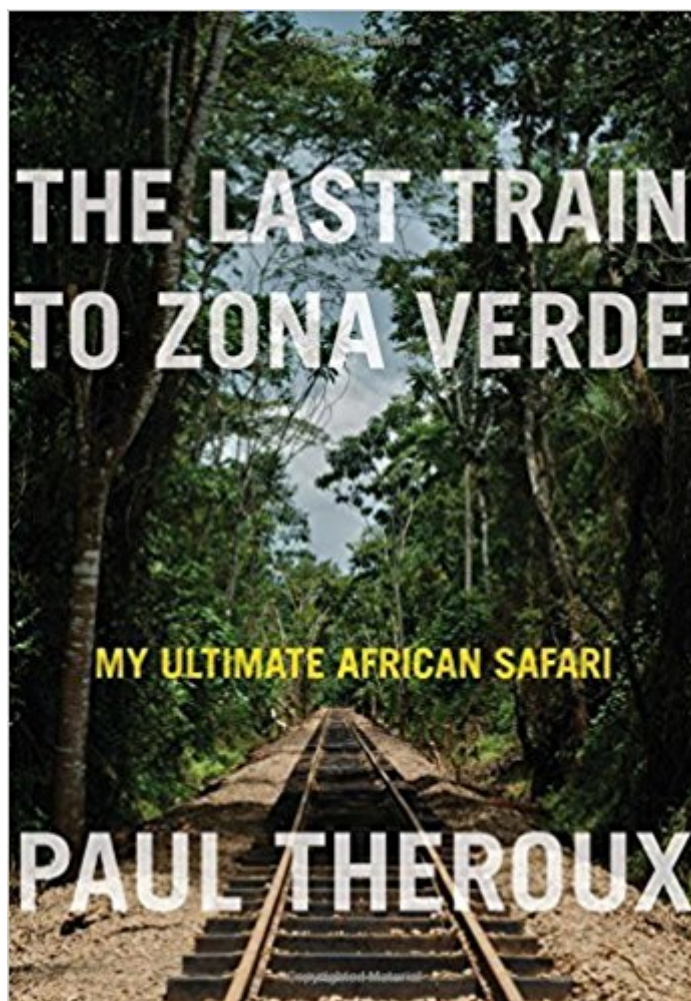


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The Last Train To Zona Verde: My Ultimate African Safari



Synopsis

Following the success of the acclaimed *Ghost Train to the Eastern Star* and *The Great Railway Bazaar*, *The Last Train to Zona Verde* is an ode to the last African journey of the world's most celebrated travel writer. "Happy again, back in the kingdom of light," writes Paul Theroux as he sets out on a new journey through the continent he knows and loves best. Theroux first came to Africa as a twenty-two-year-old Peace Corps volunteer, and the pull of the vast land never left him. Now he returns, after fifty years on the road, to explore the little-traveled territory of western Africa and to take stock both of the place and of himself. His odyssey takes him northward from Cape Town, through South Africa and Namibia, then on into Angola, wishing to head farther still until he reaches the end of the line. Journeying alone through the greenest continent, Theroux encounters a world increasingly removed from both the itineraries of tourists and the hopes of postcolonial independence movements. Leaving the Cape Town townships, traversing the Namibian bush, passing the browsing cattle of the great sunbaked heartland of the savanna, Theroux crosses "the Red Line" into a different Africa: "the improvised, slapped-together Africa of tumbled fences and cooking fires, of mud and thatch, of heat and poverty, and of roadblocks, mobs, and anarchy. After 2,500 arduous miles, he comes to the end of his journey in more ways than one, a decision he chronicles with typically unsparing honesty in a chapter called "What Am I Doing Here?" Vivid, witty, and beautifully evocative, *The Last Train to Zona Verde* is a fitting final African adventure from the writer whose gimlet eye and effortless prose have brought the world to generations of readers.

Customer Reviews

Starred Review Having traveled overland from Cairo to Cape Town in *Dark Star Safari* (2003), Theroux intended, 10 years on, to resume the trip, this time heading north up the west side of Africa, avoiding the "safe and well-trodden routes." Though he found some happy moments in "the kingdom of light," the journey was to be darker, harder, and, a rarity for Theroux, unfinished. He does find hopeful change in Cape Town, beautiful desolation in Namibia, and elegance in the bush in Botswana (albeit at extortionate prices). But when he crosses the border into Angola: chaos. After witnessing scene after scene of disorganization, poverty, and despair; after decrying the disconnect between the country's oil-rich rulers and its unemployed, idle citizens; after finding "cities that were indistinguishable from one another in their squalor and decrepitude," he concludes there is nothing more he can learn from their suffering. Ending what seems an impossible trip, he heads for home. Ultimate in the subtitle means

not best but final. As Theroux, in an autumnal state of mind, ponders his own mortality, it will be difficult for readers to imagine the world of letters without him. His ability to map new terrain, both interior and exterior, and to report from places that seldom make the news, remains undiminished. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Theroux's back-to-Africa novel, *The Lower River* (2012), was Booklist's Top of the List. But any book by the eminent author draws interest, and a national tour is planned. --Keir Graff

"Thoroughly engrossing from Cape Town to Namibia to the Okavango Delta, Theroux is his inimitable, delightfully grouchy and incisive self. At times tragic, often comical and always gorgeously written, this is a paean to a continent, by a writer unafraid to give it some tough love." --Washington Post

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