



Around the World in Eighty Days

Jules Verne (1828 - 1905)

Read by:	Mark F. Smith	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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Around the World in Eighty Days is a classic adventure novel that chronicles the attempt of an English gentleman and his French valet to circumnavigate the globe in 80 days in order to win a £20,000 wager. The Englishman is Phileas Fogg, who is rich, solitary, and a creature of habits we might describe as obsessive compulsive. His social milieu is largely confined to his membership in the Reform Club, where an argument over an article depicting the opening of an Indian railway section leads to the wager, worth about \$2 million today. Fogg develops an itinerary that takes him around the world by rail and steamship through Egypt, India, Hong Kong, Japan, and across the United States, departing October 2, 1872 and returning to London December

21, 80 days later. Needless to say, things don't always go as planned. Fogg is mistaken for a bank robber in Egypt by a Scotland Yard detective named Fix, who tails him in and out of English territory ever after. In India they rescue a young woman about to be sacrificed who joins their party. Mishaps, wrong turns, bad information, missed connections, kidnapping, hurricanes, and the International Date Line all figure in the tension to make the deadline. The book appeared in 1873, just after three breakthroughs that made world travel significantly faster: the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the linking of the Indian railway system in 1870, and the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in America in 1869. It is very much a portrait of the British Empire just before its peak, "on which the sun never sets", and is his most popular in English.

Jules Verne was born in France at Nantes in Brittany on February 8, 1828. The son of a lawyer, he went to Paris to study law but was soon sidetracked by the appeal of the Bohemian lifestyle. He was befriended by the son of Alexander Dumas, whose father advised and guided him. On a trip to Armians in 1857 he met a young widow of twenty-six with two young children, Mme. de Vianne (Honorinede Viane Morel) and they were married on January 10, 1857. In 1860, Verne met Pierre-Jules Hetzel, publisher of Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, Georges Sand, and Émile Zola. In 1863 Hetzel published Verne's first novel, *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, which was a tremendous success on both sides of the Atlantic. Verne's ensuing contract with Hetzel committed him to producing two volumes per year for twenty years. The result was a series of fifty-four novels (the *Voyages Extraordinaires*) published between 1863 and 1905. In 1870 the couple returned to Amiens where he spent the rest of his life. Jules Verne died on March 24, 1905, in his home from complications associated with diabetes.