

The Mammoth Book of Travel in Dangerous Places: Siberia and Alaska (Mammoth Books)

John Keay



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Stranded on Bering Island - Georg Wilhelm Steller

As physician and scientific know-all on Vitus Bering's 1741 voyage, Steller shared its triumphs, including landing the first Europeans in Alaska. He also shared its disasters. Returning across the north Pacific to Russian Kamchatka, the crew was stricken with scurvy and the vessel grounded. Bering and half his men would die; the others barely survived nine months of Arctic exposure. They owed much to the German-born Steller whose response to each crisis was invariably right, although no less irksome for being so.

The Walk to Moscow - John Dundas Cochrane

A naval officer made redundant by the end of the Napoleonic wars, Cochrane offered his services to African exploration. They were declined. He then hit on the idea of making the first solo journey round the world on foot. Heading east, he left Dieppe in 1820 and after some scarcely credible Siberian excursions, reached the Pacific opposite Alaska. There the enterprise foundered when he fell for, and married, a doe-eyed Kamchatkan teenager. In this breathless account of the stages between St. Petersburg and Moscow, the greatest ever "pedestrian traveller" betrays both his extraordinary stamina and his emotional vulnerability.

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