

The Phantom Atlas



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Synopsis

The Phantom Atlas is an atlas of the world not as it ever existed, but as it was thought to be. These marvellous and mysterious phantoms, non-existent islands, invented mountain ranges, mythical civilisations and other fictitious geography - were all at various times presented as facts on maps and atlases. This book is a collection of striking antique maps that display the most erroneous cartography, with each illustration accompanied by the story behind it. Exploration, map-making and mythology are all brought together to create a colourful tapestry of monsters, heroes and volcanoes; swindlers, mirages and murderers. Sometimes the stories are almost impossible to believe, and remarkably, some of the errors were still on display in maps published in the 21st century.

Throughout much of the 19th century more than 40 different mapmakers included the Mountains of Kong, a huge range of peaks stretching across the entire continent of Africa, in their maps - but it was only in 1889 when Louis Gustave Binger revealed the whole thing to be a fake. For centuries, explorers who headed to Patagonia returned with tales of the giants they had met who lived there, some nine feet tall.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'The Phantom Atlas describes some 50 "myths, lies and blunders" and illustrates them in delightful detail...deserve[s] a place on the coffee table, but only after it's been read: there is as much to absorb as to see.' -- John Ure * Country Life * 'Fascinating ... and beautifully illustrated' -- Rosamund Urwin * Evening Standard * 'Exquisitely produced... Gorgeous illustrations of countries and islands that were once thought to exist...For any fans of maps this is a must' * The Australian *

`The fascination and beauty of maps both emerge clearly in this well-written, witty and thoughtful book...this is a spirited and enjoyable study' \* Standpoint \* `One of the most beautiful books I've ever seen in my life...full of fascinating quirky things.' -- Jen Campbell, author *Weird Things Customers Say in Bookshops* `A rich selection... [that] shows how lively minds made use of limited knowledge, but also how rumour, guesswork and downright lies can persist in the scholarly imagination.' \* The Economist \* `From the magnetic mountain at the north pole to Australia's inland sea, Edward Brooke-Hitching charts five centuries of misrepresentative maps.' * The Guardian * `Unreservedly recommended' \* The Monocle \* `Excellent... Arranged alphabetically in fifty-eight short chapters, with lavish deployment of illustrations, the book provides a captivating chronicle of our battle with ignorance' * Literary Review * `Extraordinary' \* Historia Magazine \* `Beautiful... Brooke-Hitching [has] an eye for a good story and his book is gloriously illustrated with ancient mistaken maps, each accompanied by a thoroughly researched tale of the men whose errors led to them.' * Daily Express * `This intriguing book...shows how places that aren't there can endure, sometimes for centuries, once a map-maker has inked them in' \* The Times \* `Beautifully illustrated...brain-boggling...an excursion into the minds of men imagining an as yet uncharted world' * Spectator * `A spectacular, enjoyable and eye-opening read... A wonderful book, with beautiful illustrations throughout' -- Jonathan Ross `A bonkers book...Highly recommended' -- Andrew Marr

The son of an antiquarian book dealer, Edward Brooke-Hitching became an award-winning documentary director making films that examine the eccentric side of British life. He lives in London.

A very neat idea that is not always successful but hits far more than it misses, Brooke-Hitching has performed a yeoman's task in compiling this atlas of places that never were despite what the cartographers claimed. Everything from Mu to Atlantis and the fantasy land of Brasil is included, Where this book really shines, however, is its presentation of inaccurate cartography. Sometimes, wishful thinking took the place of sober science resulting in a huge inland sea in Australia or a phantom salt river running from the Pacific to Utah to explain the Great Salt Lake. Islands had an amazing habit of appearing and disappearing and Africa was home, for generations of mapmakers, to a mountain chain that never existed! The author does a very good job of explaining, when possible, how these misconceptions came to be. Usually, it is highly entertaining reading. I knocked off one star because some of the selections are downright silly and because my copy arrived damaged. A fun book to browse through at odd hours and between other books. Reading it in one sitting is not advised.

This was a gift from my daughter to my husband who loves maps. He is enjoying it very much. It is surprising, amusing, engaging and informative.

Interesting book.

I liked the book, very interesting if you like maps. Don't buy it if you are wanting an exciting page turner-- it is a book about maps after all.

A fun book for the member of our family who enjoys maps as much as others enjoy novels.

very interesting with nice illustrations. the quality of the maps is not excellent, but the reproductions are nice and give a clear enough picture for reference

Lovely volume

great book for people who love maps as much as I do. full of great old time maps with mistakes and explanations

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