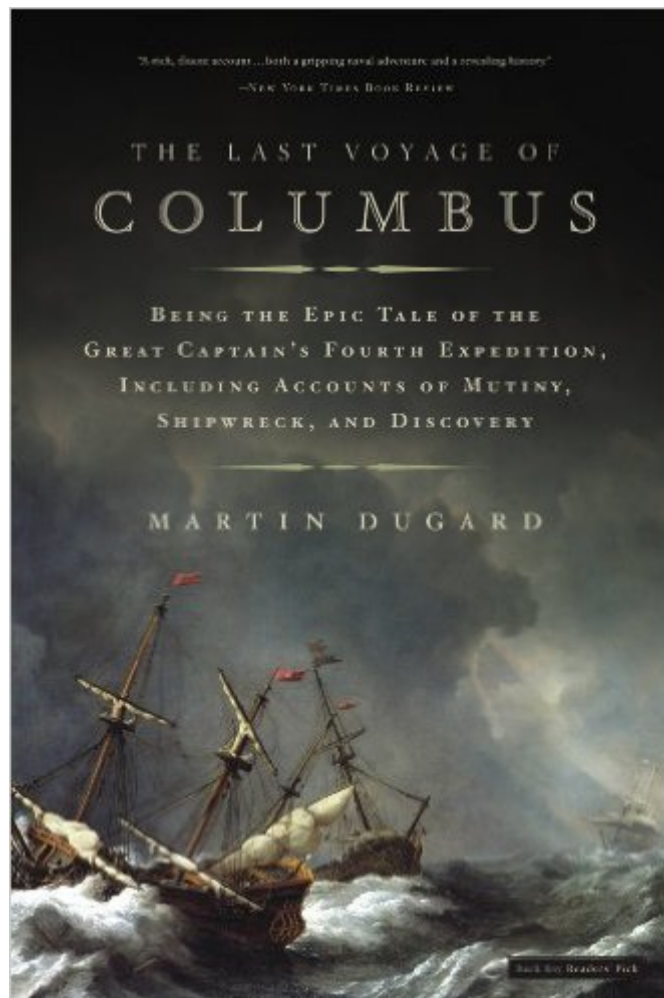


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The Last Voyage Of Columbus: Being The Epic Tale Of The Great Captain's Fourth Expedition, Including Accounts Of Swordfight, Mutiny, Shipwreck, Gold, War, Hurricane, And Discovery





Synopsis

The Year is 1500. Christopher Columbus, stripped of his title Admiral of the Ocean Seas, waits in chains in a Caribbean prison built under his orders, looking out at the colony that he founded, nurtured, and ruled for eight years. Less than a decade after discovering the New World, he has fallen into disgrace, accused by the royal court of being a liar, a secret Jew, and a foreigner who sought to steal the riches of the New World for himself. The tall, freckled explorer with the aquiline nose, whose flaming red hair long ago turned gray, passes his days in prayer and rumination, trying to ignore the waterfront gallows that are all too visible from his cell. And he plots for one great escape, one last voyage to the ends of the earth, one final chance to prove himself. What follows is one of history's most epic-and forgotten-adventures. Columbus himself would later claim that his fourth voyage was his greatest. It was without doubt his most treacherous. Of the four ships he led into the unknown, none returned. Columbus would face the worst storms a European explorer had ever encountered. He would battle to survive amid mutiny, war, and a shipwreck that left him stranded on a desert isle for almost a year. On his tail were his enemies, sent from Europe to track him down. In front of him: the unknown. Martin Dugard's thrilling account of this final voyage brings Columbus to life as never before-adventurer, businessman, father, lover, tyrant, and hero.

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Customer Reviews

Martin Dugard knows how to write well. This is a gift not all historians have. The notes section is helpful to readers who are interested in further study. Dugard has traveled to the obscure regions he describes. I only gave it four stars because I would have loved to see pictures of the sites he describes (although I am aware that would have raised the cost). I knew some facts about Columbus. His religious zeal. His son's first hand account. I have seen Ridley Scott's "1492" (which I enjoyed). However I did not know anything about this "Fourth Expedition". I have read Manchester's account of Magellan, which I found very interesting (and I intend to read Bergreen's Bio of Magellan next) however this tale is simply amazing. The title says it all. Amazing tales of storm and divine retribution (I won't give it away). Such was the strain of the mission that heroes became conspirators (these were no "Conquistadors"..for that, see Gov. Ovando). I will always remember the name of Diego Mendez (somebody I had never heard of until now). The fate of the convoy of Bobadilla is a tale you have to read to believe. I am going to hunt down Dugard's book "Into Africa" and his work on Captain Cook. I cannot recommend this book more highly.

Wow. I learned so much from this book and enjoyed every page of it. If I were in the movie business, I'd be optioning the rights on this puppy for a movie with Harrison Ford as Columbus in a heartbeat. Yes, so we all know the general outline of the 1492 story. And we know some vague details that Columbus never found the western route to the orient. But Dugard brings this to life and puts in fascinating details about life at sea, the struggles Columbus and the crew faced, and just what really did happen to bring an end to Columbus' great career. Dugard's writing style is fantastic as is his approach. He doesn't try to mis-apply 20th (or 21st) century morality onto Columbus' actions, he's good at interpreting Columbus behavior in the right temporal light. He doesn't seek to justify or crucify Columbus, just to tell a great adventure story. The best fiction writers would have a hard time beating the twists of fate, politics, action, and tension of this real life drama. I also found this book especially interesting having recently read James Reston's excellent "Dogs of God." Dogs of God sets the stage very nicely to better understand Spain's political and religious climate at the time as well as the events leading up to Columbus' first voyage. Having read this, I'm anxious to read some of Dugard's other writing, possibly his "Surviving the Toughest Race on Earth" next.

Martin Dugard's riveting account of Christopher Columbus's last voyage in the New World is not

without its flaws. Though the book is very compelling and a great read it suffers a bit from a jumping narrative in the first section to a lack of citations regarding sources throughout. The second part of the work, from the beginning of Columbus's fourth voyage to the end of the book, is great. It is a highly engrossing read with short chapters that practically drag the reader from chapter to chapter just to see what happens next. However, the first section of the book is not like this at all. Though the chapters are of similar length the opening meanders through the events that led up to Columbus's fourth voyage. I found myself somewhat confused by the large cast of characters both important and not. Though Dugard does provide some interesting overviews of Columbus's nature and his relationship with Queen Isabella of Spain. The worst shortcoming of the book though is its lack of citations. Often I found myself asking "Where did he dig that up?" Unfortunately, Dugard only provides a selected bibliography, while extensive; it does not point the reader to a direct source for some of his more interesting comments and sentences. While historians I'm sure would rip Dugard a new one for this lapse I can forgive as the general subject matter and crisp narrative make for a very good read.

This book is divided into two parts, the first deals with Columbus, his time spent getting some one (anyone) to back him financially on a hairbrain scheme to get to China/India by sailing West, and his first three voyages and their results. The second deals with the Fourth Voyage (which he calls his "High Voyage) it's triumph(s), tragedies and their aftermath. But what makes this book worth reading is what it really deals with, and that when a man's dreams come true they are not always what he expected nor what he wanted in the first place (or thought he did). Columbus wanted to sail west, discover a way to the Orient, make himself a fortune, be showered with lands medals and titles and leave a great legacy for his children and posterity. Because of his political naivete, what he got was short term acclaim, then humiliation and banishment, the smugness and pettiness of sycophants and courtiers, privation and deprivation, and lastly he almost lost credit for discovering the "New World" to a man (Amerigo Vespucci) who might never have actually commanded a ship of discovery. Keep in mind that the two continents are called America not Columbia (or Colonia, or Colomboia). Dugard does a marvellous job of bringing out the personalities of all the people involved, from Ferdinand (miser and ingrate) and Isabella (friend and admirer), to his schizophrenic crews (who could never make up their minds on whose side they were on), the indigenous people (some who fought him and others that saved him from starvation); to the man himself who thought that he was protected by God, and never lost his belief in the miraculous help of prayer.

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