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Roughing It



Synopsis

To Calvin H. Higbie, of California, an honest man, a genial comrade and a steadfast friend, this book is inscribed by the author, in memory of the curious time when we two were millionaires for ten days. So the witty Mark Twain dedicates his second travelogue and charming SEMI-sequel to *The Innocents Abroad*. Listeners to *Roughing It* will find themselves laughing along with the author, as the Wild West gets a little bit wilder in this charming edition of Twain's American adventures, mishaps and musings.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Mission Audio; Unabridged edition (July 1, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1596449810

ISBN-13: 978-1596449817

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.7 x 5.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (334 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,896,453 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in Â Books > Books on CD >

Authors, A-Z > (T) > Twain, Mark #12465 in Â Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction >

Unabridged #17152 in Â Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > General

Customer Reviews

The genius of Mark Twain is that his work is still enjoyable, and funny, to this day. This book, originally published in 1871, is Twain's account of his journey from Missouri to Hawaii (called the Sandwich Islands in his day). He tells story after story of his adventures along the way, starting with the stagecoach ride on the Overland Stage Line to Carson City, Nevada, around 1861, and then telling of his stay in Nevada, then California, then his visit to Hawaii. The stories are informative, humorous, and all-around entertaining. He lampoons everybody he can--nobody is safe--including miners, pioneers (emigrants), politicians, Mormons, Blacks, American Indians, Chinese, newspaper reporters, "desperados", even himself on more than one occasion. Sometimes his stories are so outrageous that you wonder how much is true and how much is embellishment, or just outright fiction. Even he understands this by telling the reader on occasion that he has not made up a particular story, to demonstrate that truth is often stranger than fiction, but also to imply that he has taken liberties in other places in the book. (I wonder if the Mormon Church has ever banned this

book for the things he says about them.) Even while he is being irreverent, however, he often demonstrates a sensitivity toward people, with an awareness of the situation of others that seems to me to be ahead of his time. For example, he has a chapter on the immigrant Chinese population in the West, and while he pokes fun at them in some respects, he spends the time detailing their lives and culture, as much as he could understand it, with a respect that was uncommon in his day.

This "Mark Twain Project" paperback edition of ROUGHING IT is by far the best version for most readers. It is an excellent value. The 200 pages of "Explanatory Notes" at the end, add greatly to the modern reader's understanding of the 1860's "Wild West". The Early Western Mining Frontier comes vividly and colorfully to life, thanks to the Explanatory Notes' full illumination of the fascinating, often hilarious, eyewitness account of young Sam Clemens. The 21st century reader now sees the momentous impact of Samuel Colt's "Navy Revolver" on frontier society, fully comprehends a "Stamp Mill's" importance to the silver mines of the Comstock Lode, and is in complete agreement about the "thoroughbrace's" necessity to the Overland Stage traveler's comfort! This edition also contains all 304 first edition illustrations, another great aid allowing the modern reader to take a virtual walk into a vanished time. In the "Foreword" to this edition, Editor Harriet Elinor Smith notes, "The vernacular style of ROUGHING IT often seems surprisingly fresh to modern readers.....". I'm betting that many readers, younger ones especially, may approach this book with dread, only to become immersed in the rollicking adventure, and reach the end of ROUGHING IT with regret. The readers who return for a second, third or more reading, will discover many levels of depth to ROUGHING IT that will continue to entertain and educate reading after reading, year after year. From the "Foreword" to this edition, Editor Smith also observes, "Although readers have long been entertained by ROUGHING IT, it has gradually become part of all serious study of American culture.

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