

**ATLAS
MYSTERIUM**

ATLAS MYSTERIUM
THE WORLD IN SEVEN COUNTRIES

HANDBOOK FOR CURIOUS TRAVELERS
OF STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS PLACES

BY

REUBEN WILLIAMS

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ATLAS MYSTERIUM

Chapter 1... INTRODUCTION

This guidebook is unlike any guidebook ever seen. The reader is encouraged to explore its pages, immersing themselves in the tales and locales described herein. Each continent is summarized with but a single country, excepting Africa, which the publisher has determined meritorious of two discrete entries, as each country has a significant number of towns, sights, and stories.

These overviews are all designed to give travelers a unique view of the world. Anyone can travel to Paris or Budapest, but few courageous souls would take it upon themselves to sail to Australia or hike to Lake Titicaca. If you, dear reader, are one of these braver souls, read on.

The central aim of this guidebook is to provide the reader with a practical but fascinating guide to each country, from the historical to the mysterious. In-between, the reader will find advice on hotels, restaurants, and sights that will entertain even the most prudish of adventurers.

For the more macabre travelers, the stories herein provide inspiration to explore each country's darker side. The term 'dark tourism' accurately portrays this style of travel, but who is to criticize the curious explorer but those meek and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat? There are few more noble pursuits than that of exploration, and this guide encourages all readers to engage the unknown with the tenacity and vivacity that befits an explorer of the *atlas mysterium*.

ATLAS MYSTERIUM

A note on foreign words:

The author has italicised foreign words for all things except for currencies, the names of Chinese dynasties and the names of people. The popular Wade-Giles transliteration has been used for all Chinese words.

ATLAS MYSTERIUM

Chapter 2... SOUTH AMERICA: PERU

Located on the west coast of South America, the Republic of Peru is the third-largest country on the continent and home to almost 5 million people. It is most famous for its historical ties with the Incan Empire, which ruled most of Peru from the 14th to 16th centuries.

Prior to the rise of the Incas, Peru housed a rich collection of civilizations, notably first emerging around 2500 BC with great pyramids and ceremonial sites appearing from as early as 2100 BC. The *Chavín* cult is a source of many artifacts and temples, especially those dedicated to the Smiling God and the Staff God, whose court was attended by 14 eagle-like creatures. Unfortunately, many of these artifacts are worth more melted down as gold than for their archaeological significance.

The Incan empire fell in 1572 when Francisco de Toledo executed the last remaining Inca, Tupac Amaru, and the Viceroyalty of Peru was created. The Viceroyalty lasted until the early 1820s, when general José de San Martín invaded from Argentina and Chile. Since then, various coups and battles have been fought, with the most recent democratic election resulting in a coup six years ago to prevent political volatility.

For much of its Spanish history, Peru has been the world's provider of *guano* (bat excrement), which is attributed to be the major source of prosperity in Peru.

The majority of Peruvians speak Spanish, although there are many groups who speak the traditional languages such as Quechua and Aymara. English is not widely spoken, especially outside of Lima.

Money

As currency, Peruvians use the sol. There are 10 dineros to one sol, and 10 centavos to one dinero.

Capital City: LIMA

Lima was founded by the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro in 1535. The city currently has a population over 200,000 and is in rapid economic development following years of steady decline. The city (and nearby bay) straddles the Rímac District, and has recently bled into the nearby town of Callao. An extensive network of electric trams have recently been established in the town providing local transit for a very reasonable fee. Buses, which are less reliable than the trams, are also available.

Local temperatures are mild but humid for most of the year.

What to Eat

Lima is relatively new on the international travel scene and many of the dishes are quite traditional. *Ceviche*, which is a dish of fresh fish marinated in limes and rocoto peppers, is best eaten for breakfast or lunch.

Escabeche is a must-try if you are traveling to Peru. Spicy, sweet, and sour, this dish is traditionally served cold after the fish is “cooked” in hot vinegar.

A popular street food is *anticuchos*—cow heart grilled to perfection. The hardest part about these delicacies is eating only one.

Where to Stay

Luxury hotels are few and far between in Lima. There are two main hotels that service international travelers.

Hotel España

A delightful, 12-room establishment, the Hotel España is not much to look at from outside but boasts a traditional two-floor Spanish foyer with natural sky light. Each floor is painted differently and adorned with Spanish art and sculpture.

Hotel Maury

The Hotel Maury's pisco sours are almost worth a trip to the city by themselves. Larger than the Hotel España, the Hotel Maury has an excellent banquet hall and excellent bar that makes time in Lima a very pleasant stay.

Lima: Things to Do

Museo de Arqueología y Antropología: If you are having trouble finding your way through all the historically significant sites in Peru, a trip to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the National University of San Marcos in Lima is essential. Housing dozens of artifacts from all across Peru, this museum is well worth the time.

Plaza de Armas: This square is where you'll find some of Lima's most breathtaking colonial architecture. It is also the site where Francisco Pizarro established the city of Peru.

San Francisco de Lima Basilica and Convent: A gorgeous architectural phenomenon in its own right, this basilica is well worth the time to explore, for underneath the narthex

are buried no less than 25,000 bodies, each arranged in various patterns and styles reminiscent of the famed Parisian Catacombs.

Greater Peru: Things to Do

Amazon Rainforest: Nearly 13 per cent of the Amazon rainforest is located in Peru and is home to countless dangerous species and many uncontacted indigenous tribes. A fantastic site for lovers of biodiversity and forgotten (and undiscovered) civilization!

Lake Titicaca: The highest navigable lake in the world, Lake Titicaca is split between Peru and its neighbor, Bolivia. Many new archaeological sites are being discovered even today around the shores of Lake Titicaca. If you do visit, make sure to explore the floating islands constructed by the Uros people. The most significant city on the shores of Lake Titicaca is Puno.

The Lost City of the Incas: Any budding archaeologist will be able to tell you about this city, which the Quechua people call “Old Pyramid” or “*Machu Picchu*”. Discovered by Hiram Bingham III in 1912, this is one of the most significant sites for Incan anthropology. Tourists have died traveling to the site due to its extreme elevation and dangerous path, so be sure to take it slow and manage altitude sickness.

Myths and Stories

Peru is a hotbed of traditional myths and stories, and each of these differ depending on the region that you find yourself in.

In the Amazon, you'll hear stories of a whistling creature known as *El Tunche*. This evil spirit of the forest is a

tormented, evil soul, twisted by hate. The whistling of the *Tunche* announces the death of the listener. Local legends say that if you hear the whistling of the *Tunche*, it is best to run to a safe place immediately.

To the South, in the Andes, you'll hear the story of the *Muki*, the King of the Mines. Like Rumpelstiltskin, the *Muki* make dangerous deals with unwitting people inevitably leading to a grisly demise.

Another story popular throughout Peru is the story of the *pishtaco*, a ghoulish creature who seeks out native Peruvians to kill them. The white-skinned *pishtaco* is said to consume the fat of their victims and slice them into pieces and sell them on the street, so be careful when buying escabeche. In reality, though, these creatures are believed to be legends created by the brutal attacks of Spanish conquistadors on the local populations.

Finally, we have the story of Sarah Ellen, who was executed in 1913. Indeed – in 1913, a merchant ship from Europe docked in Pisco and delivered a sealed, lead-lined coffin. Inside the coffin, a dead woman. Some say she was a witch, others say she was bitten by Dracula herself, but she had certainly been found guilty of witchcraft in England where she was from. She was executed in England and shipped to Peru, and on her death she swore she would return in 80 years. Who knows what will happen then?

Chapter 3... NORTH AMERICA: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

America is a large place and there are whole books written on the joys and delights of traveling across the country. Because of publication limitations, the author has chosen to restrict the scope of this guide to the grandest and most populous city in the country, New York.

The great country of America has not always been so vast. Originally, beginning as 13 rebellious English colonies, it has expanded to cover most of the continent. English settlement began with the Virginia Colony in 1607 at Jamestown. The Dutch originally first settled along the Hudson River in 1624 establishing the colony of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island. In 1664, the British took control of the area and renamed it New York.

Money

The United State of America uses the US Dollar, which is split into 100 cents. Unlike many countries across the world, the Mexican Silver Dollar is not accepted as general currency except as the value of the silver itself.

Key City: New York

The most famous city in America was finally renamed as New York in 1760. However, the modern-day city did not exist until 1895 when five key enclaves were merged into one city. Now, it is one of the largest cities in the world with more than 40 per cent of the city's population foreign-born.

New York has five boroughs: Manhattan, home of the New York Stock Exchange and Times Square, where the New York Times opened its office in 1904; Brooklyn, home to the famous Coney Island Amusement Park, lies on the

western end of Long Island. The renowned amusement park, also known as Sodom by the Sea, is not for the faint-hearted as it is home to many brothels, as well as a few family-oriented attractions.

Queens is also on Long Island, north of Brooklyn. Richmond is to the southwest of Brooklyn and is linked to Manhattan by ferry and will soon be connected via subway through the Staten Island Tunnel Project. The Bronx lies northeast of Manhattan and is situated on the American mainland, unlike the other island-bound boroughs.

Manhattan and the Bronx are easily accessed by the El, an elevated railway with a line between Battery Place and the Financial District. New lines are being opened every day. If the railway is not preferred, a traveller may still procure a horse-drawn streetcars, although these are steadily becoming a rarity. Queens and Richmond also feature several motorbus routes. The New York Yellow Cab Company operates taxicabs throughout the city but be careful when hailing a cab on the street as not all drivers are necessarily trustworthy.

What to Eat

Creamy dishes, such as clam chowder and spinach dip, are especially popular nowadays in Manhattan. Italian immigration significantly diversified food offerings, including the finest spaghetti and meatballs.

It would be remiss of the author to omit one particularly popular homestyle dish: chicken a la king, a creamy rice-based dish that is paired well with honey rolls.

Where to Stay

Alcazar Hotel

Located just around the corner from the Waldorf-Astoria, the Alcazar is favoured by bootleggers and other enterprising individuals on the other side of the law. Though the rates are incredibly low, travellers are advised to stay here with caution.

New Grand Hotel

The New Grand Hotel, with mock Moorish décor, is available for those on any budget with lower rates for shared amenities.

Plaza Hotel on Grand Army Plaza

Not to be confused with the Plaza Hotel in Brooklyn, this glitzy hotel is the place to stay for notables and dignitaries.

Waldorf-Astoria

Even more grandiose than the Plaza Hotel, this red brick luxury hotel is only for the most exclusive of clientele.

New York: Things to Do

One could talk forever about sites to see in New York. We have settled for but five.

Central Park: In the heart of Manhattan is Central Park. This magnificent parkland features a Menagerie with a sea lion pool and many other animals to see.

Hall of Records: How can one talk about Beaux-Arts without mentioning another major example: the Hall of Records? The building features 54 sculptures carved from Hallowell granite. Allegorical figures of heritage,

maternity, poetry, philosophy, instruction, study, industry and commerce crown the building.

New York Public Library: Budding historians could do worse than visit the New York Public Library, housed in a beautiful Beaux-Arts building on Fifth Avenue and 42nd street. As the second-largest library in America, it is architecturally significant and home to a vast collection.

Statue of Liberty: The iconic Statue of Liberty on Bedloe's Island was erected in 1886 as a gift from the French as a symbol of hope and freedom. The relatively recent painting and lighting of the statue make it very visible, even at night.

Woolworth Building: The tallest building in the world, the Woolworth Building towers above the cityscape and is instantly recognisable. Visitors may travel to the top of the building for a small fee.

Greater America: Places to Go

New Orleans, a most unique city: Famous for its unique culture, cuisine and the Fat Tuesday or 'Mardi Gras' festivals held each year, New Orleans is not to be missed while exploring the country.

Salem, historic site of witch trials: Those with time on their hands may wish to travel north to Salem, the site of the witchcraft trials that started in 1692. While there, an intrepid traveller may wish to also visit Arkham, only a few hours away by train.

Washington D.C., the nation's capital: Although much smaller than New York, Washington D.C. is the seat of American politics and the President. A fantastic site to explore the nation's democratic history.

Myths and Stories

New York is full of ghost stories. Perhaps one more mysterious is the story of the Kreischer Mansion. This mansion on Staten Island was built by Balthazar Kreischer, a Bavarian immigrant, in 1885. Kreischer died the next year and the house was fought over by his two sons. The elder brother shot himself in the head and the younger burned alive when his own house caught fire. The house is now said to be haunted by their wrathful spirits.

A second haunted location is Sing Sing prison. Named after the nearby village of Ossining (originally Sint Sinck) on the East Bank of the Hudson River, this prison is the fifth penitentiary constructed in New York and where capital punishment is administered. The jail electrocuted its first visitors in 1891 in the specially-built Death House. The electric chair, nicknamed Old Sparky, has taken many lives since then.

Just as New York is a hotbed of immigration, it has brought with it many traditions from all over the world. If you search hard enough, you will find Italian *strega*, or witches; West African *juju* or folk magic, or even Irish *gaels* about. Occult shops are rare, but can be found with a discerning eye, and there is no doubt that all of these magics are rife through the city. One can hardly expect that all the witches were burned in the Salem witch trials!

Chapter 4... EUROPE: GREAT BRITAIN

When we think of the macabre in Europe, it is easy to think of Paris' Catacombs or Bulgaria's Church of Bones, but it is precisely this reason that the author has chosen England as a site to explore. Such a pastoral country hides dark secrets behind a peaceful façade.

England was first settled by the Britons, who had a pagan lifestyle and are responsible for building many wonders such as Stonehenge. Britain was conquered first by the Romans, who gave rise to the Angles, and then by Vikings, who were Saxon. These two groups interbred, and we have today the Anglo-Saxons. There is much more to say on the topic, but the author recommends a good history book instead of this delightful blurb.

England is also the home of the Anglican faith, which sees the monarch, King George V, the head of church as well as state. It is a world power, with colonies across the world including Canada, Australia, Ceylon, Tasmania, India, South Africa, Malta, Cyprus, Kenya, Mauritius, Hong Kong, and Jamaica. In fact – the British Empire spans about a quarter of the world's area and population.

England itself is cold, wet, and dreary with perpetual rain and fog throughout the warmer months. This describes the lifestyle too: the economy is in a slump, and coal is not as profitable as it was during industrialization. Unemployment is high as the many crippled servicemen have trouble returning to work.

Money

Great Britain uses the Pound Sterling. One pound is divided into 20 shillings, of which 12 pennies make one.

CAPITAL CITY: LONDON

The only city larger than New York, London is Great Britain's crown jewel, so to speak, with 7.5 million people living therein. The Great War has irrevocably damaged this stately city, and many did not survive its tribulations. As such, the well-established British class system is slowly bleeding to death. Laborers strike for better pay, and picket lines block the streets.

The wealthiest portions of the city are north of the Thames: the West End, most of Westminster, Chelsea, Kensington, Paddington and Marylebone. South of the city, Soho is one of the most ethnically diverse areas of London and is home to the Berwick Street Market, along with any vice an incautious traveller desires.

Modernization has London in her grips, as the city is in the process of revitalizing key infrastructure. The underground 'Tube' offers convenient travel, and double-decked omnibuses are available day and night. Hackney carriages are also available – one can hail them from the street as they pass. Traveling outside of London is easiest by train or automobile.

Fog is a perpetual companion in London, and it goes by its own name, the London Peculiar. The fogs themselves are dense and unpredictable, caused not by natural phenomena but by the coal fires and factories. They range from yellow-brown to green and are quite unpleasant.

Travelers are advised that firearms are only allowed to be imported to England if the traveller obtains a Weapons Import Certificate. Obtaining one while in England is very time-consuming. However, shotguns are not considered

firearms under British law and do not require firearms certificates, although public display is discouraged.

What to Eat

Colonization has been kind to England's food. Alongside the traditional pies, sausages, potatoes, and spotted dick, a traveller will international and Cantonese dishes in Limehouse establishments.

One most famous dish is fish and chips, which are done in the traditional Scottish style. These are available, like beef pies, on most any street corner and are well worth trying. Travelers should be aware, however, of tales about rat meat and other unsavory fillings for their meat pies.

Where to Stay

Accommodation styles

Travelers wishing to maintain the utmost frugality are able to stay near Soho or the docks for very low cost, but this is dangerous as many criminals and ne'er-do-wells also use these doubtful establishments. A wiser choice would be to stay at a bed-and-breakfast, which is a small private in the suburbs or countryside. These establishments are frequently run by widowed landladies as a source of income, and in addition to providing meals, each has their own set of rules that must be abided by.

The Cavendish Hotel

If an explorer desires the comfort of a hotel, but not the glamour of the Ritz, then the Cavendish Hotel provides ample opportunity to rest and recuperate after a day of exploration. It is well-appointed and clean with reasonable architecture.

The Ritz and Savoy

The Ritz on 150 Picadilly hardly needs mention: the name itself is eponymous with glamour. Another famous hotel – the Savoy – is on Strand. Any traveller will not go amiss staying at one of these fine establishments, but it must be noted that both are not the cheapest. The American Bar at the Savoy serves some of the finest drinks in London.

London: Things to Do

British Empire Exhibition: The 1924 British Empire exhibition, which has extended into 1925, is a marvel to behold. With pavilions dedicated to each of Great Britain's colonies as well as palaces for Housing and Transport, Industry, and more, the Exhibition is not to be missed. For children, a funfair is also available on-site, and for women, the Pears' Palace of Beauty is well worth the investment – one can meet Helen of Troy, Madame de Pompadour, and many other significant women.

British Museum: The British Museum, which is linked to the British Library, is a fantastic endeavour. It was created in 1735 as the world's first free, national, public museum and now houses millions of artifacts from across the globe. The collection grew too large and in 1823, the building was demolished to make way for the Greek Revival-style building now in use. The British Library is only available to scholars of significant merit, and a letter of recommendation must be provided upon visiting.

London Tower: London Tower, located in the old medieval town of London is the historical castle of London. Built in 1070 by William the Conqueror, it also hosted the execution of Anne Boleyn and Jane Grey, imprisoned Sir Walter Raleigh, and now houses the Crown Jewels.

St Pancras Old Church: Located behind the station, this unassuming church is believed to be one of the oldest sites of Christian worship in England. The current church was reconstructed in 1847, but retains the inscribed altar stone dating to 625 AD.

Greater England: Things to Do

Bath: Founded by Romans as a spa resort, the word for our hot tub of water comes from this city. Awash with golden stone townhouses, sweeping crescents and Palladian mansions, Bath is a true opportunity to break away from the hubbub of travel and truly relax.

Derby: Derby makes for a fantastic day trip for those wishing to escape the city life. There are also many great sites to see there, including Mother Hill (Mam Tor in the native tongue), one of the earliest hillforts in Britain, and Blue John Cavern where Derbyshire spar (or Blue John) is mined. Found nowhere else in the world, this elusive blue crystal is often described in the mines as “raw beef”. A truly mystifying sight to behold.

Stonehenge: One of the greatest and most mysterious Celtic sites in the world, Stonehenge is shrouded in the fog of history. What was the purpose of these monolithic stones so arranged? Perhaps the curious explorer could find out.

Myths and Stories

Great Britain is home to many mysterious stories, some dating back over a thousand years. Most infamously is the disappearance of the Ninth Legion. Five thousand of Rome’s finest soldiers disappeared in the swirling mists of Caledonia as they went to put down a rebellion. Even now,

nobody knows what happened, but they certainly never returned.

Travelers in England would also do well to pay heed to the fair folk. These creatures, known also as Fairies, are tricksters and imps. Legend says these folks are known to steal human infants and replace them with one of their own. Even now, English people are known to dress their babies in frills and bows to steer the fair folk away from them.

Between the fairies and missing Romans, England also has its fair share of Black Dogs – and none more famous than the Black Dog of Newgate, the soul of a powerful sorcerer. The legend is about Newgate Prison, which is now the site of Old Bailey. During the reign of King Henry III, a sorcerer was sent to Newgate Prison and was eaten by his fellow inmates – England was in the middle of a severe famine and prisoners were the last to be fed. But the prisoners turned mad and started attacking each other. When only a few were left, they decided to flee the prison – they were successful until the Black Dog caught them and ate them, one by one.

The author cannot end this section of the guide without mentioning one of the most famed killers of all time, who stalked the streets of London just 35 years ago. Jack the Ripper. Since his murders (up to 13 estimated), more deaths have been linked to his crimes. But who is he? Is he still out there, on the unlit streets of Whitechapel?

CHAPTER 5... AFRICA: EGYPT

Egypt is a realm of wonders. Howard Carter's opening of the tomb of Tutankhamun in November 1922 grasped the world in a fit of Egyptomania. In fact, Egypt hosts the oldest continually identifiable culture in the world, with dynasties of North and South Egypt stretching back to 3100 BC.

Since gaining its independence from England almost three years ago, it has instituted a significant number of protectorate laws around the export of their national heritage. This has meant that anything of more than minor historical significance can no longer be removed from the country with up to a year in prison awaiting those who breach these laws.

The country itself is in turmoil so travelers ought to be wary; however, the British government has retained discretionary powers over imperial communications, the Sudan, the defense of Egypt and the Canal, as well as the protection of foreign interests and local minorities.

Arabic is the most common tongue spoken throughout Egypt, though some also speak English or French. The majority of Egyptians nowadays are Islamic, with a Coptic Christian minority. Wise travelers are cautioned to remove their shoes when entering a mosque.

Egypt, fortified by desert, is hot. With only a single inch of rainfall a year, Egypt regularly reaches 99 degrees Fahrenheit (37 Celsius) in the summer.

Any wishing to explore Egypt should consider the support of a *dragoman*, or local guide. They are essential as translators, hagglers, and navigators. But, take heed, as many may be thieves and vagabonds, in their own right.

Money

Egypt uses the Egyptian pound, which can be split into 100 piastres. However, with the British influence at play, the British pound and the Mexican silver dollar are generally accepted.

CAPITAL CITY: CAIRO

El Kahira (Cairo) is the city of Arabian Nights, where mysterious gifts can be found in every stall and storytellers and jugglers and snake charmers line the street corners. Built during the Islamic conquests of Egypt in 968 AD, it is littered with architectural wonders: palaces and mosques that are some of the finest in the world.

The Ezbekia Gardens are a major centre surrounded by cafes, restaurants, and nightclubs along with the major post office and American consulate. To the East, the New Quarter meets the Old City, a maze of narrow, winding alleys and crowded marketplaces. The famous bazaar, the *Muski*, sells jewelry, spices and rugs that are of such craftsmanship, they are a must-see in their own right. Largely built in the Middle Ages, the streets are shadowed by overhanging upper stories.

Along the bank of the Nile is the *Kasr el-Dubara*, where most governmental buildings and palaces are located. Just south of the *Kasr el-Nil* Bridge is the British Consulate General.

Travelers, explorers and amateur archaeologists should be careful in Cairo. Although it is a city of great beauty, it is also a city of poverty. Be careful when drinking the water here, as schistosomiasis is endemic and syphilis is common amongst the local population. Those flaunting wealth can expect to be robbed.

What to Eat

Ta'meya, or Egyptian Falafel is an incredible dish that is often served alongside *Ful*, or fava beans dressed with lemon and oil. This dish is so quintessentially Egyptian that it is said that *Ful* was eaten over 4000 years ago by the ancient Egyptians themselves!

For those who can handle the spice, *kushari* is a second iconic dish that pays homage to Italian influence. Vermicelli, macaroni, tomatoes, hummus, chilli, and lentils create a truly revelatory mix of flavors that are sure to go down well.

Where to Stay

Most European-style hotels are located around the Ezbekia Gardens. Any of these are amenable to tourists.

Shepherd's Hotel

One cannot write a guidebook without consideration for the world-famous Shepherd's Hotel. The epitome of art deco influence on Egyptian architecture, the hotel is well-appointed and very comfortable.

Traditional Options

Those wishing for a more traditional experience may opt to try their luck with a more out-of-the way hotel. Many of these may be dangerous to foreign tourists, but, if one is lucky, they may discover a charming, if quaint, experience as well.

Cairo: Things to Do

City of the Dead: Located on the southern edge of Cairo and accessible by tram car, the City of the Dead is home to

thousands of citizens and tens of thousands of the dead. It is also the heart of Old Cairo, where the city was first founded. Tombs and mausoleums are used as houses alongside those they honor. Travelers may visit many tombs for previous rulers here, including Sultan Inal and Amir Qurqumas.

Egyptian Museum: For those interested in seeing some of the most glorious Egyptian artifacts ever found for themselves, the Egyptian Museum must be visited. As the state-sponsored caretaker for national heritage, it is open to visitors from 9am to 4.30 pm all days, except Sundays.

Pyramids at Giza: The last remaining ancient wonder of the world, the Great Pyramids at Giza are easily accessible from Cairo via a tourist tram that runs hourly. Tickets for guided tours are available from an office along the street from the Mena House Hotel, near the tram terminal. The largest of the pyramids is the Pyramid of Cheops (Khufu), then the Pyramid of Chephren (Khafre), and Mycenrius (Menkaura) are smaller. The ongoing excavations, such as at the Great Sphinx, are also worth seeing.

Greater Egypt: Things to Do

Alexandria: This famous city, site of the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Library of Alexandria, is one of 11 cities that Alexander the Great named after himself during his conquests. However, due to turmoil and difficulties, the only ancient icon still standing in its original location is Pompey's Pillar, named so due to a misreading of the dedicatory inscription at the base of the pillar.

Dahshur: For those who are particularly fascinated by the architecture of Ancient Egypt, two more pyramids may be found 20 miles south of Cairo near the city of Dahshur.

These two pyramids: the Red Pyramid and the Bent Pyramid, were both built on the orders of Sneferu, the first *pharaoh* of the Fourth Dynasty.

Port Said: This relatively new city was established on Easter Monday in 1859 by Sa'id of Egypt during the construction of the Suez Canal and is the main port of entry for those coming to and from Egypt. It features public and private beaches, many significant theaters and museums, and boasts one of the most multicultural populations in Egypt.

Myths and Stories

Egypt has a rich history of beast-headed gods and goddesses. Perhaps most famous is Ra, the Eagle-headed god and creator of all other gods. Legend says that he was also the first Pharaoh.

One of the most famous occult texts is also a fragment of Egyptian history. The Book of the Dead, which comprises many spells and magic formulae, was used as a protection ward itself for mummies in their tombs.

On the subject of the dead, the ancient Egyptians had a most fascinating belief that when a person died, his sins would be weighed against a single feather – if the weight of the soul was too great, it would inevitably be dragged down to purgatory.

A more recent myth arising from the excavations and archaeological digs concerns the tomb of King Tutankhamun. Opened in 1922 by Howard Carter, the curse of the pharaoh says that those who violate the boy-king's tomb are destined to die. Indeed – several deaths in the intervening years have taken place but, as of writing, Carter himself is still alive.

CHAPTER 6... AFRICA: KENYA

Home to more than ten ethnic groups, the Protectorate of Kenya (previously known as British East Africa) has been home to humans for over 20 million years. It was established as a British colony in 1888 – originally with German influence from the Protectorate of Zanzibar, the German handed the coastal holdings to England in 1890 to prevent rivalry.

The country has only recently become a self-governed colony. Until 1920, it was still directly under control of the Crown, but, even today, the British Empire oversees foreign and Commonwealth matters.

The British have brought great infrastructure development to the country, notably the Uganda Railway. Running through the country all the way from Lake Victoria to Mombasa, the line passes through the country's capital, Nairobi.

The country is named after the highest mountain in the area, Mt. Kenya, and is a key source of tea and coffee for the British Empire. The climate varies as widely as the country's many people. The coast is generally hot and humid, but the inland climate swings wildly with two wet seasons in spring and autumn marking the passing of each year.

It is impossible to escape racism when talking about the Kenyan colony. White Europeans operate colonial administration and dominate key positions while the native African populations are largely impoverished and oppressed. Indian settlers, brought over in their thousands to complete the Uganda Railway, form a middle class.

As part of the British Empire, Kenya uses the currency and legal systems of Great Britain. Many towns are segregated, and this is generally enforced throughout the country.

Firearms are cheap and widely available as hunting is a national past-time. Permits must still be purchased from an accredited Customs House. Those wishing to travel to Nairobi will require additional permits from the Government House.

Money

Kenya, as with many of its neighbours, employs the East African shilling. This is a recent currency, put into place in 1921 after the increasing silver prices made the East African florin unviable. Many smaller places may prefer to trade in the pound sterling or the Mexican silver dollar.

The shilling, equivalent to 1 shilling sterling, is split into 100 cents.

CAPITAL CITY: NAIROBI

Nairobi is still a new colonial town with a population of about 8000. Just beyond the town rises Mount Kinangop and the beautiful Aberdare Range; Mount Kenya soars further northeast and Mount Saitama to the North.

The region is very cool and dry, with an altitude of 5500 feet and rich soil – these agricultural advantages explain why European settlers moved the country's capital here.

Nairobi is a segregated city, divided into three quarters: one for Europeans, one for Asian/Arabians, and one for Africans. Offices, hotels, clubs, even toilets and jails are segregated.

What to Eat

For those looking for the traditional, British experience, most clubs serve French and English food. However, for the curious traveller, many local, Indian, and Chinese dishes may also be found in their respective areas in Nairobi.

Chips *Malai* is a beautiful fusion of these cuisines: British hot chips, cooked in an omelet and served with *kachumbari* and tomato sauce.

Fried tilapia, served with *kachumbari*, *ugali*, or *pilau* is also popular as the fish is local. Even on their own, *ugali* (boiled maize) or *pilau* (spiced rice cooked in broth with meat or vegetables) are beautiful and worth trying.

Where to Stay

Hampton House Hotel

For those on a budget, this lodging is run by an elderly expatriate and a very fair place to stay. There is very little more to say about this place.

New Stanley Hotel

A prestigious establishment, located in the heart of Nairobi, and a fantastic opportunity to experience local craftsmanship: the owner is a milliner and dressmaker.

Nairobi: Things to Do

Fort Smith: Home to the King's African Rifles, Fort Smith is an active barracks for hundreds of soldiers. Tours are available to English citizens upon request, but caution is recommended: the troops train with live ammunition.

Government House: A large, colonial-style building that issues hunting permits and can provide a diplomatic safe-haven for any British citizens who have encountered difficulties.

Muthaiga Club: The hottest place to be in Nairobi, located on the edge of the Asian district, and surrounded by tropical gardens. The Muthaiga Club is a private club, so is only accessible to members and guests; but if one can get an invitation, it features bowling greens, tennis courts, and a bar.

Greater Kenya: Things to Do

Mombasa: The second-largest town in Kenya, Mombasa is for many the first port of call in Kenya. With a population of approximately 30,000, it is a cultural melting-pot and former slave-trading hub. It is uniquely built on a coral island offshore of mainland Africa, and displays a wide variety of architectures, from the Portuguese Fort Jesus to the mud-brick Swahili houses, Islamic design and British Colonialism. Travelers are recommended to stay in the Castle Hotel.

Mt Kenya: The second-highest mountain in Africa (after Kilimanjaro), Mt. Kenya is a magnificent peak reaching over 17,000 ft in elevation. Even seasoned mountaineers are cautioned in any attempt to summit the peak. It has only been summited once by Sir Halford John Mackinder in 1899 after several attempts and many lost lives.

Wildlife safari: Hunting game is a popular past-time in Kenya. You can attend a traveling safari by automobile or register at one of the game lodges dotted throughout the countryside. At a lodge, you will have the opportunity to bunk in a well-appointed platform and shoot game at your

leisure. This includes elephants, giraffes, lions, rhinoceros, kudu, wildebeest, and more. Taxidermists in Nairobi will often create hunting trophies for the lucky traveller for a modest fee.

Myths and Stories

One of the indigenous populations of Kenya, the Kikuyu, believe that the world was created by a supreme creator called *Ngai*. Sacrifices to *Ngai* are performed under a sycamore tree. The Kikuyu also believe that a person's spirit can be a terrible thing. After death, a person's spirit becomes a ghost and if the person is murdered, the spirit will pursue the murderer until they come out of hiding. Meticulous burial rites are maintained to prevent a person's spirit from haunting others.

Many other groups in Kenya believe in spirits. In these cultures, shamans commune with the spirits to cure ailments and diseases, restore scarcity of hunted game, cure infertility in women, and perform curses to harm others. However, voodoo is not common in Kenya.

Located near the mouth of Mbaraki Creek in Mombasa, the Haunted Pillar of Mbaraki is the second-oldest monument in Kenya (after Fort Jesus), and nobody has any idea what it once was. Perhaps a lighthouse, perhaps something else, folklore claims it is home to an Arabian spirit with powerful magic. Women travel to the pillar to perform fertility rituals at its base in the dark of night. Offerings are made in the hope that the spirit will cure the ill. But there could be a darker side to the spirit's magic as well.

Chapter 7... AUSTRALIA: AUSTRALIA

The Commonwealth of Australia, recently unified in 1901, is a country of dichotomies. It is a modern country built on imperial roots. With over 70,000 years of culture, it prides itself on its youth. It is both fertile and arid, vast but crowded. Australia is the driest, flattest, and smallest continent in the world but hosts a population of only 6 million. As most of it is an ancient and stable tableland, the fertile coasts are home to over 90 per cent of its population.

As white settlers have established cities along the coasts, many of the Aboriginal Australians have been pushed off their lands, sent to mission settlements, or tragically exterminated. This has halved the native population to only 170,000 since the landing of Captain Cook. The government has recently set up Aboriginal Protection Boards for the management of the native peoples. Many native Australians are chained and sent to missions, under the care of the Presbyterian Church. Their children are used as cheap labour in laundries, housemaids in well-to-do homes, or as field hands.

Each state in Australia has separate laws and taxation requirements. For instance, Western Australia has no firearms management policy. Despite this, firearms should not be carried or discharged in settled areas without good reason. "Any Asiatic or African alien" (as the law states) is not permitted to hold a firearm, nor are Aboriginal Australians.

Word in Australia only spreads at the speed it is carried. Mail is carried over land and parcel delivery is often to depots along permanent rail lines. Telephones are rare,

although many radio stations were established in 1923 to permit national broadcasts.

Trains are the primary means of transport, though largely incomplete – particularly with Northern fringes, such as Darwin and Cairns lacking tracks. Each state built tracks individually resulting in changes in railway gauges, so travelers must disembark at a state's border and transfer to a new train to continue their travel. Steamship is much preferred for interstate travel, with the ability to reach areas that are otherwise impossible by rail.

Many Australians own automobiles, with over half a million cars registered. However, roads are typically in poor state, so drivers should know how to change a tire before attempting a trip of more than a few miles.

Money

As currency, Australia mints their own pound, which is divided into 20 shillings and each shilling into 12 pence.

CAPITAL CITY: CANBERRA

Although it existed prior as a station known as Canberra Cottage, the city of Canberra was developed as the Nation's capital in 1913. However, construction was delayed until 1917 due to the Great War. Due to incorrect data provided to Walter Burley-Griffin, the town's designer, Griffin resigned from the board in 1920. The first residential blocks were only sold a few months ago, in December 1924. There is no value in visiting this still-developing town, unless a traveler particularly cares for construction sites.

MAJOR CITY: SYDNEY

Sydney, like much of Australia, is growing in population with now over 900,000 residents. Extensive architectural growth is also underway, as the shantytowns of Sydney are being progressively modernized with terraced housing. The local government is also in the process of planning a large bridge to span the Sydney Harbor.

MAJOR CITY: FREMANTLE

The city of Fremantle is one of the prominent ports on the Western coast and is only 17 miles from Perth, the home of the University of Western Australia. Budding zoologists may be interested in the local zoological gardens, which are accessible from the city's new electric trams.

What to Eat

Australia is largely settled by British colonialists, so much of the food is similar to English fare. It is fair to say that they have perfected the fish and chips that the British designed. The other key influence is Chinese: as many Cantonese emigres have come as a result of the Victorian gold rush, Chinese food has now entered the heart of Australian cuisine, with cookshops operating out the back of other businesses.

For those with a sweet tooth, Australia is a trove of new confectionaries. In this decade alone, they have developed new soft drinks such as Kirk's Ginger Ale and Passiona, alongside chocolate bars such as MacRobertson's Cherry Ripe, Hoadley's Violet Crumble, and Sweetacre's Minties.

Baking is a fascination in Australia. Each city has its own cookbook bibles, published by women's groups connected to schools and churches. They publish much the same recipes but pride themselves all the same on them.

Things to Do: Greater Australia

Ayer's Rock: Known as *Uluru* as by the *Pitjantjatjara* people, Ayer's rock is a massive stone towering 1142 ft high. It juts from the surrounding desert magnificently and if an adventurer is brave enough to endure the harsh Australian heat, it is a magnificent sight to behold.

Gold Rushes: As recently as 1906, gold rushes have been discovered across Australia. These have been opportunities for entrepreneurial pioneers to try their luck mining gold for themselves. Perhaps a prospecting traveler might find something glittering in the gold fields of Australia?

Myths and Stories

The Aboriginal Australians believe in what is known as the Dreamtime, wherein myths are combined with landscape and spirits to provide knowledge both practical and spiritual. Through the oral history of the Dreamtime, the Aboriginal Australians explain the creation of great rivers and rugged landscape. They also record locations of food and water, and the paths of trading and migration routes.

One example is the Dreamtime history of Ayer's Rock. According to Uluru dreamtime, ten ancestors of the Aboriginal people created the rock as they traveled a featureless world, creating physical evidence of their time on the Earth. But not all stories are human – there are sentient snakes, great bats, and other mysterious beings in these stories, as well.

Colonial history is also marked with superstition, as many early convicts and settlers created stories about monsters in the night to explain the strange noises made by Australian wildlife.

But there are human influences in colonial stories as well – one popular Australian song written in 1895 and first recorded this year is about an itinerant worker, or “swagman” dying in a waterhole and becoming a ghost!

Chapter 8... ASIA: CHINA

China has a rich history of dynasties, with the eldest discovered dating back to 1600 BC. The Chin dynasty, where Imperial China truly began, dates back to 221 BC. The Chinese monarchy ended in 1912 with the abdication of the 4-year-old emperor P'ui, beginning the Republic of China. The resultant political turmoil has fragmented the country.

After the Great War, China had sided with the Allies and felt betrayed when much of German occupation in China was given to the Japanese. This has further damaged the Chinese cultural identity, with warlords vying for power in every region.

Nevertheless, China is a beautiful country and one well worth visiting for the worldly adventurer. From the Yellow Mountains to the Terracotta Warriors in *Hsi'an*, to the rice terraces of *Kuanghsih*, China is a gorgeous place to explore for the nature-lover and the amateur archaeologist, alike. Indeed, current expeditions in *Tunhuang* may prove alluring to many. It is also the source of many inventions, such as paper, noodles, and fireworks. The country's cultural wealth, art, and architecture are well worth exploring for the intrepid traveller.

Since the collapse of the Ching dynasty, the economy has been in shambles. It is not unusual for a foreigner of even moderate wealth to live in princely opulence. The native Chinese population, though, does not fare as well.

Anyone arriving at a treaty port such as Hong Kong will undergo customs checks. Opiates and guns are liable to be confiscated if found. Other items may be subject to import duty if carried in bulk.

Money

The Chinese adopted the yuan as their official currency in the late 1880s. However, Mexican silver dollars are also widely accepted. Each yuan is split into 10 jiao or 100 fen. However, regional currency is usually only valid in the area it comes from.

MAJOR CITY: SHANGHAI

Because of its foreign influence, the author has chosen to focus on Shanghai as a major site. Originally a small, undistinguished city in *Kiangsu* Province, the Treaty of Nanking brought the Opium Wars to an end and enabled the British to set foot in China through Shanghai. After the British, the French and Americans took possession of areas of this Chinese city. These areas of extraterritoriality, within which no Chinese law applies, are known as 'the concessions'.

The Shanghai Municipal Council now oversees all three of the concessions, and the British and American concessions have now joined to form the Shanghai International Settlement. Other countries, such as Japan, Italy, Mexico, Norway, and Peru, among others, have also received concessions in Shanghai, much to the chagrin of the Chinese government.

Now, due to the international influence and opulence of Shanghai, this beautiful city is known as the Pearl of the Orient and the Paris of the East. Despite this, there are

remarkably few expatriates living in the city. Of the 1.6 million Shanghai residents, only 20,000 are not Chinese.

Increased poverty, overpopulation, lack of opportunity, and governmental neglect from the Ching dynasty has strengthened traditional values and private associations. These associations function as clubs, insurance companies, pension funds, political allies, and more. With national central authority in its current sorry state, these associations hold the power. There are over 100 powerful cliques, factions and movements in Shanghai alone. The International Settlement also has its own police force alongside the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, and the gendarmerie patrol the French Concession.

If the reader is intending to travel extensively through Shanghai, the author recommends a guide and a *comprador* – a middleman who can negotiate business dealings. Shanghai natives speak Shanghainese, which despite sharing the same writing system as Mandarin and Cantonese, is entirely different in spoken form.

What to Eat

A canny traveller can find world-wide influences in Shanghai, including Japanese, British, French and Spanish cuisine. However, when in Rome do as the Romans do! Pork soup dumplings, available on many street corners, are a must-try but be careful to bite a small bit off before consuming.

Beggar's chicken is also a unique Shanghai dish, which is a whole chicken wrapped in lotus leaf. Legend says it was discovered during the Ching dynasty by a beggar who stole and buried a chicken in mud.

Finally, the author cannot allow the reader to travel to Shanghai without trying the city's famous fried noodles. Perfectly salty and sweet, these fried noodles are a necessity for travel in Shanghai.

Where to Stay

Heng Shen Hotel

Those wishing to stay in the French Concession may wish to stay at the Heng Shen Hotel. Though it is smaller, it is built in the style of a French *chateau*, with Chinese influences and beautiful gardens around.

Palace Hotel

If a traveler wishes to stay in the Shanghai International Settlement, they can go no further than to stay at the Palace Hotel. This six-story architectural marvel is built in the Western style and spares no expense in comfort.

Shanghai: Things to Do

Ching An Temple: Situated in the heart of Shanghai, this temple was built in the third century, but moved to its present site in the Song Dynasty, destroyed in 1851, and rebuilt. The Song architecture is beautiful and well worth the view from an architectural perspective.

Hongkew Park: Originally purchased in 1896 and opened in 1909, Hongkew Park was designed as a shooting range for the Shanghai Volunteer Corps but now includes a golf course, tennis courts, swimming pool, and bowling green. Although it lies outside the International Settlement, it is still managed by the Shanghai Municipal Council. The Shanghai Municipal Band performs summer concerts here every fortnight from July-August.

Fortune-telling: Having one's fortune read is a popular pastime in Shanghai and taken very seriously by practitioners. Unlike the Western arts of palm reading and tarot, fortune-telling in Shanghai involved complete calculations of horoscopes and the Chinese art of *feng shui*.

Greater China: Things to Do

Forbidden City: Previously the seat of power in China, the Forbidden City is where the Emperor of China lived surrounded by opulent imperial gardens and temples. The complex holds 980 buildings, with 9999 rooms. As a site of Chinese architecture and history, it cannot be missed.

Great Wall of China: Stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Jade Gate, the Great Wall of China is not one wall but many constructions of walls, built between the fifth century BC to the 15th century AD. It is built from rammed earth, stones and wood, but from the Ming dynasty, tiles, lime and stone were used to strengthen the wall. Sticky rice mortar held these bricks together. The scale and impressiveness of this wall rivals the pyramids themselves.

Hong Kong: The British Colony of Hong Kong is an island off the South coast of mainland China. It has flourished thanks to its status as a free port and is now a major financial centre. Besides English, the main language spoken in Hong Kong is Cantonese. Aquatic-minded travelers may enjoy a *walla-walla* boat between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon.

Myths and Stories

Chinese mythology has interacted with Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism to create the unique melting-pot of beliefs and philosophy. According to mythology, beneath

the Earth is an underground realm called *Tiyü* inhabited by the souls of the dead and various monsters and spirits. Despite its subterranean location, it appears similar to the world above with a hierarchical government bureaucracy. Each section of this underworld is known as a court and is ruled by a judge. Depending on the sins committed in life, the souls of the dead are here tortured in different ways.

Perhaps one of the most important creatures in Chinese mythology, the Chinese dragon is a powerful and divine creature and controller of water. One of the most famous of these dragons is *Yinglung*, the god of rain. Notably, some of the previous emperors were said to raise dragons!

Wuhsia is a popular form of fiction that have been used throughout Chinese history to describe epic people with superhuman capabilities. These vigilante warriors have been the subject of Chinese stories from as early as 300 BC as both heroes and villains. Perhaps these stories expose the truth in humanity's actions, be they noble or cruel.

AFTERWORD

The author hopes that any travelers finding this curious tome find it useful in engaging with the mysterious place we know as the world. Although the premise is limited in scope to but a single country in every continent, there is much yet to explore. From ancient valleys to sacred mountaintops, forgotten ruins to hidden ossuaries, an adventurer armed with a curious mind will find much in the world yet to discover. Much yet lies beyond the Wall of Gog and Magog. Perhaps these pages could provide a jumping point for the reader, from which to explore other unusual places of our own *atlas mysterium*.

