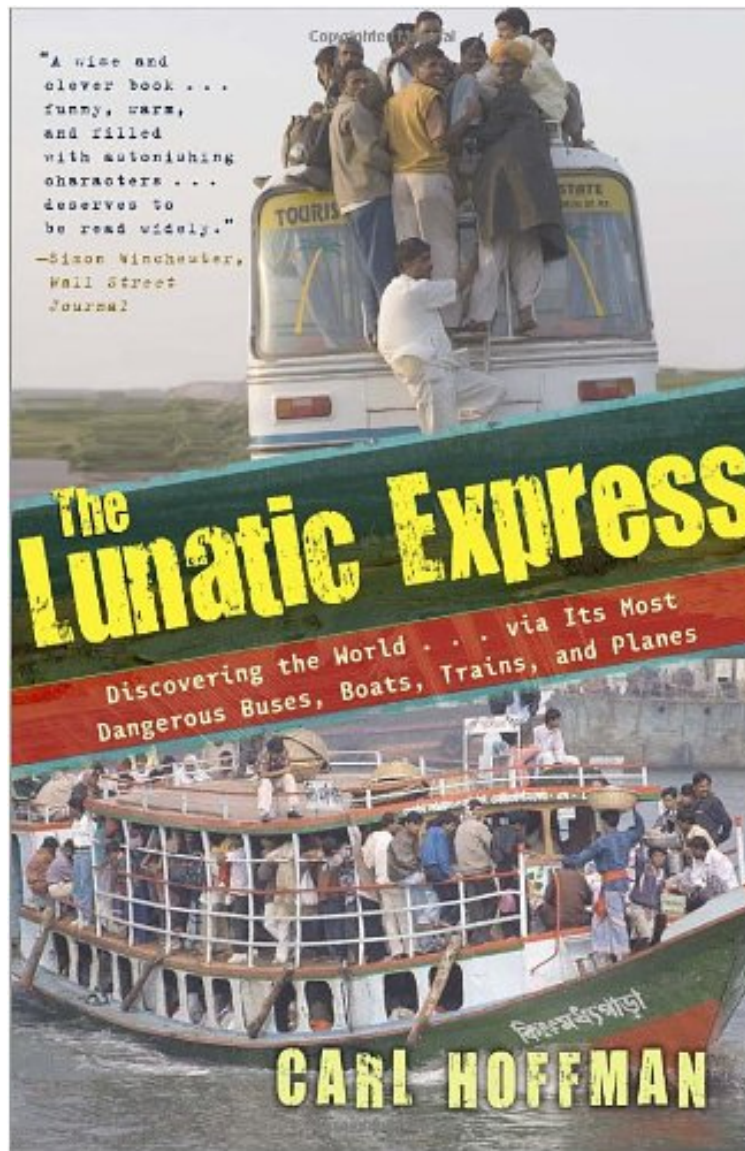


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The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes

Carl Hoffman

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Carl Hoffman : The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Lunatic Express: Discovering the World . . . via Its Most Dangerous Buses, Boats, Trains, and Planes:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. I absolutely was blown away by this book By Mary Anne Enriquez I absolutely was blown away by this book. I actually will be buying more copies to give as gifts. I do not understand the negative reviews of this book. Here is a man, the writer, who is deeply aware of his faults, and guilt ridden, goes on an incredible and often dangerous existential soul seeking journey. This is no travel story of the usual sense, but a deeply personal journal of a man's midlife crisis, and daily struggles of his place in the world. We all question our existence and place on earth...unless we are so poor, so hard working, that there is no time or energy left to think. The choices of where the author went, methods of travel, and his observances of not only other cultures, but of himself make for a book I could not put down. His writing was deeply spiritual and moving to me, though I got mad several times at his outrageously dangerous methods of travel, and his seemingly death wish when he has a family back home who love him. I would find myself yelling at him...at times...until I understood how brave it is to write one's inner quest for happiness- or at least peace. If the writer were a woman, no doubt the critics would call her "independent and adventurous," with no mention of "whiny and selfish," (opinions used in poor reviews below). What an incredible book. Yeah, makes one think about their cushy North American lives....we have nothing to complain about considering how much of the rest of the world lives. I am looking forward to Carl Hoffman's next journey. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Worth Reading By Marc Engaging book. Well written. Insightful narrative. Somewhat pretentious. Artificial premise. Human connection. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Take a Trip on the "Wild and Crazy" Side By William Capodanno I loved the premise of this book, even though as a happily married father of three children 11 and under, I'm not nearly as crazy as Carl Hoffman and certainly would never take such risks. However, as someone who loves to travel (albeit in comfort), "Lunatic Express" was quite entertaining -- a crazy trip on the most dangerous transportation modes across 5 continents during the course of 6 months. As Hoffman notes, living in the developed world, we take for granted the general safety of our travel, especially on trains, planes, boats and buses. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for those in "Third World" or "Developing" nations. Safety on these means of transport in these countries is nerve wracking and nail biting to say the least. Much of the equipment is poorly maintained and been put out of service by First World countries and there is little to no regulation. The truly refreshing aspect of Hoffman's book are the encounters he has with everyday people who not only help him experience the cultures and countries he visits, but literally help him survive some utterly suicidal trips (i.e., Afghanistan). Hoffman does his best to assimilate himself into the culture and forego any luxury or comfort. When "Lunatic Express" focuses on his travel experiences with all the local flavor, the book is wonderful. Unfortunately, like some other readers mention, I found the parts that focused on his self-analysis of his "reasons for this type of adventure" or the family troubles he was confronting a bit self-serving and uninteresting. This was especially true of the love-at-first-sight encounter in India that did nothing more than provide a view into Hoffman's shallow side. All quibbles aside, the bulk of this book is a first-rate adventure tale through some of the most unsafe trips you could ever dream up. I'm glad Hoffman survived his journey so we have this entertaining read to enjoy.

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 of its most teeming cities and remotest places: from Havana to Bogot 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.

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. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist You have to wonder who in their right mind would voluntarily fly on an airline with one of the worlds 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 worlds travelers, Hoffman tells us, travel is no luxury. The majority of todays 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; lets face it, would we really want to follow in the authors footsteps? --David Pitt 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 paradoxa 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 worlds 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.