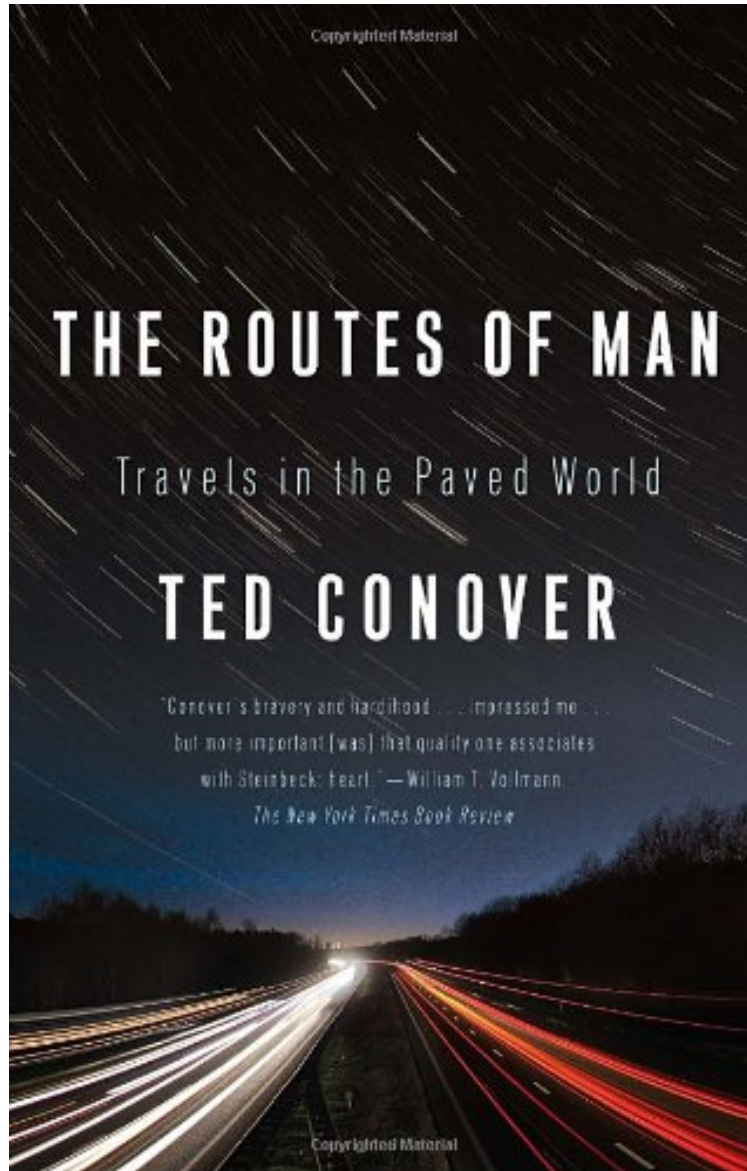


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The Routes of Man: Travels in the Paved World

Ted Conover

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Ted Conover : The Routes of Man: Travels in the Paved World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Routes of Man: Travels in the Paved World:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wow. I couldn't put it down. By Jason Stokes Picked this up for a recent plane flight to Africa, thinking it would give me plenty to read on the way over. Unfortunately, I screwed up - as I read the entire book on one flight, and was stuck with nothing but cheesy movies and in flight magazines for the

second flight. Bad for me, but good for my review of the book. I loved it. Conover follows several "roads" throughout the world, and highlights the impact that these roads are having on the people. He typically withholds judgment and just tells the story, but at times it is clear that he is both thrilled by and challenged by the prospect of these roads. They open up new markets, allow people to buy and sell goods, and generally integrate people better into the capitalist, western culture. However, this is usually at some expense of their native culture - whether it is people in northern India, who for centuries have had to use a frozen river to access lands outside their own, or the burgeoning car culture of China - both are challenging what it means to traditionally live in those areas. Overall, I was engaged and excited at many points. I found myself looking at roads in my area of Africa and imagining the impact they've had, as well as the roads back home. This book not only was an enjoyable read, it told a story that bears further thought and introspection.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. High contrasts in the every changing world

By OKay "While Conover examines troubling issues that road-building can entail--pitting development against environmental concerns, or isolation against connectivity and possible erasure of local cultures, for example--it is his strong sense of life's clock ticking all around him that lifts his reporting above the ranks of travel-as-usual literature. . "The building of new roads provokes mixed feelings for the wilderness that they replace and the never ending question of whether this is really progress. Roads change landscapes and both add and detract from the lives of the people nearby. In rich detail Ted Conover explores six routes and the impact of new roads. Included are just a few powerful pictures and thankfully some maps. But it's not just the geography and economics: he keeps a strong focus on the hopes and fears of those who travel these routes. In Peru, a load of rare mahogany makes its way over the Andes from an untracked part of the basin... He hitches rides in unreliable, body-battering trucks on narrow winding roads up the sides of mountains then boats down backwaters to witness illegal logging. Finally, he stays at a hotel for eco-tourists. But a new east-west route across South America will soon cross this whole area changing everything. In India, he walks for days on ice down a frozen riverbed with teenagers escaping their cul-de-sac Himalayan valley for more education: most will seldom return. Conover's high tech cold weather gear contrasts with the maroon goncha robes of the older men and then blends into the transitional garb of girls in traditional colorful garments and pink sneakers and boys in jeans and parkas. In East Africa, he visits truckers whose travels have been linked to the worldwide spread of AIDS. One can't help but like Obadiah who in his own words "is the best driver there is." Border bribery, the plight of women in the sex trade, and Uganda's green hills are part of the story as are the many "uncertain" causes of death. In the West Bank, Conover witnesses the injustices as Palestinian commuters wait in the sun at checkpoints, change cabs, sneak through yards, and are mysteriously detained. Roads for "Israelis only" divide not only farmers from their fields but the country from lasting peace. Then with Israeli soldiers Conover monitors the same checkpoints and rides on night patrols always alert for rock throwing, guns, and bombs. The weariness and hassle of it all exhausts and fascinates the reader at the same time. The Chinese road trip is lighthearted after Israel. This "modern version of a caravan" delights in the freedom of the open road (but without the US infrastructure for refueling, eating, and sleeping. Miles pile up as reckless drivers ride the shoulders and ignore both speed limits and police. No wonder Chinese highways are the deadliest in the world. But twelve hours at the wheel is fun for these guys: individuals in China have owned private cars only since the turn of the millennium. Lastly are the roads are in Lagos, Nigeria where bumper-to-bumper traffic "a go-slow" becomes an instant market and armed robbers and driving at night are synonymous. This huge immensely crowded (and still growing) African city has redefined traffic chaos. From inside one of only twenty-one ambulances in the city the reader gets a look at life in a global megacity. Even rush hour in Houston is looking good. Conover's reporting is close to the ground. One can't help but think that he is a brave guy with intestines of steel who, more than a few times would have really liked a long hot shower. But he largely keeps himself to himself focusing instead on the people and cultures being impacted by the encroachment from the routes of man. "I don't want to be rude," he says at one point "but I really would like to live to the end of this trip." It's an eye opening and entertaining read.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Places you want to read about but may not be able to handle the actual journey!!

By N. Wykstra My praise to Ted for his clear sentences and yet descriptive writing that gives one a feeling and vision of the journey. I like his writing enough that I will seek his other books. My son is a biologist, my science minor in preparation of my teaching degree and my age (72) give me some background to what is being said throughout the book. I am not yet finished and I am recommending the book to my friends. The findings and the Title have the main theme of these routes of our world. The research and actual adventures make for the perfect view of the particular route being described. The stories are like short stories gathered in one book so this is a good read for me. My husband has had Parkinsons for 18 years and I do not find time to read as I used to. I am his caregiver --we try to do things together most of the time. Whatever your age or life --I feel this book is a MUST READ!

From the Pulitzer Prize finalist and National Book Critics Circle Awardwinning author of Newjack, an absorbing book about roads and their power to change the world. Roads bind our world metaphorically and literally transforming landscapes and the lives of the people who inhabit them. Roads have unparalleled power to impact communities, unite worlds and sunder them, and reveal the hopes and fears of those who travel them. With his marvelous eye for detail and

his contagious enthusiasm, Ted Conover explores six of these key byways worldwide. In Peru, he traces the journey of a load of rare mahogany over the Andes to its origin, an untracked part of the Amazon basin soon to be traversed by a new east-west route across South America. In East Africa, he visits truckers whose travels have been linked to the worldwide spread of AIDS. In the West Bank, he monitors highway checkpoints with Israeli soldiers and then passes through them with Palestinians, witnessing the injustices and danger borne by both sides. He shuffles down a frozen riverbed with teenagers escaping their Himalayan valley to see how a new road will affect the now-isolated Indian region of Ladakh. From the passenger seat of a new Hyundai piling up the miles, he describes the exuberant upsurge in car culture as highways proliferate across China. And from inside an ambulance, he offers an apocalyptic but precise vision of Lagos, Nigeria, where congestion and chaos on freeways signal the rise of the global megacity. A spirited, urgent book that reveals the costs and benefits of being connected how, from ancient Rome to the present, roads have played a crucial role in human life, advancing civilization even as they set it back.

From Publishers Weekly [Signature] ed by Jeb Brugmann In *The Routes of Man*, Conover, author of the NBCC award-winning *Newjack*, reveals globalization's neural system growing along the world's expanding and connecting road systems. Governments and smugglers, armies and insurgents, and the local poor and international NGOs negotiate their ambitions at border crossings, checkpoints, and dives. Tracing the route of rare mahogany from Peru's illegal jungle logging camps to Manhattan's brownstones, he examines how highways connect the fates of forests, untouched tribes, and finicky antique collectors. In the Himalayan frontier of Kashmir, highways are ventures of national territorial control, and in China a growing superhighway system underscores the disparity between the haves and have-nots. Conover's voice is that of a sobered Kerouac, tamed by a bigger conscience, and on an open road increasingly controlled by corporate, government, and military interests. His acclaimed narrative gifts are on full display in a wonderfully evenhanded treatment of the roadway in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Highways have been co-opted for Israeli settlements, and Palestinian professors, engineers, and migrant laborers construct ever-shifting back-road routes and taxi-hops to earn their living. With Conover as our guide, we move through Israeli checkpoints in Palestine's West Bank and witness the daily indignities faced by corralled Palestinian commuters and the psychological angst of Israeli soldiers. There is no open road here, just a gritty, fractured infrastructure of hatred that strangles both nations. More subtly, Conover reveals the highway as common social territory, particularly as the meeting place between men and women. His treatment of east African truck drivers whose travels are suspected to be linked with the global spread of AIDS avoids stereotype and sensationalism. He is as attentive to and interested by the drudgery of transporting goods as with the truckers' polygamy or encounters with sex workers and police bribery. We meet truck drivers who are true gentlemen and tough, articulate women fully capable of negotiating roadside life. Conover maintains a commitment to accurate portrayal and embraces the whole world, not only its dramatic aspects. *The Routes of Man* seeks to describe more than to explain this ever-connecting world. It does the former with an agility that leaves the reader anticipating the next adventure. But the narrative fails to build the argument posed in its subtitle: that roads themselves have become a source of change in the world, independent of the nations, armies, and cities that build, control, and fill them with trade and traffic. But this many-textured journey is not to be missed. Conover deftly navigates the romance and harsh reality of a world intent on a real and not just a virtual connectedness. Jeb Brugmann is author of *Welcome to the Urban Revolution: How Cities Are Changing the World*. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From *Bookmarks Magazine* readers were generally happy to follow Conover as he brought to life some of the world's most interesting and dangerous routes while managing to steer clear of the thousand "road-as-life" metaphors that could have congested the work. But they tended to criticize him with their own transit analogy: *Routes of Man*, many wrote, lacks the promised path connecting Conover's adventures perhaps because many of the essays originated as magazine articles in *National Geographic*, *the Atlantic*, and other publications. For some critics, this was no issue; the [hardcover's] subtitle, they argued, was clearly an imposition by the marketing department and shouldn't detract from the book. But others wanted more reflection from an author whom they respected for traveling so far and learning so much. From *Booklist* Roads bring medicine and disease, development and destruction, commerce and war. Curious about the impact of new roads on isolated places, immersion journalist Conover, a National Book Critics Circle Award winner, rides in unreliable, body-battering trucks on harrowing roads in Peru to witness the illegal logging of mahogany trees, then, with all due irony, stays at a hotel for eco-tourists. In the spellbound Himalayan valley of Zanskar, he joins villagers walking down the only winter road: the frozen river. What will happen if India builds an all-season road? Is there a connection between truckers and the spread of AIDS in Africa? It seems so as Conover rides with a Kenyan truck driver who observes, The road is very unfair, very harsh. Road-to-hell stories of Iraq and Afghanistan are matched by chilling experiences at the checkpoints that block roads and destroy lives in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Convivial, intrepid, and happiest in motion, Conover tempers concerns about the paradoxes of roads with appreciation for the ingenuity and fortitude of the road warriors who welcome him into their arduous lives. --Donna Seaman