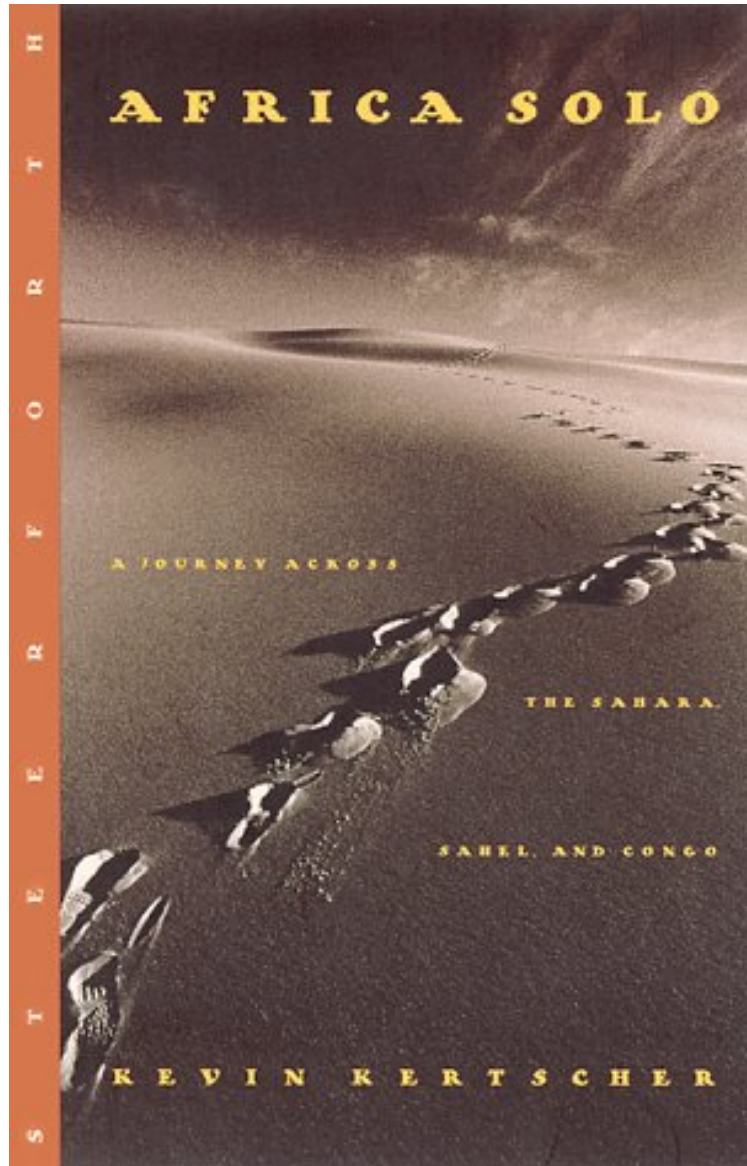


[Library ebook] Africa Solo: A Journey Across the Sahara, Sahel and Congo

## Africa Solo: A Journey Across the Sahara, Sahel and Congo

*Kevin Kertscher*

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**Kevin Kertscher : Africa Solo: A Journey Across the Sahara, Sahel and Congo** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Africa Solo: A Journey Across the Sahara, Sahel and Congo:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Brigitte Duborg This is the perfect Adventure book, I enjoyed every page and admired the authors guts in many situations. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

You can feel his transformation. By Manuel Festoli I would recommend this book. For someone who didn't really know what he was getting into, you can see he matured during his trip. Good job. He became a citizen of the world. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. *Feeling Africa* By Ivy Kevin Kertscher's *Africa Solo* is the account of the kind of trek that just cannot be undertaken right now, and so it's worth reading for both its historical and its sociological value. Although it is different from many travel books in that it focuses on individual experience rather than history or events, the book offers a different kind of education: a single person's insight and experience. In the late 1980s, Kertscher trekked - mostly by hitchhiking, with some walking and one plane trip - through West, Central, and East Africa, taking a winding path from Oran in Algeria to Nairobi in Kenya. He also traveled mostly alone, which gave him a lot more exposure to the continent, and put him in more danger as well. An average person like Kertscher probably could not duplicate this trip today; political instability and unrest have rendered many of the countries he visited more dangerous for foreigners, as well as altering the areas through which he traveled significantly since his journey. That change is one of the primary reasons why Kertscher's book is still worth reading - he provides an account of an older Africa the one that gave birth to the current one. His observations of Mobutu's Zaire, while not as detailed as Helen Winternitz's in *East Along the Equator*, explain a great deal about the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And his account of Rwanda during a break in its long history of conflict is surprising - he describes it as one of the most peaceful and progressive countries in Africa. The personal perspective of the book - the author's solo movement through the continent, relying mostly on others for transportation - is also valuable; I got a better sense of the regional differences in the people than I have from other Africa books. Kertscher also experienced much more than most travelers do of the kindness of strangers in Africa; in his sort of travel, he was forced to rely on others, and it impressed me how often those others came through for him. I can't say I'd travel the way he did, but the results were apparently better than I would have expected. All in all, this is an engrossing read that provides a personal perspective on one portion of a very large place. *Africa Solo* should not be used as a guidebook, because of the many changes in the area, but cultures do change more slowly than governments, so perhaps a person planning a trip to the area would still benefit from this book. Certainly armchair travelers will enjoy it.

Feeling the need to reorient his inner compass, filmmaker Kevin Kertscher set out on a personal journey across large expanses of the African continent.

From *Library Journal* Kertscher, a film editor who worked on Ken Burns's *Baseball* and Thomas Jefferson documentaries, needs "to be alone to orient my inner compass." In fall 1988, he decided to fulfill a fantasy? to traverse the Sahara and journey across Africa. With little historical preparation, he traveled from Algeria through West Africa to Ghana, Zaire, the Congo, Rwanda, and Kenya. His recurrent fear of unfamiliar surroundings and his anxiety about being robbed, raped, conned, hounded by beggars, or afflicted with disease inhibited adventurous curiosity and prompted him to keep company with fellow Westerners. As a result, his observations and encounters are understandably of marginal interest, lacking cultural, historical, or political engagement. Not recommended; instead read Michael Asher's *Impossible Journey: Two Against the Sahara* (Morrow, 1988).? Lonnie Weatherby, McGill Univ. Lib., Montreal Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Kertscher, an independent filmmaker whose grandfather was a white hunter in Africa, uses his background to render a fascinating account of his travels across the breadth of Africa. Kertscher crosses the Sahara desert and the Sahel region, moving on to Timbuktu and southward to the Ivory Coast and the jungles of equatorial Africa. He battles malaria and loneliness, sees the silverback gorillas of East Africa, and floats on the Congo River in a rigging of six barges alive with people, animals, and cargo. At differing times and durations, his traveling companions include peace corps volunteers, conventional tourists, and a band of adventurers trying to sell progressively deteriorating cars. Kertscher has an eye for detail and an appreciation of different peoples and cultures, finding beauty and dignity in the music or religious worship of the people he sees. He appreciates the experience of being a foreigner, wondering at the rootlessness of long-term travelers unable to fit in anywhere. And he clearly understands the privileges that continue to be extended to a white person in Africa. Vanessa Bush From *Kirkus* s In a narrative that is among the better recent additions to the genre, a personable and resourceful modern-day Henry Stanley traverses half of the African continent by thumb, afoot, and aboard riverboat. Comfort was not among his considerations when Kertscher, an independent filmmaker, set out from the Algerian port of Oran heading into the Sahara. He hitches rides with North Africans and a quarrelsome group of Europeans, traveling in a four-car caravan led by an unstable egomaniac. Upon entering the Sahel, to the south of the Sahara, Kertscher heads west via a series of slow and unreliable conveyances to reach a Peace Corps friend in Timbuktu. His account of one incredibly long and breakdown-filled trip aboard a truck overloaded with passengers sitting atop sacks of dates is especially representative of the state of local transport, and even more of the Africans' and eventually Kertscher's good-humored resignation to the pace of travel. Guiltily, but faced with the prospect of crossing the Congo during the rainy season, Kertscher flies from the Ivory Coast to the Central African Republic, hitches south to the Congo River, and catches the boat (really a floating city replete with merchants, crime, and police) to Kisangani certainly one of the most picturesque, crowded, and uncomfortable excursions anywhere. Soon after,

Kertscher contracts a severe malarial infection; only through the kindness of the local Congolese villagers does he pull through. The final stage of his journey through east Africa includes encounters with mountain gorillas and a visit to Tanzania's Ngorongoro Crater. While the journey is hardly unique, Kertscher is refreshingly unassuming and open to nuances of human nature (his own included), and while his occasional explanations of the motivations behind his trip seem canned and tired, he draws a colorful and vibrant portrait of this marvelous landscape and of its warmhearted people. -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.