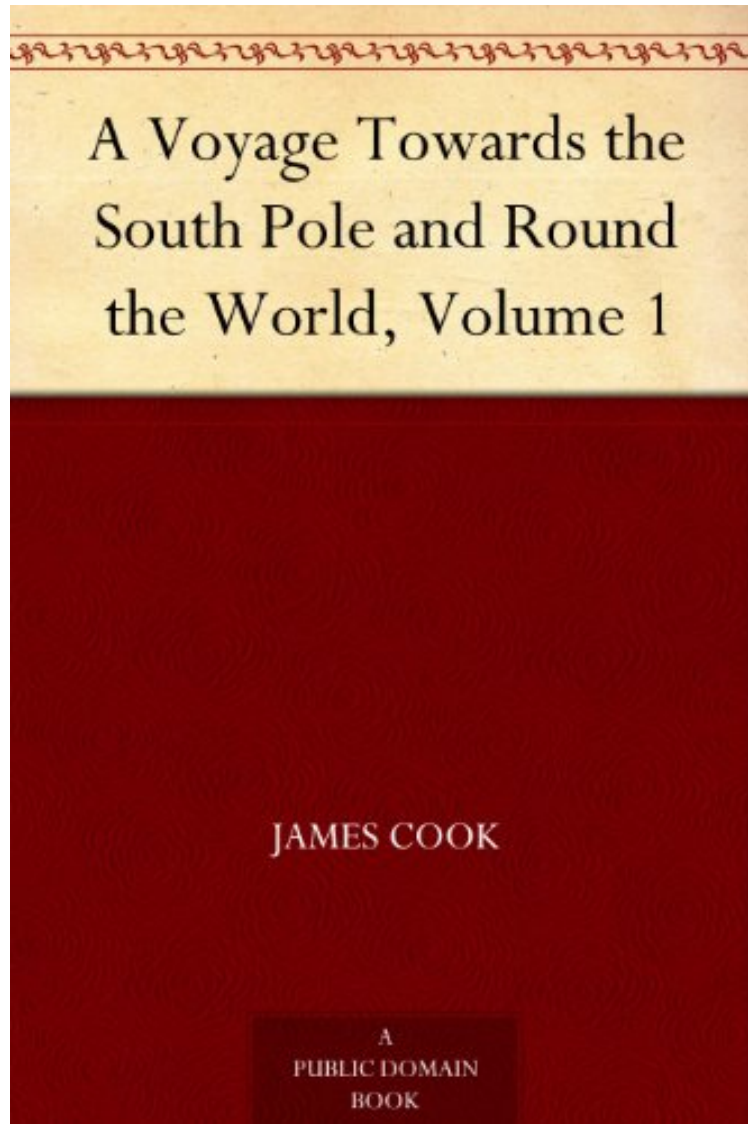


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A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Round the World, Volume 1 (English Edition)

Von James Cook

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Von James Cook : A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Round the World, Volume 1 (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Round the World, Volume 1 (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Great Read about a Great VoyageVon Meks LibrarianThis 3-volume-work written by Captain James Cook himself was first

published in 1777 and covers Cook's second long voyage on behalf of the British Crown in the years 1772 to 1775. I read the first volume; it was a free kindle book (surprise!) when I downloaded it in 2012. At first, I braced myself for a rather "dry" read; with lots of listings of longitudes, weather observations and ships' provisions. And the book contains all that, as you'd expect from a Captain's account of his voyage. But there is so much more, and it was a surprisingly pleasant read which I enjoyed very much. James Cook himself only went to school for five years before starting on his long life spent mainly aboard ships when he was still a teenager. He apologizes for his lack of writing skills in the book's foreword, but I quite like his simple style, very readable for something that was written in the late 18th century. Throughout the book, he comes across a thoughtful, fair and honest man; honest with himself as much as with his crew and the people he meets during his voyage. At no point does he regard the natives of the various places he visits as inferior; he does not want to change their ways or claim their islands for himself or the British Crown; nor does he attempt any missionary work there. On the contrary, he frequently mentions how well skilled the natives are in their crafts, makes observations of their system of government, customs and religion, and never fails to admit to not fully understanding something the natives tried to explain to him and his crew (among which there were artists to draw everything they saw, botanists, doctors, and other scientists). For instance, he writes "...the less I say about it, the fewer mistakes I shall make", clearly indicating that he does not want to speculate about positions of islands, meanings of customs or numbers of inhabitants when he is not sure about them. He is also not easily given to prejudice, writing that "The actions of a few individuals are not sufficient to fix a custom on a whole nation." In a book about his first voyage to the South Pacific, he had made some statements about the women on one of the islands he visited. In this newer book, after having visited the island again (and being received by the natives as the long-lost friend they truly seemed to consider him, and vice versa), he makes amends to his own former statements, saying that to judge the women of the island by what he observed in the few women he saw near the ship would be like drawing conclusions about the women of France by the behaviour of a few prostitutes met in the harbour of Marseille. His mission actually consists of one most important task: to establish once and for all whether there is or is not a large landmass to the very South of our planet, the unknown and much speculated about "Terra Australis". On the way there and back, he has the task of (re-)visiting any land he finds along the way, and since he was equipped with one of the first chronometers ever built, there was hope he would be able to add more accuracy to the maps as had been possible ever before. He well succeeded in the latter, but not in the former task. His two ships are equipped with the latest in terms of technology, medicine and food deemed fit to combat scurvy and other illnesses, and several times during the book, the captain proudly declares that they had not one man on the sick roll, or (after months in the Antarctic Seas) only very few showed light symptoms of scurvy. He makes sure that the ship is scrubbed clean and smoked out between decks whenever possible, the bed sheets and clothes of the men changed and washed frequently, and there seems to have been very little disciplinary trouble with crew members. The way Cook describes the islands, their inhabitants and landscape, is good enough to set the mental imagery in motion. It took me a while to work out where he actually was when he kept talking of Otaheite - of course he was referring to Tahiti, stupid me! Like I said, I very much enjoyed reading this first volume and will try and find the other two.

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