

No passport hassle or surly border guards with globe-trotting film

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Welcome to Around the World in DVDs, a quick new guide to great movies on DVD from the wide world of cinema.

Every two weeks, I'll take a globe-trotting look at five titles that are emblematic of a nation. Each segment will be timed to a current event (say, the Iranian nuclear crisis) or a national holiday (like Independence Day in Algeria).

To start things off, though – and in the spirit of last Sunday's "international" Oscars - today's theme goes beyond borders. Here are five films that are all set in multiple countries – movies that shift the spotlight between peoples and places to illuminate the human condition. You'll find most of these titles at big chains and many neighbourhood stores.

A Talking Picture (*Portugal/France/Italy, 2003*) Sailing between Lisbon and Mumbai, cruise ship captain John Malkovich entertains three distinguished passengers at his table - Catherine Deneuve, Irene Papas and Stefania Sandrelli - and their riffs on civilization and its discontents are exquisite. Portuguese director Manoel de Oliveira made this when he was 96; it's his 36th film.



Aria (*Britain, 1987*) A unique outing in opera. Ten musical shorts by 10 different directors, from Altman to Godard to Roeg. Each short is built around a classic aria and set in a foreign city: Wagner in Vegas, Verdi in Vienna. Fascinating, non-stagy and very sexy.

The Red Violin (*Canada/Italy/Britain, 1998*) Francois Girard's time-travelling epic about a 17th-century Italian violin's peregrinations through Austria, England, China and finally Montreal, where it's being auctioned (by Colm Feore). The Canadian DVD has a commentary track by Girard and co-writer Don McKellar.

Until the End of the World (*Germany/France/Australia, 1991*) Five hours long over three DVDs, this is director Wim Wenders's masterwork, a global sci-fi flick that stars William Hurt, Max von Sydow and Jeanne Moreau. Best music soundtrack of the '90s, critics said. (This mail-order title comes with Region 2

coding, which isn't compatible with unmodified North American DVD players; the version with the best image and sound is from Germany's Kinowelt distribution. See amazon.de.)

Around the World in 80 Days (*U.S., 1956*) The ultimate nation-hopping comedy, this Hollywood blockbuster stars David Niven as Phileas Fogg, traipsing across the globe in a hot-air balloon. Warner's two-disc special edition is lovely and filled with bonus extras. Avoid the 2004 remake with Jackie Chan, which bombed in theatres.

And coming soon: **Night on Earth**, Jim Jarmusch's whimsical 1991 look at taxi rides over one night in five cities: New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome and Helsinki. The Criterion Collection is readying a North American DVD release for the fall.

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