

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

## Following in the Footsteps



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# KidsPost

Sunday, July 28, 2013

# Retracing man's first footsteps

**Paul Salopek is on a 7-year trek along a path forged 60,000 years ago**

**P**aul Salopek is an adventurer and a dreamer. And he's an old-fashioned trekker — setting out on foot to circle the world. No Ford Mustang for him.

Salopek is also a modern-day explorer. In addition to a few clothes, a small first-aid kit and notebooks, he is carrying an audio recorder, a camcorder, a small computer and a satellite phone — a telephone that connects to a satellite and can be used in many places where cellphones don't work. (A few fellow trekkers help carry supplies and keep him company.)

The journey is long: 21,000 miles! That's more than seven times the distance between New York and San Francisco.

It will take seven years to complete his journey.

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## INSPIRATION FOR THE WALK

■ **Herodotus:** This ancient Greek historian was born in 484 B.C. and traveled to Persia (modern-day Iran), Babylon (a city in what is now Iraq), Egypt and Europe. As he wrote the history of his people, he remained open-minded and recorded different points of view.



STEVEN STANKIEWICZ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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Salopek was born in California and spent his childhood in Mexico. He says he has always liked to travel and doesn't like to rush. At age 14, he climbed Mount Whitney in California and crossed the state's Sierra Nevada mountains by himself. At 15, he walked the length of Death Valley. He once rode a mule 2,000 miles through mountains in Mexico.

A longtime journalist, Salopek has reported from Africa, Asia and Mexico. Now 51 years old, he plans to keep writing. As he travels around the world, he is writing stories about the people he meets and the way they live. He looks for how people find local solutions to big problems such as food shortages and lack of water. He also records the sounds he hears and takes photos of the sky and the Earth's surface.

The long walk started in January in the Rift Valley in Ethiopia in East Africa. Many consider East Africa to be home to the first humans, who lived 160,000 years ago. It is here that the oldest fossils (traces of living things) of human ancestors have

been found. The people who lived in the valley were called the Afar. As hunter-gatherers, they obtained all of their food by catching wild animals and gathering edible plants.

Genetic testing has shown that all humans are descended from the Afars. Many of them left Ethiopia about 60,000 years ago and crossed over to the Arabian Peninsula when the water in the Red Sea was so low that a chain of islands was formed to connect the two pieces of land.

Salopek is retracing the paths our ancestors took as they left Africa and settled in parts of the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the Americas. As Salopek walks, he is learning more about himself — and all of humankind.

— Kem Knapp Sawyer  
*kidspost@washpost.com*

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Sawyer is a contributing editor at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, which is supporting the walk's educational mission. Salopek is a National Geographic fellow. More information at [www.outofedenwalk.com](http://www.outofedenwalk.com).



MOHAMAD BANOUNAH

**As a teenager, Paul Salopek, above, walked the length of Death Valley in California.**





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## Where will Paul Salopek go, and what will he find?

- **The Middle East:** He will visit temples, churches and mosques in the land where three of the world's major religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — took root.
  - **The Shanidar Cave in Iraq:** The skeletons of Neanderthal men who lived 60,000 to 80,000 years ago were discovered here.
  - **The Silk Road:** He will follow Marco Polo's route, which linked parts of Europe to China.
  - **The Bering Strait:** This body of water separates Russia and Alaska. Scholars think that humans first migrated from Asia to North America along a "land bridge" that was created here as glaciers formed and water levels dropped.
  - **Tierra del Fuego:** This archipelago, or group of islands, near the southernmost point of South America will be Salopek's final destination. The Yaghan people settled here 10,000 years ago; today, only one person speaks their language.
- Salopek will also explore fun and unexpected places. Follow his journey at [www.outofedenwalk.com](http://www.outofedenwalk.com) to learn more!

## Do the math

- Salopek will walk 21,000 miles in seven years. He plans to walk for six months of each year and write, rest and recuperate during the other months. What is the average number of miles he will walk in a day? (Round to the nearest whole number.)
- Salopek walks an average of 1,430 paces (or steps) per mile. If his journey is 21,000 miles long, how many paces will he walk?

## Be part of the journey

Ask Paul Salopek a question about his seven-year trek. KidsPost will forward him questions and feature his answers online at [kidspost.com](http://kidspost.com).

Kids ages 6 to 13 are invited to enter our contest and/or submit a question. Have a parent or guardian send us your entry to [kidspost@washpost.com](mailto:kidspost@washpost.com) or KidsPost, The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW Washington, D.C. 20071. On each entry, the adult should include your name, age and home town as well as the name and phone number of the adult submitting the entry. A note from the person giving permission for you to enter the contest or ask a question is also required.

# Paul Salopek on a 7-Year Trek

Read the KidsPost article “Retracing man’s first footsteps” and review the maps.

1. What nouns does the KidsPost article writer Kem Knapp Sawyer use to distinguish Paul Salopek?
2. Name the modern technology that Salopek is utilizing as he travels mainly on foot.
3. In addition to all who will follow his trek online, with whom is Salopek traveling?
4. Salopek plans a 7-year, 21,000-mile journey. Go online to the educational expedition’s website: [www.outofedenwalk.com](http://www.outofedenwalk.com) to learn where he is.
  - a. Approximately, how many miles has he completed?
  - b. What is he doing?
5. At which two destinations along his journey from the Rift Valley to Tierra del Fuego will Salopek have to cross a body of water?
6. What is a fossil? Where have some of the oldest fossils been found?
7. Read the educational mission’s website ([www.outofedenwalk.com](http://www.outofedenwalk.com)) to learn about observations and discoveries that have been made. Select one. Summarize the information and give a personal reaction to it.
8. Write three questions you would like to ask Paul Salopek or one of his walking partners. Visit the KidsPost website ([www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/kidspost)) to see if students have asked your questions.
  - a. If someone has, read Salopek’s responses. For example, someone asked him:  
**What day and country/city you started/finished the journey?**  
**P.S.** Started January 10-11, 2013, in Herto Bouri, Ethiopia; will end on my birthday, 2020, in Puerto Williams, Chile.
  - b. If someone has not asked your questions, follow the directions and send them to KidsPost.

# Map It — Trekking the Globe

Be inspired by the travels of Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, Herodotus, and modern adventurer-journalist Paul Salopek who is taking seven years to travel on foot from the Rift Valley in Ethiopia, across Asia to the Bering Strait, south through Alaska and Canada to Tierra del Fuego. Use a globe or take up your map to find the following geographic areas.

## Continent

*One of seven large continuous expanses of land*

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- North America
- South America

## Region

*Area that shares a characteristic that unifies it; these may have official boundaries, public acceptance or vernacular connection*

- Arabian Peninsula
- Central America
- East Africa
- Middle East

## Archipelago and Strait

*An archipelago is a group or chain of islands. A strait is a narrow passage of water connecting two seas or a channel joining two large bodies of water.*

- Bering Strait
- Tierra del Fuego

## City or Place

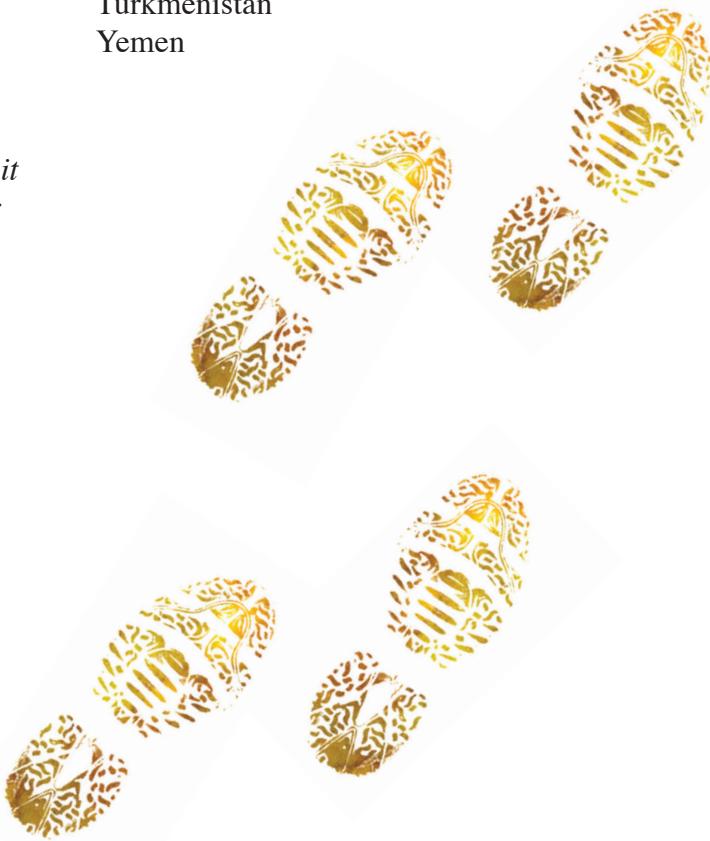
*A city is a jurisdiction with boundaries; a center of population, commerce and culture. A place is a natural geographic area with definite or indefinite boundaries, having a particular position in space.*

- Huangzhou
- Jeddah
- Mecca
- Rift Valley
- Shanidar Cave
- Tehran

## Country

*A nation with its own government*

- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- India
- Iran
- Iraq
- Libya
- Morocco
- Panama
- Peru
- Saudi Arabia
- Turkmenistan
- Yemen



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## Meet Ibn Battuta and His World

Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan Muslim scholar who lived in the 14th century. He was born on February 25, 1304. His whole name — Shams al-Din Abu ‘Abdallah Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Yusuf al-Lawati al-Tanji Ibn Battuta — reflects the names of his father and grandfathers. He came from a family of respected *qadis* or judges. Like most children, he would have started school when he was six years old. He studied mathematics, history, geography and memorized the Qur'an (Koran). In 1325, a year after Marco Polo died, he left his home in Tangier to make his first Hajj.

At that time, known as the Post Mongol Renaissance, Islam had spread along trade routes. Arabic was the language of the educated from Timbuktu to Beijing. What began as a Hajj turned into a 24-year journey. Since he was a gentleman and scholar, Ibn Battuta met leaders and acted as a judge. We know about his travels from the *Rihla*, the memoir he dictated. Since it was not considered appropriate to tell about your personal life, readers of the *Rihla* learn more about the manners of the road; cultures and attitudes; leaders, scholars, people and places he witnessed.

If you look at today's map, Ibn Battuta visited 40 countries. As Douglas Bullis writes in "The Longest Hajj: The Journeys of Ibn Battuta": His descriptions of life in Turkey, Central Asia, East and West Africa, the Maldives, the Malay Peninsula and parts of India are a leading source of contemporary knowledge about those areas, and in some cases they are the only source.

When Ibn Battuta was in southwestern Oman, he mentions the ways the sultan lured merchants to his ports:

*"When a vessel arrives from India or elsewhere, the sultan's slaves go down to the shore, and come out to the ship in a sambuq carrying with them a complete set of robes for the owner of the vessel [and his officers]. ... Three horses are brought for them, on which they mount with drums and trumpets playing before them from the seashore to the sultan's residence. ... Hospitality is supplied to all who are in the vessel for three nights. ... These people do this in order to gain the goodwill of the shipowners, and they are men of humility, good dispositions, virtue, and affection for strangers."*

Ibn Battuta described the custom of chewing betel nut, which is still socially important in many parts of the world today:

*"A gift of betel is for them a far greater matter and more indicative of esteem than the gift of silver and gold. ... One takes areca nut, this is like a nutmeg but is broken up until it is reduced to small pellets, and one places these in his mouth and chews them. Then he takes the leaves of betel, puts a little chalk on them, and masticates them along with the betel nut. ... They sweeten the breath, remove foul odors of the mouth [and] aid digestion. ..."*



COLLECTION OF REPRODUCTIONS COMPILED BY THE YORCK PROJECT

**Caravan of pilgrims in Ramleh (31st Maqamat).** A 13th-century book illustration produced in Baghdad by al-Wasiti showing a group of pilgrims on a Hajj.