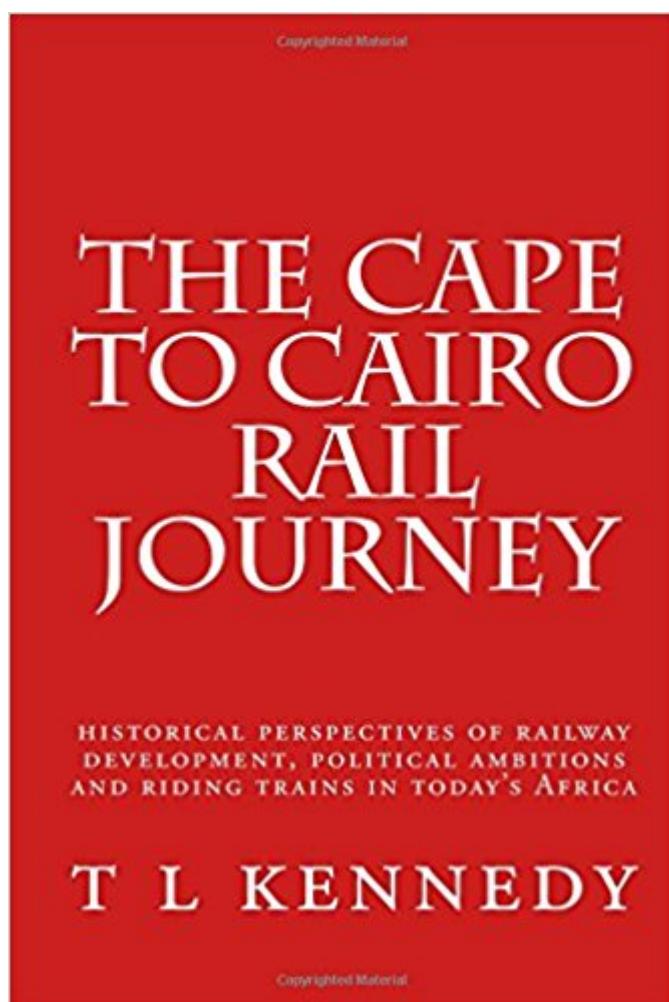


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The Cape To Cairo Rail Journey: Overseas Rail Adventures (Railway Adventures And Historical Sketches) (Volume 1)



Synopsis

This book contains a descriptive travelogue of the author's rail journey following the historic "Cape to Cairo" route envisaged by Cecil Rhodes more than 100 years ago as an exercise in British imperialism. While construction of the rail link was never completed in totality, most of the distance can be covered by passenger trains, in varying degrees of comfort and cleanliness, immersing the traveler in African life on the train and in the passing scenery along the railway line. Rail travel descriptions are richly enhanced by historical sketches of railway development in each country and many anecdotes of previous travelers, explorers and railway builders that formed African railway networks as they exist today. The story begins with the author's telling of his first arrival in South Africa in 1981 for a three-year contract that became thirty. Southern Africa was still a favorite haunt of steam locomotive enthusiasts, particularly along the route between Kimberley and De Aar and the Bulawayo – Victoria Falls line. However, most of the trains included in this travelogue were pulled by poorly maintained diesel or electric motive power. Journeys were fraught with mechanical failures (several hours standing in the desert, just outside of Khartoum North station) and by non-operational signal systems (throughout Zambia). Keeping to the timetable was accomplished more strictly in the southern part of the continent (South Africa/Botswana/Zimbabwe) but began to deteriorate moving northward with Sudan being the worst time keeper with a 13-hour delay. But the point was not to arrive dead on time but to enjoy the somewhat dubious distinction of riding some of the dirtiest trains on the planet with thieves as traveling companions while at the same time crossing some most interesting topography and finding many amiable and personable Africans as travel mates. These journeys were mostly pleasurable to endure, intensely interesting and challenging to put down on paper and hopefully, the reader will share the enthusiasm of the author in "living" these journeys through the words set down in this book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having lived in South Africa for 30 years, Mr. Kennedy is a professional Transport Economist and has worked as a consultant in more than 45 countries but his true passion is traveling by train in exotic places and researching the history of railway development. He has traveled extensively by rail in Africa, South and South East Asia, China, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. His first overseas trip was a three week adventure on the Trans Siberian Express in 1974 which included a brush with the KGB while attempting to photograph the Lubyanka, the headquarters of that infamous intelligence organization in downtown Moscow. Immediately preceding his arrival in South Africa, the incentive to undertake the Cape to Cairo journey was sparked by his purchase of the four volume tome The Story of the Great Cape to Cairo Rail and River Route, edited by Leo Weintal (1923), purchased during his wandering through the old bookshops along London's Charing Cross Road. This book is the result of the successful completion of that journey, and the first in a series of descriptions of railway adventures that sparked his enthusiasm and desire to record his impressions of these journeys.

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