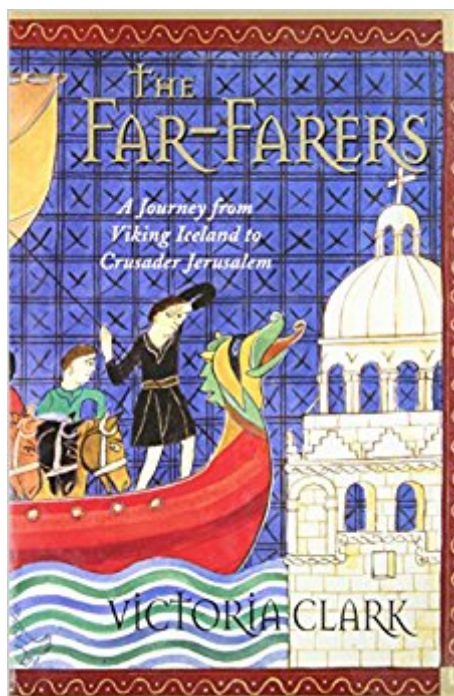


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The Far-Farers: A Journey From Viking Iceland To Crusader Jerusalem



Synopsis

Just before the year 1000, a young Viking named Thorvald turned his back on the pagan gods of his fathers to preach the Christian gospel. But his Icelandic countrymen mocked and outlawed him. Abandoning his homeland, Thorvald embarked on an epic journey to the heart of all medieval world maps—Jerusalem. A thousand years later, Victoria Clark embarked on the same journey to discover to what extent the dramatic changes and conflicts sweeping Western Europe a millennium ago still resonate today. *The Far-Farers* is both the story of this twenty-first-century journey and a history of eleventh-century western Christendom. In this remarkable book Clark illuminates a group of influential eleventh-century characters—Thorvald, emperors of eastern and western Christendom, abbots, saints, princesses, Crusaders—who form links in a historical chain extending down the century and all the way from Iceland to the Holy Land. Western Europe was struggling to unite then, expanding rapidly and changing utterly. Warfare, peacekeeping, multinational monasticism, institutional power struggles, mass pilgrim travel, and rising religious fundamentalism were a few salient characteristics of this world—a world more like our own than we might imagine. The twenty-first-century people Clark encountered as she traveled through Iceland, central and Western Europe, the Balkans, Turkey, and the Middle East cast fresh light on both worlds. In the ancient capital of Poland, a young Catholic priest scorns the idea of Europe uniting in the name of human rights instead of Christ. At the Crusader stronghold of Krak les Chevaliers, a Syrian playboy highlights the deep and widening gulf between the West and Islam. A richly evocative and beautifully written work, *The Far-Farers* is neither conventional history nor travel, but a powerful and authoritative demonstration of our enduring connection with the distant past.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the late 10th century, a Viking convert to Christianity was banished by his fellow Icelanders and made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Though perhaps not the best known of Viking sagas, the story of Thorvald the Far-Farer has survived to the present day and inspired British journalist Clark to retrace Thorvald's transcontinental journey. But Clark is interested in Thorvald's tale not for its own sake but for its place in the broader context of Christianity circa A.D. 1000, a time which, she assures readers, "set the western world's course" for the millennium that followed. Thorvald soon falls by the wayside, replaced by an assortment of emperors, kings and popes-and Clark's own, much more banal, modern misadventures. Unwavering assumptions about the "tragic shortcomings of organized religion" color her perspectives, and her journey does little more than confirm her antagonistic attitudes; the survival of the ancient practice of plenary indulgence (in which Catholics essentially barter to obtain a state of grace) particularly riles her, and she relishes confronting priests about it. Although Clark is familiar with the schisms between the Western and Eastern Christian churches (her previous book, *Why Angels Fall*, was about Eastern Orthodoxy), this book is undermined by her insistence on explaining the story's modern relevance rather than letting these engaging events speak for themselves. At one point, Clark remarks, "the main action in my eleventh-century drama was filling me with more anticipation than the prospect of [the] twenty-first century." Readers will undoubtedly have the same reaction. 16 pages of illus. not seen by PW.-- twenty-first century." Readers will undoubtedly have the same reaction. 16 pages of illus. not seen by PW. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Conveying the excitement of transcontinental journeys, both ancient and modern, *The Far-farers* draws the reader not only into passing curiosities, but also into the deeper questions of Europe's last millennium."

Great used condition... and I mean pristine. This book arrived promptly, and was a great value. I look forward to giving it to my history buff dad for Christmas. I anticipate he'll be securely affixed to his recliner with this book and a glass of whisky for several days.

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