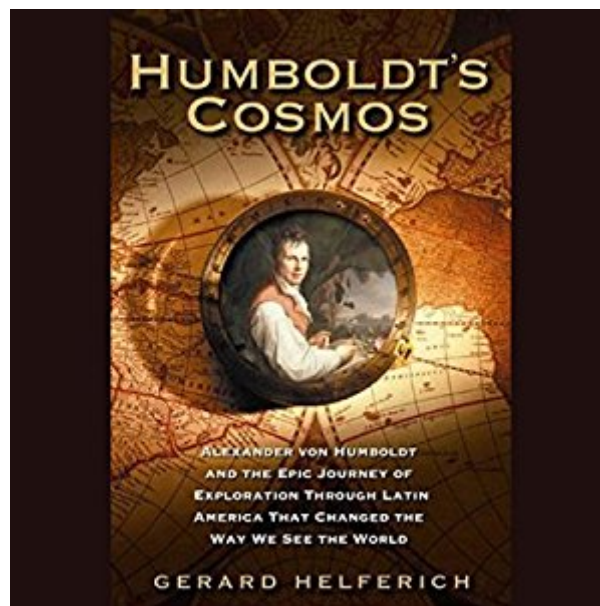


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Humboldt's Cosmos: Alexander Von Humboldt And The Latin American Journey That Changed The Way We See The World



Synopsis

The thrilling story of the charismatic explorer who Simon Bolivar called "the true discoverer of South America" and the daring expedition that altered the course of science. From 1799 to 1804 German naturalist and adventurer Alexander von Humboldt conducted the first extensive scientific exploration of Latin America. At the completion of his arduous 6,000-mile journey, he was feted by Thomas Jefferson and presented to Napoleon, and, with the subsequent publication of his findings, he would be hailed as the greatest scientific genius of his age. Humboldt's *Cosmos* tells the story of this extraordinary man who was equal parts Einstein and Livingstone, and of the adventure that defined his life. Gerard Helferich vividly recounts Humboldt's expedition through the and over the Andes, highlighting his paradigm-changing discoveries along the way. During the course of the expedition, Humboldt cataloged more than 60,000 plants, set an altitude record climbing the volcano Chimborazo, and became the first to study the great cultures of the Aztecs and Incas. In the process, he revolutionized geology and laid the groundwork for modern sciences such as climatology, oceanography, and geography and his contributions would influence future greats such as Charles Darwin and shape the course of science for centuries to come. Published in time for the bicentennial of the expeditions completion in May 1804, Humboldt's *Cosmos* is a dramatic tribute to one of history's most audacious adventurers, whom Stephen Jay Gould noted "may well have been the world's most famous and influential intellectual."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Through Alexander von Humboldt's own writings, Gerard Helferich takes us on high adventure from

the unforgiving, bug-infested steamy jungles of the to some of the highest Andean peaks of South America as Humboldt methodically searches for the common thread that connects the "unity of nature". For five years, from 1799-1804, Alexander von Humboldt traveled extensively in South and Central America intensely observing every facet of the natural and physical world to speculate on how everything is related. Whether it was trudging through crocodile and jaguar infested waterways of the Orinoco River, climbing 19,000 foot volcanic mountains in the Andes or measuring ocean currents and observing native cultures, Humboldt had a keen eye for every aspect of our planet. He formulated the design of isotherms which is still used to this day in meteorology, raised awareness on such varied topics as geomagnetism, plant geography, volcanology, cartography and many other subjects. Even though towns, counties, mountains (even one on the moon), forests and bodies of water have been named after him, for the most part history has forgotten this amazing man and his accomplishments.

The only thing I knew about Humboldt was that the Pacific Oceanic current was named after him. This book catches your attention from the very beginning, showing you the life, custom and geography of central and South America in the 1800's, places that Humboldt explored in his long journey. The author also gives a browsing on the history of the natives and the places that Humboldt trekked. The life of Humboldt is also very interesting, by his achievements, his relentless curiosity and by the unique opportunity to meet very important people of the time such as Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon, Simon Bolivar and Charles Darwin. This is definitely a book to enjoy and learn, so much to learn.

Gerard Helferich has done a great service to humanity by not allowing Alexander Von Humboldt to become another meaningless name attached to a street or landmark. Humboldt was the second coming of Benjamin Franklin and shared the same worldwide recognition. While Lewis and Clark explored the North American North West using the patronage of Thomas Jefferson and the American government, Humboldt self-financed his exploration of South America. This is absolutely fascinating history. For the most part reading the book is smooth sailing, at times readers can suffer from information overload and once in a great while Gerard Helferich will put the reader to sleep with expansion concerning some miniscule details. Now, this is a book I will re-read because it is so detailed and well-written. I would like to thank the author, Gerard Helferich, for providing me with such a wonderful enlightening history of an extremely notable human.

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