

Ibn Battuta's Travels Illustrated

1325-1353

The Rihla

To see his journeys on a map click on

[Google-Earth kmz-File of Battuta's Travels](#)

For this link to work you have to have the GE-Program installed on your hard-disk

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[Introduction](#)

In 1325, a year after Marco Polo's death, the Moroccan jurist ibn Battuta set out from his native Tangier on his first Hajj to Mecca. He would not see Tangier again for 24 years. The **Rihla**, his travelogue is filled with numerous tales and adventures which far exceed the observations of Polo in liveliness, acuity and insight. Yet Battuta is virtually unknown in the "West". - This essay brings excerpts from the Rihla illustrated with photos from the internet. A companion Google-Earth Post shows Battuta's route on the GE globe.



[Book 1](#)

1325 - 26

Battuta leaves Tangier to perform his first Hajj to Mecca. On his way along the Mediterranean coast of Africa he takes a wife. In Alexandria a pious ascetic predicts that he would travel to India and China. A few days later Battuta dreams of a big bird taking him to Yemen, Iraq, Persia and India. In Damascus he joins the Syrian pilgrims to Mecca



[Book 2](#)

1327-30

On the return he attaches himself to the Iraq caravan headed for Baghdad, but leaves it to visit Basra and Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz in Persia. Ill with diarrhea he sets out on his second Hajj from Baghdad in October 1327. He spends 3 years in contemplation and prayers in Mecca.



[Book 3](#)

1330 - 31

He begins to travel seriously first to Yemen then by dhow along the Coast of East Africa to Tanzania. On his return he visits the Hadramaut, Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. In Al-Hasa he joins the Hajj caravan of the local governor for Mecca



Book 4.1

1431-32

The idea to strike it rich takes hold of Battuta: India and China appear on his horizon. He resolves to travel along the Ottoman-Byzantine frontier in Turkey to the land of the Golden Horde (Qipchaq). - He nearly perishes in a snow storm in the mountains and in another storm on the Black Sea. Eventually he reaches the Aul of Uzbek Khan in Serai on the Volga.



Book 4.2

1333

Uzbek Khan obliges Battuta as his ambassador to conduct Princess Baylun, his fourth wife to her imperial father in Constantinople. Battuta has an audience with Emperor Andronikus III, tours the city and visits Christian convents and churches. When the Princess refuses to return to Uzbek Khan, he returns alone well-rewarded to Serai.



Book 5

1333-34

In the Winter of 1333-34 Battuta travels across the width of Central Asia following the Northern (Scythian) Silk Road: Khwarizmi-Bukhara -Karshi - Balkh – Kunduz- Kabul. Instead of following the direct route across the Khyber Pass to Delhi, he turns south to Karachi and only there crosses the Indus, the border of Sultanate India.



Book 6

1334-42

Battuta spends nine years as advisor to Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq in Delhi. He amassed great riches, fell out of favor and was finally appointed as Tughluq's ambassador to conduct a delegation of Chinese to the court of the Emperor of China.



Book 7

1342

After a two-month the heavily armed caravan reached Gandhar and embarked on ships. In Calicut a storm destroyed the ships with their precious cargo for the Chinese Emperor. Battuta escaped, because he was at the mosque! He had lost all his Indian riches and barely saved his skin. Fearing Sultan Tughluq's rage Battuta incognito walks down the Malabar coast as far as Quilon



Books 8-9

1343-44

In 1343 Battuta escapes to the Maldives and finds himself in a matriarchal society. He loves it, of course, and acquires a harem of beautiful slave-girls. The queen appoints him qadi, and he tries to pass an ordinance that the women have to cover themselves in his courtroom - they walk about topless. He marries the widow of a brother of the king. In the end he elopes with a Moslem ship captain to Ceylon leaving his pregnant wife behind. - The ship is wrecked on the Cormandel Coast. Once again he survives and with great cunning makes his way back to Calicut.



Books 9-11

1345-46

In Calicut he learns that his wife in the Maldives has born a son. He decides to leave the child with his mother. - He leaves Male on a boat to Chittagong, Bengal, to visit the brother of the sheikh in Alexandria. Eventually Battuta reaches Zayton in China. He travels among Moslem merchants to Hangzhou all the time admiring the exemplary Chinese bureaucracy - but dislikes the Chinese. He is getting tired, and when a revolt against the emperor threatens, he returns to Zayton and embarks for India and home.



Book 12

1347-49

Ibn Battuta's return home took three years. When he arrived in Palestine the Black Death has broken out, forcing him to find his way by ship. Arriving in Morocco he found his mother had died from the Plague. - But the Imam of Fez received him with open arms.



Book 13

1349-50

Battuta had a brother in Ronda, Andalucia. After his long absence he resolved to visit him. An additional incentive was the jihad against the Christian armies advancing on Andalucia. Battuta explored another frontier.



Book 14

1351-53

Intrepid traveler he is, Battuta's curiosity took him on a last journey through the African desert to the legendary gold-land of Mali Exploring Timbuktu and the upper reaches of the Niger, which he believed was the Nile. He spent 3 years in Africa.