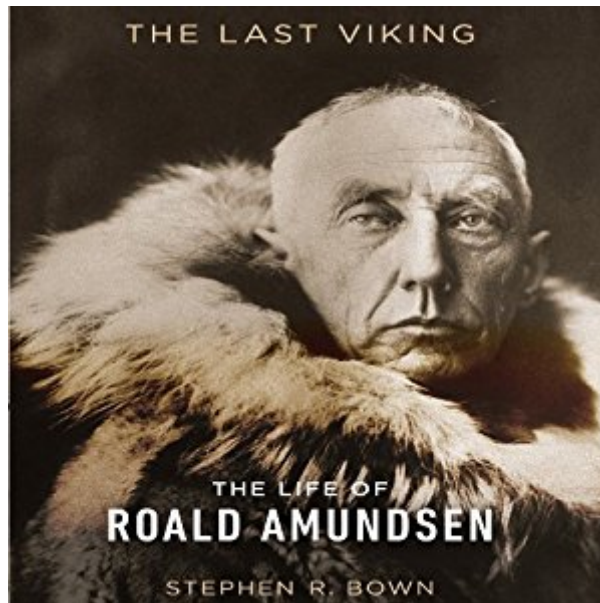


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# The Last Viking: The Life Of Roald Amundsen



## Synopsis

The Last Viking unravels the life of the man who stands head and shoulders above all those who raced to map the last corners of the world. In 1900, the four great geographical mysteries - the Northwest Passage, the Northeast Passage, the South Pole, and the North Pole - remained blank spots on the globe. Within twenty years Roald Amundsen would claim all four prizes. Renowned for his determination and technical skills, both feared and beloved by his men, Amundsen is a legend of the heroic age of exploration, which shortly thereafter would be tamed by technology, commerce, and publicity. Feted in his lifetime as an international celebrity, pursued by women and creditors, he died in the Arctic on a rescue mission for an inept rival explorer. Stephen R. Bown has unearthed archival material to give Amundsen's life the grim immediacy of Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World*, the exciting detail of *The Endurance*, and the suspense of a Jon Krakauer tale. *The Last Viking* is both a thrilling literary biography and a cracking good story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've enjoyed some classics in this genre such as *The Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* and *Arctic Adventure: My Life in the Frozen North* (which is a lesser known but great account of life in the Arctic). So I was interested in *The Last Viking*. *The Last Viking* is a well-crafted work on both the life and achievements of Roald Amundsen, one of history's greatest explorers. Among Amundsen's headline accomplishments were that he was the first European to sail the Northwest Passage, the first person to see the North Pole, and the first human to reach the

South Pole. The Norwegian press called him "The Last Viking." While author Stephen R. Bown is clearly taken with Amundsen's life and heroics, he doesn't shy away from showing us his warts too. Bown gives us a 21st century look at Amundsen, a man characterized by intense determination and passion, but with a stubbornness and inability to express feelings that could be infuriating; a man who was capable of great charm, but also great arrogance. But when it came to exploration, Amundsen had the humility to learn from the Inuit who, unlike most Europeans of his day, he considered his cultural equal. Bown does a fine job chronicling the details and historical context of Amundsen's adventures. Through these details, we get entertaining accounts of the travels and travails of the Last Viking. Armchair explorers will be pleased as there is plenty of good adventure, such as plane crashes and maulings by polar bears.

Interesting read that accurately describes the race for the poles, preparations and technology of that time. It does not go into highly detailed accounts of the actual expeditions which was OK. You can read additional books on the subject if you enjoy the minute by minute details. Outstanding resource section at the back of book that links you to the movies taken during the expedition.

As a fan of Arctic exploration *The Last Viking* is one of the best books I have read on this topic. Stephen Brown has done an outstanding job of detailing the life of one of the great explorers of all time. When we think of Roald Amundsen we usually just think of his being the first to reach the South Pole. Brown goes much further and takes us through the life of this incredible man beginning with his early days and a step by step journey through his many adventures. What really made Amundsen such a great and successful explorer was his willingness to learn from others, to study, to read, and to prepare before launching into his journeys. His first great success was his trip on the *Goja* through the Northwest passage. In that experience he lived with and studied the Inuit People and gained great insight as to how they survived in such cold and harsh climates. With that knowledge, he successfully accomplished his goal of later reaching the South Pole. Amundsen was constantly on the go and lectured and traveled extensively as he loved to tell people about his travels. The author gives us a good insight into the total life of Amundsen beyond just his exploration epics. We find how he related others, not just those on his trips, but the general public who loved hearing him speak and relate his experiences. We learn a great deal about his final trip, a joint effort with the Italians in a dirigible from Spitzbergen across the North Pole to Alaska. Truly, this man was one of the greatest explorers in history. He accomplished all he set out to do. This book is well worth your time and I highly recommend it.

Stephen Brown's research was impeccable. His research and bibliography was extensive. I appreciated Brown's attention to detail as well as his commentary. In reading about the exploits of an explorer who was rocking the world nearly 100 years ago, it is important to understand both the times and the context for which his actions turned. Brown really puts it together with a clear and in depth look at a truly remarkable man. If Roald Amundsen had one weakness, he could only be accused of being human. Don't let the one negative review by Ron DiGiovanni sway you. After all, Ron does admit to "harbored ... suspicion" about Amundsen, and his sour-grapes review reflects a predisposition for disliking the man.

I purchased the book for several reasons. First, I was scheduled to attend a webinar by the author. Second, I was preparing a presentation "Leadership Lessons from the South Pole" for a professional group in the Twin Cities (MN). But most of all, I have an abiding admiration for Amundsen's management and leadership traits/skills. I first became familiar with his life when I read Roland Huntford's "The Last Place on Earth." Since then, I've read several books and many articles about polar explorers such as Amundsen, Scott, and Shackleton. Bown's book seems to be well researched and is easy to read. I learned several things about Amundsen that I did not know. Amundsen was not only "The Last Viking" but the greatest polar explorer since he had three most significant firsts: the Northwest Passage, the South Pole, and the North Pole. Managers and leaders could learn a lot by reading this book.

This book read like some of the best non-fiction for the first half, with Roald Amundsen's voyage to the South Pole described in detail. Most fascinating was the information about the preparations he did for the trip, from studying Inuit clothing to testing various types of dogsleds and skis. The second half of the book describes his various North Pole adventures, but it gets a bit windy and defensive towards the end, defending Amundsen against the reputations of other explorers like Scott. I read this in anticipation of a trip to Norway later this year. I did not know much about Amundsen and was greatly educated about his accomplishments - I believe I will appreciate seeing the Fram and other ships at the Viking museum when I go much more now! Would definitely recommend this for those who like non-fiction page-turners.

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