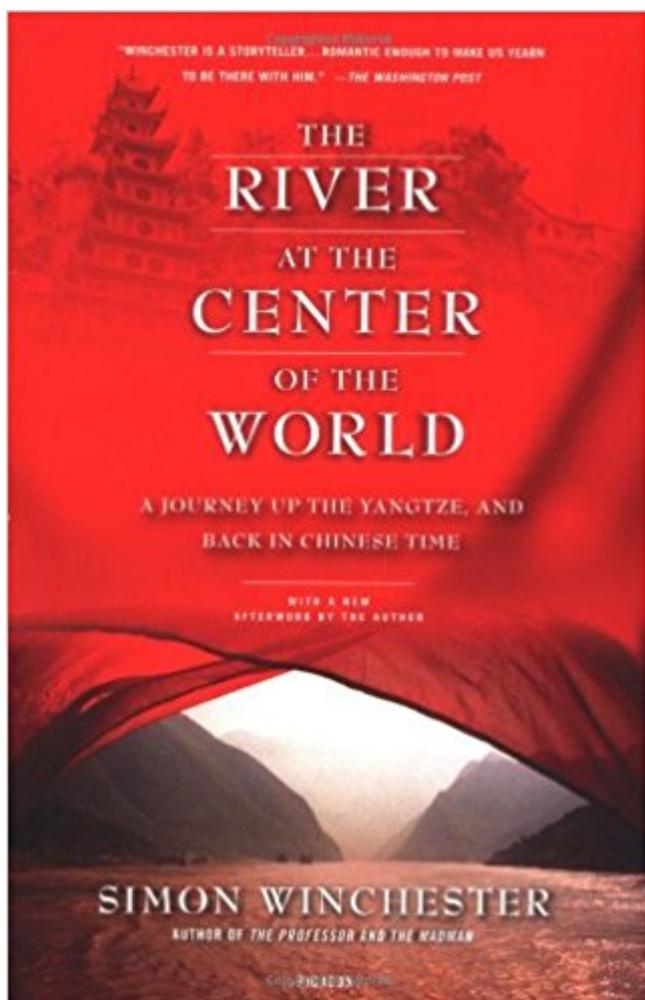


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# The River At The Center Of The World: A Journey Up The Yangtze, And Back In Chinese Time



## **Synopsis**

Rising in the mountains of the Tibetan border, the Yangtze River, the symbolic heart of China pierces 3,900 miles of rugged country before debouching into the oily swells of the East China Sea. Connecting China's heartland cities with the volatile coastal giant, Shanghai, it has also historically connected China to the outside world through its nearly one thousand miles of navigable waters. To travel those waters is to travel back in history, to sense the soul of China, and Simon Winchester takes us along with him as he encounters the essence of China--its history and politics, its geography and climate as well as engage in its culture, and its people in remote and almost inaccessible places. *The River at the Center of the World: A Journey Up the Yangtze, and Back in Chinese Time* is travel writing at its best: lively, informative, and thoroughly enchanting.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

British born author Simon Winchester lived in Hong Kong before setting off on a journey up the Chang Jiang or Yangtze River as it is most often referred to in the West. In *The River at the Center of the World: A Journey Up the Yangtze and Back in Chinese Time*, he chronicles his adventures across China along the 3,964-mile River. Employing nearly every mode of transportation--including boat, train, jeep and shoe leather--Winchester recalls his passionate exploration of the countryside, while providing important and engaging historical information. His recollections of the Chinese people are often less complimentary, as he exudes an air of disgust at the country's apparent disregard for pollution, its awkward modern architecture and decaying historical monuments. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The delicious strangeness of China," as Winchester puts it, is as much the subject of this absorbing account of a personal journey as is the Yangtze River, the third-longest in the world and the entry to China's heartlands. Along its banks, some of the most important events in the country's history have played out, and the river occupies a singular place in the national psyche. In 1994, Winchester followed its course from the East China Sea to Tibet by boat, car, train, plane, bus and foot; but this is more than an ordinary account of a traveler's pilgrimage, although it is a must for any visitor to China. Wryly humorous, gently skeptical, immensely knowledgeable as he wends his way along the 3900 miles of the great river, Winchester provides an irresistible feast of detail about the character of the river itself, the landscape, the cities, villages and people along its banks. Most notably there is Shanghai, once "the most sinful city in the world," now an economic powerhouse rivaling Hong Kong; Wuhan, where the 1910 revolution began that brought Dr. Sun Yat Sen to power and where Mao Ze Dong, at 70, chose to make his famous swim; the Three Gorges, where a great, controversial dam to rival Aswan is being built; and Chongquin, once Chiang Kai-shek's smoggy and furnace-hot capital. Finally, Winchester made his way to the great river's source 15,000 feet high in the mountains of Tibet. A journalist who has written extensively about Asia (Pacific Rising; The Sun Never Sets) and spent nine years in Hong Kong making frequent visits inland, Winchester is comfortable with the country's long, complex history and politics, and he writes about them with an easy grace that defies the usual picture of China as an enigma wrapped in a conundrum.

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This book was recommended by a colleague. Though I've read deeply and extensively about China, I'm embarrassed to say I'd never heard of Winchester. And now that I have, I'm a great fan of his. And if you like this book, read "The Man Who Loved China". It's also terrific.

Delighted to receive the pre-loved copy so promptly following my request and order, thank you. This book fulfills all expectations of a truly magnificent addition to my list of favorite reading, - especially as I had only borrowed it from our public Library previously, and very much wanted my own copy, having been advised that it is currently out of print. With China occupying increasing political importance in world affairs, I believe this volume should be included in senior students' curriculum as background information. The author's inimitable style of writing carries the reader so effortlessly (and entertainingly) into the interesting experience of mixing history with current affairs. I would

recommend it as The Book for Every Year!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I was in China on Yangtze last October 2015 and this book puts it in perspective for me. Winchester makes history interesting. I could almost smell the River and towns. The maps at the beginning of the chapters let me know the areas of which he was talking about.Glenis Cislowski

Simon Winchester has been my favorite author ever since I have read his book Krakatoa. He combines his knowledge as a geologist with his observational skills as an experienced journalist and tremendous writing skills that draw the reader in.

Just what my sister-in-law wanted for an upcoming trip.

Though sometimes pedantic in writing style, the passion for great rivers, especially the Yangtze come through vividly. One learns so much about China, past and present, by taking this colorful, fascinating, and precisely recorded journey on the Yangtze with Simon Winchester. Ready for a trip from Shanghai to Tibet on a meandering great river? You'll love this book.

A number of people have criticized this book because Mr Winchester did not adequately introduce them to what life is like along the Yangtze, or else otherwise cover some interest they have in the subject. I must, though, question the expectations these critics have had as perhaps being a bit unreasonable. Mr Winchester wanted to travel up the Yangtze from its mouth to its source. He did this and then he told us about it, interspersing descriptions of his experiences with some interesting historical information. I think it is a little unfair to criticize him for not doing more than this when nothing more was promised.I liked this book. I have read Paul Theroux's books on traveling in China and it was interesting to read a contrasting account from someone who I, for one, would probably regard as a more congenial travel companion. Winchester's prose can occasionally get a bit too overblown, even a bit long-winded (as some have complained) but I did not personally find that it unduly detracted from my enjoyment. My only complaint is less about the substance or quality of the work than the fact that it is now somewhat dated. I very much enjoyed reading Mr Winchester's discussion about the (then) impending Three-Gorges Dam project. Now, of course, the project has been completed for a couple of years and much of what Winchester had to say back in 1996, when my edition was published, is now obsolete speculation. Still, that won't prevent me from reading the

book again sometime.

The writer makes the journey from the sea, all the way to the source of the Yangtze, describing the peoples and their land. It is easy to read, with entertaining anecdotes that make it clear just how the Chinese have changed in the last century. If you have ever been to a repressed country, you will be riveted by the authenticity of any and all dialogs this man had through his gutsy interpreter and other guides.

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