



Orient Express: A Travel Memoir

John Dos Passos

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Before John Dos Passos enjoys fame as a chronicler and critic of American society, he wins recognition for command of aesthetics. *Orient Express*, a memoir of the author's travels through Eastern Europe, the Near East, and the Middle East, focuses on sights, sounds, and smells rather than plot or character. Dos Passos applies his instincts as a painter to mountain ranges and grimy alleyways, finding beauty everywhere.

His tour extends from Tiflis, Georgia, to Erivan, Armenia, and Marrakesh, Morocco; from Kasvin, Iran, to Baghdad, Iraq, and Damascus, Syria. He crosses the Syrian Desert, observes the aftermath of the Greek-Turkish War, climbs the Caucasus, explores Persia during the rise of Reza Kahn, and records the creation of Iraq by the British. His message is clear and relevant to contemporary travelers: holiness and happiness abounds in the East as much as the West.

"With the name of Allah for all baggage," Dos Passos writes, "you could travel from the Great Wall of China to the Niger and be fairly sure of food, and often of money, if only you were ready to touch your forehead in the dust five times a day and put away self and the glamorous West. And yet," he adds, "the West is conquering."

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