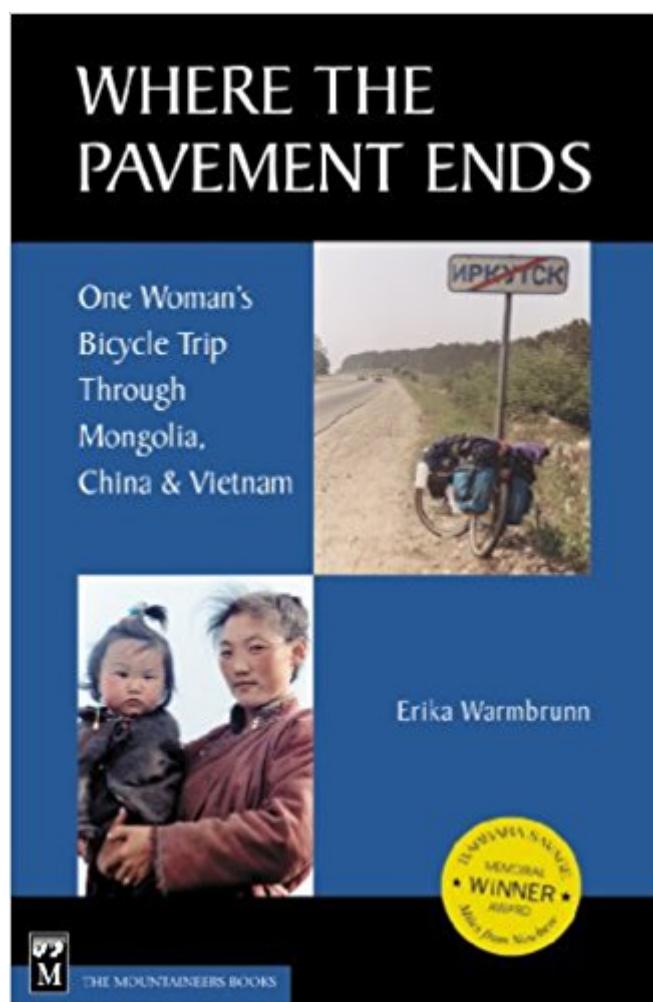


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# Where The Pavement Ends: One Woman's Bicycle Trip Through Mongolia, China, & Vietnam



## Synopsis

"In the middle of the night I crawled out of my tent into a silvery vastness truly unchanged since Genghis Khan and his hordes loped west more than half a millennium ago. There was no glow of city lights on the horizon, no ranger station at the edge of the next valley, no quaint general store, no paved road. There was nothing but space, unbounded and untamed. A brilliant moon lit the blackness crystal clear. Moonshadows of every blade of grass danced silently in the wildness. It was the emptiest, quietest place I had ever been. I threw my arms out wide and spun slowly around and around in the dazzling clarity of the night, the stars blurring into ribbons of light above me."

Mongolia. It was Erika Warmbrunn's dream. To escape deep into parts of Asia inaccessible to tours and guidebooks, to abandon herself to the risks of the unknown. And so, with only a bicycle named Greene for a traveling companion, she set off on an eight month, 8,000 kilometer trek that stretched across the steppes of this ancient land, on through China, and down the length of Vietnam. Freed by Greene's two wheels from the tyranny of discrete points on a map, she found that the true merit of travel was not in the simple seeing, but in flowing with the unexpected adventure or invitation, in savoring the moments in between -- the daily challenges of new words and customs, the tiny triumphs of learning a new way of life, the daunting thrill of never knowing what the next day would bring. Wanting to ride a Mongolian horse and finding herself in the saddle for four hours, herding fifty head of cattle. Asking for a hotel in a Chinese village and being taken into a family's home to share their grandmother's bed for the night. Pedaling into the Vietnamese highlands and being stopped along the muddy road by a father asking that she join his two-year-old son's birthday party. Accepting a Mongolian village's invitation to stop pedaling and stay for a while, to live with them and teach them English. In the doing and the telling, *Where the Pavement Ends* is a much richer experience than any line on a map can show. *Where the Pavement Ends* is the recipient of the "Barbara Savage Miles From Nowhere Memorial Award." You can find out more about this author at her website: [www.wherethepavementends.com](http://www.wherethepavementends.com)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Living in Seattle and failing to make her mark as an actress, Erika Warmbrunn decides to chuck it all and go traveling. Her resulting novel, *Where the Pavement Ends*, is an absorbing account of her ambitious eight-month solo bicycle trip through the countries of Mongolia, China, and Vietnam. While Warmbrunn's accounts of the travails of traveling in far-off lands doesn't necessarily break new ground, she writes with humor and candor. If you have even a twinge of wanderlust, you'll appreciate this book. Her adventure begins in Mongolia, where she cycles past curious onlookers in dusty towns with names like Khatgal and Moron. Abandoning her set-in-stone itinerary, she spends a memorable month in the village of Ashaant teaching English to schoolchildren and living in a traditional ger (tent). In China she braves the cold and nerve-racking interrogation but is awed by the Great Wall and intrigued by fellow backpackers' tales, told over noodles and beer. By the time she reaches Vietnam, with the frenetic Saigon and its ever-present reminders of the war, she is psychically and emotionally spent. Four thousand miles is a long way to go--even when it's a journey in search of self. --Jill Fergus

In 1993, this 27-year-old American woman set off alone from Irkutsk in Siberia and eight months later ended up 5000 miles away in Saigon. Hers was not so much a test of endurance, although there was plenty to endure such as eating sheep's head in Mongolia, confronting bureaucratic hassles in China, and fending off overly eager children in Vietnam but rather a journey of self-discovery. She stopped for a month to teach school along the way and took public transportation a couple of times. She writes poignantly and frankly of the dilemmas caused by First World low-budget travelers in Third World countries. Should they pay more than locals, what hospitality and privileges should they expect, and what should their impact be on the people they encounter? She confesses to occasional bad behavior, exasperation, and a lack of sensitivity. Travels such as hers are not so rare today, but thoughtful, honest, insightful writing about the cross-cultural experience is. A fine addition to public libraries; highly recommended. Harold M. Otness, formerly with Southern Oregon Univ. Lib., Ashland Copyright 2001 Reed Business

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With all my galavanting around the world when I was younger and even lately (I'm nearly 70), I never quite took on the challenge Erika took on--to bicycle from Russia through Mongolia and China and Vietnam. After reading "Where the Pavement Ends", I ached with yearning to do something similar. This isn't just a bike story. It's a story of a young woman recognizing which of her motivations are wise and which foolish; learning to let go of original goals in order to respond to the unanticipated opportunity. I watched her grow and change, and touch the lives of all sorts of people along her constantly-changing path, and thought, "Now if more people could be like this--whether by bike or otherwise--wouldn't mutual understanding and peace have a better chance?

This book had sections that were very original and insightful but others were tedious and repetitive. I ended up skimming sections where the same descriptions of different places started, they should have been eliminated by the editor. One of the most annoying was the obsession with whether or not she was getting ripped off or maybe it was her condemning of people who thought they were always getting ripped off. I couldn't really tell, she says at one point that she thought she was above it and it was irrelevant then spent way too much time in many sections talking about it. The sample sent from was brilliant writing so I now think she is good but I think it got to the point of filling up pages after awhile hence the three star rating.

Great read

After visiting Mongolia, I was interested in her interpretation of the culture - especially the generosity of the people. The book does not disappoint. Her encounters in Vietnam were eye opening. Such courage, endurance, and determination!

Wow, this was interesting. Who would ever decide to bicycle through Mongolia, let alone a single woman. Absolutely fascinating, this one is a keeper.

I had to continuously admire the author and her courage to take this ride on all alone. One really felt you were there and experiencing the author's ups and downs as she rode through Mongolia, China and Vietnam alone. Definitely a good read.

A fascinating tale, exquisitely written.

A wonderful adventure. I enjoyed every page.

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