

Globetrotters

A Repertory of
World Travelers
1850-1945

Roland Hochstrasser



MUSEUM OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM



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A Repertory of World Travelers
1850-1945

2026 English Edition

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Foreword

In the Footsteps of Women and Men Who Traveled the World

*I travel not to go anywhere, but to go.
I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move.*

Robert Louis Stevenson,
Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes,
1879.

In the stillness of ordinary days, as life unfolds like a black-and-white film - intense yet monochromatic - it is travel that brushes strokes of color across the canvas of the everyday. Vivid emotions, unforeseen challenges, unexpected twists that unsettle certainties: these are the elements that spark flashes of vitality within the seemingly monotonous fabric of our days, transforming familiar spaces into uncharted territories of possibility.

Travel transcends mere physical displacement, rising instead to the level of a universal metaphor for human existence - a theme that has permeated literature, nourished art, and fueled philosophical reflection for centuries. From ancient Greece, where the wayfarer sought wisdom along dusty paths, through the medieval pilgrimages that intertwined devotion and discovery, to the explorations of the Renaissance, travel has always been both a journey of inner transformation and of geographic exploration.

In these pages, I invite you to follow an unconventional path, a mosaic of micro-stories quietly narrated by both celebrated and unknown travelers. These are voices from a pivotal historical moment, when a new perception of space intertwined with technological expansion, redrawing the boundaries of the known and the imaginable.

The thread linking these narratives stretches across centuries: from Homer's *Odyssey*, where each island is a trial to be overcome, to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which the journey becomes an allegory of human redemption, to modern works such as Kerouac's *On the Road*, where the road itself becomes the protagonist. In every age, the path reveals itself as a space of the soul, an arena for inner battles, a place of searching, and of encounters with others and with oneself.

Today, in a world shaped by globalization and rapid transformations, the stories gathered here help us decipher how the ancient metaphor of the journey continues to illuminate the dynamics of our time - mirroring humanity's anxieties and hopes, its ingenuity and its creative folly.

This volume does not aspire to be an exhaustive historical analysis, but rather an invitation to explore the deeper meaning of travel within one's own life. It is a prism through which to observe the personal journey, reminding us that every life is a voyage that, beyond geographic coordinates, unfolds through the infinite landscapes of the human spirit.

The globetrotters you will meet in these pages were more than travelers: they were explorers of possibility, cartographers of the imagination, witnesses to an era in which the world opened itself to new discoveries while still guarding its mysteries. Their stories remind us that every journey, however carefully planned, is always an act of faith in the unknown.

Roland Hochstrasser

Introduction

*If you travel from choice and not from necessity,
you are as glad to be on the road again as you were
to rest a day, for to the born traveler there is
nothing quite so satisfactory as motion. When the
train moves out of the depot or the steamer leaves
her wharf, then is such a person truly happy.*

Lilian Leland,
Traveling Alone,
1890.

The Birth of a New Imagination

In 1872, Jules Verne published a novel that, more than 140 years after its first appearance, remains universally known and admired for its evocative power: *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*. The story follows Phileas Fogg, a wealthy London gentleman of fixed habits, sedentary and reserved. On October 2, 1872, Fogg leaves his residence in Saville Row and heads to the Reform Club. As on every day, he arrives at the club at precisely eleven-thirty, having walked exactly 575 steps.

That day, the enigmatic protagonist becomes involved in a discussion with several fellow members, sparked by recent events - particularly the theft of £55,000 - on the ease with which the thief might vanish in an ever-shrinking world. Fogg ultimately accepts a wager proposed by Mr. Stuart and supported by his colleagues Fallentin, Sullivan, Flanagan, and Ralph. The gentlemen stake £20,000 on the impossibility of traveling around the world in eighty days. That very evening, Fogg departs from London, returning victorious exactly eighty days later, on December 21.

To achieve this, Fogg makes use of a variety of means of transportation - steamships, railways, carriages, yachts, cargo ships, sledges, and even elephants. Each stage of the journey is enlivened by unforeseen events and unusual adventures, further complicated by the persistence of Inspector Fix, who is convinced that Fogg is a bank robber and follows him throughout the voyage in an attempt to arrest him.

Beyond the printed version, the story was also adapted for the stage by Verne and Adolphe d'Ennery. On November 7, 1874, the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin in Paris hosted the première of the play of the same name, which achieved immense success and remained in continuous production until November 10, 1878.

Together, the novel and its theatrical version inspired generations of travelers and marked a turning point in the cultural perception of travel. With Verne's publication and the compelling stage adaptation, interest in the theme grew rapidly: the journey around the world became a contest between reality and fiction, joined by imaginary characters, journalists, authors, and wandering adventurers alike.

The celebrated French poet and filmmaker Jean Cocteau, fascinated by Fogg's exploits, undertook his own round-the-world journey between March 28 and June 17, 1936, later writing: "The masterpiece by Jules Verne, with its red-and-gold prize-book cover, the play performed behind the red-and-gold curtain of the Châtelet, excited our childhood and gave us - more than the sight of a globe - the love of adventure and the desire to travel" (*Mon premier voyage*, DeAgostini, 1964).

Made famous by the legendary Phileas Fogg, globetrotters enjoyed a golden age in the early decades of the twentieth century - a period marked by rapid technological advances and a growing curiosity about the unknown. From every social background, they set out toward uncharted horizons with enthusiasm and, at times, great recklessness. Imaginative and daring, they undertook the most improbable expeditions, often with improvised means, contributing to the global consolidation of a new collective imagination and a new way of conceiving travel itself.

Global Changes and the Emergence of Globetrotters

In the historical context of the nineteenth century, several key innovations in the field of transportation radically transformed the possibility of traveling on a global scale. The first transcontinental railway in the United States, inaugurated in 1869, enabled fast and reliable coast-to-coast connections. In the same year, the opening of the Suez Canal drastically reduced sailing times between Europe and Asia, facilitating trade and exploration. At the same time, the establishment of a unified railway system in India significantly improved mobility within the subcontinent.

The invention of the internal combustion engine marked a further step forward in transport: with the automobile beginning to spread in the early twentieth century, overland travel became faster and more affordable. Among the feats that drew international attention was the 1907 Peking-Paris motor race, which demonstrated the resilience and capacity of cars to face extremely long routes. Aviation, too, offered a decisive contribution to human mobility. The Wright brothers' first flights in 1903 opened the way to long-distance air travel, and in the years that followed, aviation progressed rapidly. Transatlantic flights and round-the-world routes gradually rendered the planet more accessible. The first aerial circumnavigation of the globe was completed by an American team in 1924. Slower than the journey imagined by Jules Verne, it took 175 days to cover

42,400 kilometers (26,350 miles), flying east to west across the Pacific, Asia, Europe, and the Atlantic.

It is against this dynamic backdrop of immense technological and social change that the exploits of the globetrotters are set - a reality often forgotten or, at best, relegated to the footnotes of volumes devoted to the major social and economic phenomena of the era. Yet between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, thousands of wanderers embarked on the most extravagant undertakings, often without adequate preparation or resources. These micro-histories, diverse and fragmentary, offer a distinctive lens through which to read both the history of tourism and the broader transformations of society.

For decades, globetrotters were fleeting celebrities, arriving unexpectedly in towns and cities where they often enjoyed, at least initially, a certain degree of popular acclaim. The phenomenon appeared in many guises and provided opportunities to address sensitive social issues. The early journeys of adventurous women travelers, for example, signal a new positioning of women within society. Likewise, the efforts of hundreds of travelers with disabilities underlined a determination to assert their normalcy in a world that tended to marginalize those who did not conform to prevailing standards.

The documented adventures from the late nineteenth century onwards are far from uniform. The records left by wanderers and the accounts published in periodicals describe round-the-world journeys, transcontinental walks, and a wide variety of other routes - undertaken alone or in company, sometimes accompanied by animals, and often relying on mechanical means such as bicycles, motorcycles, or cars. This diversity is mirrored in the travelers themselves: men and women, children and infants, the elderly, each moved by heterogeneous motivations, promoting projects both original and mundane, authentic and invented.

To this varied population, one must add a frequently overlooked category that has played an important role in the collective imagination: the imaginary traveler. These fictional globetrotters, born from the pages of authors' works - and epitomized in the masterful creations of Verne - have defined paradigmatic characters who remain an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

The Fragile Traces of the Globetrotters: An Incomplete Repertoire

Many of the stories included in this *Repertoire* remain unfinished and are difficult to reconstruct or verify. Historically, travel has often involved the constant use of disguise - employed not only to evade the dangers awaiting the unwary traveler, but also to adapt to circumstances. A traveler may invent a past never lived, alter or conceal their true identity, and reveal it only when convenient. They may choose to change role and social status, sometimes for entirely valid reasons, at other times simply to obtain an immediate and tangible advantage (Mazzei 2013).

The available testimonies are often limited, inconsistent or contradictory, making it difficult - if not impossible - to establish with certainty how many travelers actually accomplished what they publicly claimed. Beyond these partial or incomplete attestations, there are also journeys that have left even fewer traces, are extremely difficult to document, or have left none at all. In such a context, any attempt at an all-encompassing account is clearly impossible.

A partial recovery of the available information, however, can still allow us to appreciate a phenomenon that remains relatively little known and studied. Why investigate the micro-histories of such fleeting figures and compile them in a *Repertoire*? Because the stories of globetrotters recount, in their own way, the birth of a new world - one in which travel assumes new meanings. Their actions help us better understand the starting point of these new dynamics, and perhaps glimpse the motivations underlying such social practices.

Travel here carries a dual significance: it is a displacement through space, but also a journey through time, enabling us to read the transformations of society through the eyes of men and women who experienced them first-hand.

The aim of this work is to pay tribute to those women and men who ventured onto unknown roads, often with improvised means, and who, in doing so, inspired fascination and wonder that remain unchanged to this day. It is a tribute offered by those who now travel in comfort, relying on an extensive network of rapid and efficient transport services.

The *Repertoire* is, by its nature, an incomplete document - a work in progress to which all are invited to contribute, whether by identifying new globetrotters or by providing additional details and corrections about those already listed.

The first chapter offers contextual information for the *Repertoire*. The following section presents the globetrotters in alphabetical order, each entry providing essential facts, a brief summary, and references for further research. The final part is devoted to fictional characters, who have played - and continue to play - an important role in promoting new forms of tourist consumption.

Sources and Method

The information compiled in this publication is the result of research carried out over the course of two decades, consulting library and archive catalogs and drawing on a variety of materials - published books, periodicals, postcards, and other documents produced in different parts of the world. No rigid research model has been adopted, as the aim is not to offer a complete catalogue of the experiences of the last two centuries - an undertaking that, even with advanced big data management, would be unlikely to yield definitive results. The subject is elusive and fluid in its boundaries, not only because of the scarcity of available information.

It is, in fact, difficult to establish unequivocally who qualifies as a globetrotter. How is it possible to define such a figure, and what forms of “certification” might be applied? A considerable number of the micro-histories encountered are of doubtful reliability; in many cases, where thorough investigation has been possible, episodes of pure or partial fabrication have emerged. In light of these challenges, this *Repertoire* adopts a broad definition of the term: a globetrotter is a person who travels the world for extended periods, often with improvised means and without a commercial purpose. This phenomenon differs from the traditional *Grand Tour* of the European elites in its more accessible and democratic nature, involving also the less privileged classes. The figure of the globetrotter embodies a form of travel defined by adventure, personal discovery, and a challenge - whether against oneself or against time.

The designation *globetrotter* identifies an individual engaged in extended world travel, typically undertaken with limited resources

and without commercial intent. Distinct from the aristocratic tradition of the *Grand Tour*, globetrotting emerged as a more inclusive and democratic form of mobility, open also to those from less privileged backgrounds. The globetrotter embodies a conception of travel centered on adventure, the exploration of the self and of the unknown, and the challenge either of personal limits or of establishing new records.

A wide range of initiatives were considered, provided they:
are spontaneous and non-commercial in intent;
are conducted as autonomous projects, with a clear beginning and end;
have an impact on the collective imagination;
display an element of originality.

The main sources of information are:
postcards and other materials produced by the globetrotters themselves;
archives of contemporary newspapers and periodicals;
published travelogues and diaries;
bibliographies and online resources;
archival collections.

Data drawn from these sources are presented with references and with any inconsistencies noted. For instance, many postcards issued by globetrotters report routes, distances, records, and lists of cities and countries visited - information that must be treated with caution, as it often formed part of a deliberate strategy to sell the object or attract attention for self-sustenance purposes.

The *Repertoire* presents a synthesis of the collected information. The code accompanying each traveler's name allows readers to retrieve the complete record, including an image when available, on the website www.museumoftravel.org. This system enables the community of users to supplement or correct the information provided. Certain fields, particularly links to external web pages, are subject to rapid change, and their maintenance requires constant attention.

The *Repertoire* records the events that took place between 1850 and 1945 - a timeframe chosen somewhat arbitrarily, yet necessary to establish clear boundaries. The period under review is marked by profound technological, social, cultural, and political transformations that influenced and shaped the way people traveled and perceived the world.

The year 1850 coincides with the beginning of a new era for organized tourism: Thomas Cook, often considered the pioneer of modern tourism, had already organized his first group tour in 1841, but it was in the following years that he began developing international travel packages. This period also marks the beginning of the World's Fairs, the very first of which took place in London in 1851. Travel literature also experienced major growth during these years, with authors such as Mark Twain and Robert Louis Stevenson helping to shape the collective imagination surrounding travel and exploration.

The year 1945 represents a symbolic threshold: the end of World War II marks a profound break in the study of travel and tourism. It was an event with deep global repercussions that radically transformed both society and the world economy. The tourism that developed in the aftermath, shaped by the new geopolitical order, would rapidly change the global landscape, increasingly taking on the characteristics of a mass industry.

Any assignment of a globetrotter to this timeframe is determined by the year in which their most significant journey took place. The attribution of this label, as with other information associated with each profile, remains indicative and to some extent ambiguous. A journey around the world, for instance, is an endeavor that unfolds over extended periods of time - whether in a linear fashion or carried out in stages. The same kind of systemic ambiguity applies to modes of transportation. As a general rule, the means most frequently used have been indicated, based on the available information, which is often limited.