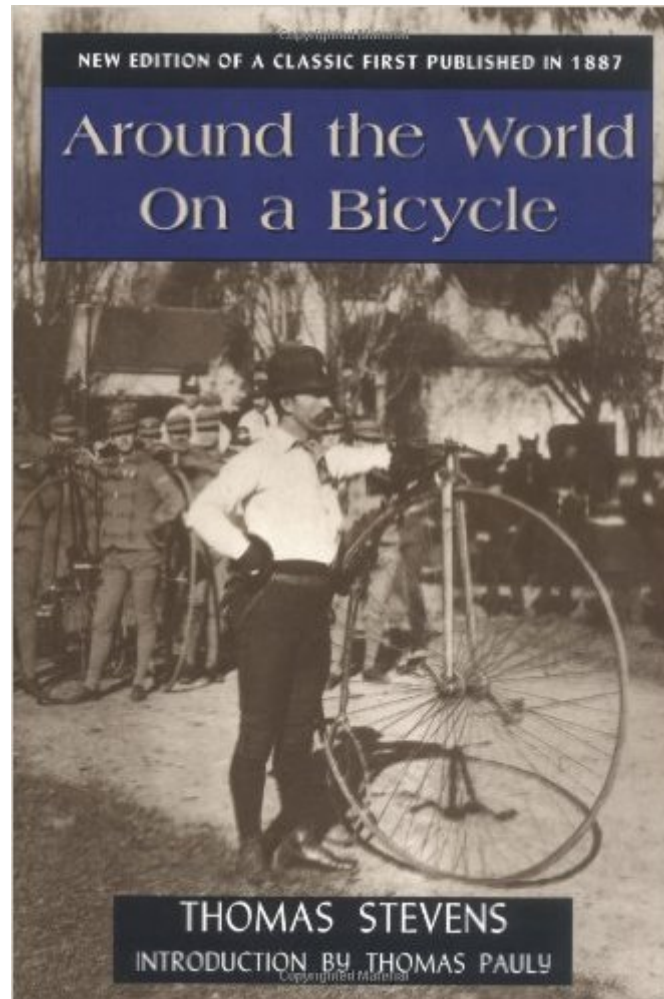


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# Around The World On A Bicycle (Classics Of American Sport)



## Synopsis

In 1884, Thomas Stevens left San Francisco on a Columbia high-wheeler with the outrageous goal of becoming the first man to ride a bicycle across the United States. When he reached Boston, he decided to continue around the world, and soon sailed to London for the ride across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The high-wheeler was heavy and cumbersome, his supplies were limited to socks, a spare shirt, and a slicker that doubled as tent and bedroll, and much of the country he traversed was wild. Yet he persevered, recording his colorful and often harrowing adventures during the three-year odyssey in a classic of 19th century adventure and travel writing.

## Book Information

Series: Classics of American Sport

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

San Francisco to Boston, England to the Balkans, Turkey to Afghanistan, India, China and Japan: Stevens boldly cycled where no bicycler had gone before! On the recommendation of a friend, I've been looking for this book for years. So I was delighted to learn that it had just been republished for the first time since 1902. Yes, 1902: Stevens started his trip in 1884. This intrepid wheelman (note: "wheel" is singular because Stevens' cycle was so dominated by the 50 inch front wheel he would often just refer to it as his "wheel") recorded his adventures and thoughts about the people and lands he visited during 13,500 miles of cycling. As you might expect from a bicycle journalist, Stevens carefully describes the riding quality of most of the roads and trails he followed, comments on his many headers, and joked about the amount of food he could eat at the end of a long day

pedaling a 41 pound bicycle. But the book is far more than a cycling story, it is a glimpse into a world that is long-gone yet still relevant. He saw the hostility between different ethnic groups in the Balkans, he visited Kurdish nomads in what is now northern Iraq, commented on how the mullahs were preventing Iran from modernizing, etc. A man of his times, some of his words (e.g., not particularly flattering portraits of the Native Americans that he met) would definitely not be considered politically correct 110 years after he wrote them. But all in all, it was a delightful read.

Truly a classic traveler's tale, one that I'd been tempted to pay \$100+ for a used copy of last year. This is an excellent reprint of the original, with all its illustrations, plus some of Stevens's other writings on his trip, with a well-footnoted introduction.

It's amazing to think that Stevens was able to complete such a journey over 100 years ago on such a beastly bike. With no gears and bad roads, it seems he had to walk (or trundle) his bike as much as he rode it. It is especially interesting to see just how different some parts of the world are now, and yet just how little other parts of the world have changed since his journey. More than a travel book or bicycle adventure, the book is an interesting time capsule from long ago that is a pleasure to read!

As a bicyclist with a fascination with the turn of the last century, I couldn't resist buying this book. And what an amazing journey it is! Traveling west to east through barely-tamed 1880s America, the author describes his encounters with the local people, flora and fauna - and the performance of his 'wheel'. Imagine the boldness and naivete of someone who would set out on such a trip with little or no long-distance experience! And then to sail across the ocean and continue your journey through foreign lands with just a tiny satchel of supplies - which must have been dominated by his prodigious notebook! Oh, and his trusty pistol. Imagine crossing foreign borders and attending teas with dignitaries with that piece of hardware tucked into your belt. Although some of his descriptions of native peoples are disturbing to our 21st century sensitivities, all his descriptions seem apt for the times in which he lived. He has a natural curiosity and gives us a vivid description of every discovery and encounter. An amazing slice of history from the point of view of an extraordinary 'average' American of his time. At almost 1100 pages(!), this is not exactly beach reading. Although some of his daily trials and tribulations become tiring, we would be left wondering what happened in the interim days if this would have been 'properly' edited to today's standards. I recommend you practice with a barbell a few weeks before ordering a copy...

The history making first circumvention of the world in 1884-86 by bicycle was before paved roads, automobiles or the telephone. The author's excellence in descriptive depictions of people, places, history, and topography make this 1072 page memoir hard to put down. The author's insightful geographical and historical reporting gives ponderous meaning to current political happenings. Excerpt: Squeamishness in Asiatic traveling The old khan-jee proves himself a thoughtful, considerate landlord, for as I eat he busies himself picking the most glaringly conspicuous hairs out of my butter with the point of his dagger. One is usually somewhat squeamish regarding hirsute butter, but all such little refinements of civilized life as hairless butter or strained milk have to be winked at to a greater or less extent in Asiatic traveling, especially when depending solely on what happens to turn up from one meal to another.

The book is a fascinating journey describing the world as it was over a hundred years ago. Roads at the time were not as we know them today, making the journey all the more remarkable. But to the prospective buyer of this edition (the one with the picture of 2 sailboats on a rocky waterway) be aware. The preview pages include the portions from both volumes, making it appear as if it was in fact both volumes. What I received was only one of the two volumes, and that was volume 2 which has a picture of some rocky ruins on the cover, a completely different book than the one pictured. I did work with me regarding this in a timely manner but the description should be better clarified.

I just finished reading *\_Riding the Edge\_* and somehow felt I needed to read this for perspective. With 100 years (or so) between the efforts, different routes, and very different people it's amazing to me that barriers to travel seem even today to be more political than anything else. I had already downloaded the scanned text for the book from project Gutenberg when I found this at [and](#) thought it would be easier to read on paper. The real surprise was a link to the scanned document that the text was taken from. This is a real treasure. The image is much more readable than the text and it includes the illustrations. The price of the book is well worth access to the scanned image.

A fascinating account of an incredible adventure.

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