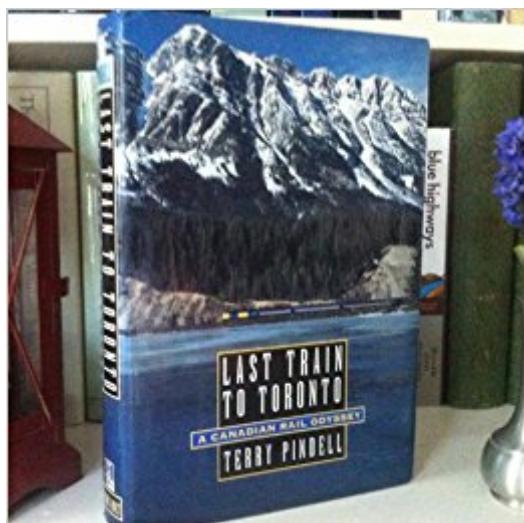


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# Last Train To Toronto: A Canadian Rail Odyssey



## **Synopsis**

The author traveled the thousand of miles of Canada's train routes. In this memoir travelogue, he recounts not only a journey but a land and culture from a most unique perspective. Pindell portrays the ever changing landscape and character of the diverse nation.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Upon learning of the Canadian government's proposed rail cutbacks to its passenger system, the author of *Making Tracks: An American Rail Odyssey* (LJ 6/15/90) decided to venture North to explore almost 20,000 miles of Canada's diverse rail system. The product of this journey is not only an informative book that fully documents an interesting adventure and the history of the railroad, but a good narrative on the history of Canada itself. Though the prose initially appears disjointed, one quickly adapts to the author's style of alternating between his personal experiences and Canada's history. One will delight in Pindell's colorful portrayal of the characters he encounters, descriptions of topographical transitions, and his ability to capture the uniqueness of each rural community he visits. In addition, Pindell addresses many pertinent topics related to the technology of the industry. This is a positive book on the joys of train travel, and essential for railroad enthusiasts or those interested in the impact of the rail industry in Canada. Recommended for most travel or history sections.- Jo-Anne Mary Benson, Osgoode, OntarioCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Having written in *Making Tracks* about his experiences traveling 30,000 miles of US passenger lines, Pindell now heads north, where he rides ``the steel of Canada'' for a year. To Canada, Pindell

notes, railways have had an importance far beyond transportation needs. They have, he says, ``virtually the same function in its founding as the Bill of Rights did ours.'' And as he travels, Pindell describes the role that trains and tracks have played in Canadian history. But he is also set on a little pulse-taking as well as giving history lessons, so he talks to his fellow passengers, mostly convivial sorts, who obligingly tell him about their lives, their politics, and their views on the US (not favorable). Pindell begins his odyssey with a trip from Toronto to Winnipeg on the Canadian and contemplates ``the nature of heaven-- two thousand eight hundred eighty-seven miles lie ahead of me--the longest train-ride in North America, the second longest in the world.'' He ends a year later with the Canadian's last run from Vancouver to Toronto--a victim of government cutbacks, the legendary train is to be mothballed. In between, Pindell travels northwest as far as Prince Rupert, where there's nothing to do but ``work and drink''; to Gaspe, where the people are predominantly French and resigned to a separate Quebec; to Churchill, on James Bay, where polar bears gather to hunt seals--and to wherever else all the other lines that still carry passengers over the Rockies and through the Maritimes take him. A sturdy piece of travel writing: readable, informative, and surely a railway buff's delight--but not a profoundly insightful or lapidary work. -- Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Pindell knows just when to switch from the grand sweep of history to the tiny details of train travel, and paints a picture of our nearest neighbor that is surprisingly complete. Although Pindell expresses justifiable nostalgia for routes that have been axed since his journey, a great number of spectacular rides are still to be taken in Canada. Everyone who loves the "torque of travel" should consider the cross-continental trip to Vancouver or Prince Rupert, the bi-lingual route from Toronto to Halifax, or the "Polar Bear Express" to the edge of Hudson's Bay. Don't leave home without Pindell.

Received as expected. Good quality. Timely arrival.

This is a coast-to-coast train ride and back, interchanging between travel description and local history. This was Terry's attempt to describe the last passenger train of the Canadian-Pacific Railroad before the route became dedicated to freight hauling, although the actual last train is just the last chapter, the rest are descriptions of scenery, passengers and history of the area along the way. The story shows how Canada was united because of the railways. Immigrants were recruited to settle the northern praries and then were promised railways to connect the town. (In US-American

history it worked the other way around) The story works. Between meeting foreign travelers (many who openly admit they don't like Americans), oil drillers, loggers and nude Canadian dancers out West (amazing, really, how many crowned dancers he met on the trains!) to crabbers and fishermen and disenchanted Quebecois out East, his style is a bit Paul Theroux and Studs Terkel. It's a shame that most of the trains no longer run like they do in the book. The characters are varied, the dialogue interesting and the countryside in most cases breathtaking. It's almost worth jumping on a train westbound to experience again. What a shame such travel now is obsolete. It makes me wonder what happened to all the people Terry profiled, especially the nude dancers he met out west. This book is not a chronological story of his cross-country trip, though. Almost half the book was dedicated to British Columbia in great detail. Granted, it's a region rich in history, but I almost wondered if he would ever set foot in the rest of Canada. He does. After finishing off his time in BC he starts the next chapter in Montreal and moves east from there to Nova Scotia.

No lengthy review and analysis here. I read this book twice over the past 10 years and thoroughly enjoyed every word re-living my own VIA train ride. Beautiful country and people in Canada. One of my 'Keeper' books.

For anyone interested in trains and Canada, this book is a must. I learned so much about the route and the west of Canada. It inspired me to explore more of Canada and take as many train rides as I could. It's truly an adventure book.

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