



American Traveler: The Life and Adventures of John Ledyard, the Man Who Dreamed of Walking The World

James Zug

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Called a "man of genius" by his close friend Thomas Jefferson, John Ledyard lived, by any standard, a remarkable life. In his thirty-eight years, he accompanied Captain Cook on his last voyage; befriended Jefferson, Lafayette, and Tom Paine in Paris; was the first American citizen to see Alaska, Hawaii, and the west coast of America; and set out to find the source of the Niger by traveling from Cairo across the Sahara. His greatest dream, concocted with Jefferson, was to travel alone around the world and cross the American continent from the Pacific Northwest to the Atlantic. Catherine the Great dashed that dream when she had him arrested in deepest Siberia and escorted back to the Polish border. Ledyard wrote the definitive account of Cook's last voyage and his death at the hands of Hawaiian islanders, and formed a company with John Paul Jones that launched the American fur trade in the Pacific Northwest. Before the Revolution, Americans by and large didn't travel great distances, rarely venturing west of the Appalachians. Ledyard, with his boundless enthusiasm and wide-ranging intellect, changed all that. In lively prose, journalist James Zug tells the riveting story of this immensely influential character -a Ben Franklin with wanderlust-a uniquely American pioneer.

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