

Travellers from across time and space

There are many famous and important people who have journeyed to discover the far ends of the world. This article presents several you may not have heard of, but who have made travelling a way of life. They did not do it only for themselves, however – they connected people of all races, religions, and ages wherever they went.



Xuanzang: In the 7th century, a Buddhist monk had a dream which inspired him to embark on a journey to India and discover the origins of his faith. Despite hunger, thirst, avalanches, and bandit attacks, he visited many places: Xian, the deserts and mountains of western China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and all of India. It took him more than 15 years, and 10,000 kilometres, but he finally succeeded. He returned to China with a collection of texts in Sanskrit that discussed Buddhism and wrote a travel record of Central and South Asia. He is appreciated today as a linguist, historian and folk hero.



Ibn Battuta: One of the greatest travellers of all times, he was a 14th-century Moroccan explorer. It took him thirty years, but he managed to reach the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and finally China. He left important descriptions of his journeys, along with many stories, which were used as travel books. They describe geography, natural history, politics, religion, and people he met. Of course, he also suffered many troubles: muggings, pirate attacks, hunger, and the loss of his family.



Annie "Londonderry" Cohen Kopchovsky: A 19th-century Latvian immigrant into the US was the first woman to travel around the world on a bicycle. It was not likely that she would succeed: She had only learned to ride a bicycle several days before her trip, was very short and thin, and a mother of three small children. She endured bad weather, bureaucratic problems, injuries, and insults, and was almost killed by a wagon. However, she managed everything and arrived back home in under 15 months, winning a \$10,000 prize. Later, she became a journalist and an entrepreneur.



Freya Stark: The British explorer and a self-taught polyglot was the first Westerner who managed to reach several southern Arabian desert regions, such as Iran's Valley of the Assassins. She took part in both World Wars, beginning her travels between them. She did not stop travelling until she was into her 70s. She wrote over 20 books, in which she described her travels to Syria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Yemen, Lebanon, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

Questions:

Who of the people mentioned...

- ...spent the greatest part of his or her life travelling?
- ...was famous for his or her stories?
- ...took part in two wars?
- ...travelled for religious reasons?
- ...was a parent?
- ...learned several languages on their own?
- ...became a legendary person in his or her country?
- ...was not from Eurasia?