

The Adventures
of the young
Marco Polo
26 x 25'

Concept – Characters – Storylines

The Adventures
of the young
Marco Polo

Journey to Madagascar



CONCEPT

Credits

Format: 26 x 25'

Target Group: 6 - 10 years

Genre: Junior / Animation

Produced by: MotionWorks GmbH

Producer: Tony Loeser

Executive Producer: Romy Roolf

Co-Producer:

Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk/ARD

Directed by:

Eckart Fingberg, Tony Loeser

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CONCEPT

The Adventures of the Young Marco Polo

After a long journey eastwards, young Marco Polo is finally reunited with his father at the court of Kublai Khan. However, just as they are planning their return home, Marco discovers something that changes all his travel plans: His friend Shi La is not an orphan! Her mother, a famous Chinese singer, is still alive.

Knowing how it feels to miss a parent, Marco wants to help Shi La find her long-lost mother, and even Luigi overcomes his travel-weariness to help his friend. Together the three of them set out on a journey to exciting new places and fascinating cultures that will soon become another great adventure.

They meet the brave soldier girl Mulan, help build the Angkor Wat temple, and participate in an elephant party in the middle of the jungle. On the Indian Ocean they get immersed in a swarm of butterflies and in Egypt they encounter hidden tombs and mummies. Their friendship is tested from time to time, but together they overcome all obstacles.

New adventures are waiting – just over the horizon!



CHARACTERS



Marco Polo

Age: 10 years old | Gender: Boy

Marco is the future famous world explorer in-the-making. If you had to describe him in one word, it would be curious ... well, maybe two words ... intensely curious.

His curiosity drives him, empowers him and also gets the better of him. He is very intelligent and seeks new knowledge and understanding, but he can be impatient and reckless if things do not go his way or if events proceed too slowly for him. He often acts without thinking, which lands him and his friends in hot water time and time again. Luckily, this same temperament also finds solutions to get them out of trouble – usually just in the nick of time.

Much of his temperament is due to the fact that he is an only child whose father was away on travels for much of the time. Marco has never really had to pay attention to other's needs, and his world, up to now, has mostly been confined to his father's library, surrounded by books, maps, and journals. This sheltered, lonely existence has fuelled his desire to see the world and learn new things at rocket speed.



His best friend is Luigi – and he trusts him completely. He would never dream of letting him down and – though he might deny it if asked – values his opinion on his ideas and plans. The two friends are very close, even though Luigi's superstitions and nervous caution sometimes drive Marco a little crazy.

Marco idolizes his father. He has read every word, studied every map and illustration that his father ever recorded about the world beyond Venice. When his father goes missing, Marco's only thought is to embark on his quest to find him. This journey also feeds his desire to see the world for himself and he begins to record his own impressions and experiences in his father's last journal, picking up where he left off.

Marco is not entirely consumed by his passion for exploring – he also has a great sense of humor, he can be mischievous, and he likes to play little jokes on Luigi.



CHARACTERS



Luigi Bellini

Age: 12 years old | Gender: Boy

If you had to describe him in one word, it would be hesitant. Luigi is a little big and heavy for his age, somewhat reserved, and he would have preferred to stay at home in Venice. He longs for the comforts and familiarity of home and he is suspicious towards anything new, because it can never be as good as it is at home. This sometimes becomes very irritating to both Shi La and Marco, but they accept it as part of who he is.

Marco is his best friend and Luigi will do anything for this friendship. When situations become dangerous, his need to protect his friends overcomes his cautious nature and fear of the unknown. He needs harmony in his life and can be very “motherly”. Luigi will try to calm things down and mediate if arguments arise or situations become hostile. Although he knows about who is right and who is wrong in conflicts he always goes along with Marco in the end.

His daily routines are very important to him, such as a good breakfast, regular meals, and a set time to make camp. He does all that he can to create a “home” wherever they go, from improvising tableware to finding a safe place to sleep.

He has strong moral values learned from his solid family upbringing and he firmly believes in honesty and integrity. Sometimes he speaks deep worldly wisdom that comes from his pure, true heart (two wrongs don’t make a right; a cobbler should stick to his last, etc.). Luigi does not crave material things and if given the choice between money and wealth or his friends, he would ultimately always stand by Marco, Shi La and Fu Fu.

Luigi might seem a little slow at times, but that does not mean that he is unaware of what is happening around him. He is very skilled at crafts and can build and repair almost anything.



CHARACTERS



Shi La Won

Age: 11 years old | Gender: Girl

If you had to describe Shi La in one word, it would be tough.

At first glance Shi La seems very headstrong and aloof. She doesn't like to reveal what she is thinking – which gives her an air of mystery. She is remarkably self-sufficient and confident in her own abilities.

Initially, she has her own agenda to travel with the boys as long as long as it is to her advantage – but gradually she develops a strong friendship with the two. She pretends to know everything about the route they are traveling, although the truth is she came from China by sea and really hasn't experienced the overland route. She claims to be a Chinese princess even though in reality, she was raised in an orphanage.

In conflict situations, she is often the first one to resort to using her fists or Kung Fu, even when they might have been able to talk their way around it. Then her friends have to hold her back – or stand back.

Although Shi La projects a tough exterior, she really has a very feminine, sensitive side. Despite the fact that she is always ready to rumble, she likes to dress well and maintains a cultured appearance in keeping with her “princess” persona.



CHARACTERS



Fu Fu

Age: unknown | Nature: Bat

If one had to describe Fu Fu in one word, that word would be headstrong. At first glance he looks very cute and cuddly, but he can be very stubborn and wild.

Fu Fu behaves like several pets rolled into one little fellow. He has the air of a cat when slyly stalking small animals, sleeping in the sun, or hissing at something in anger or fear. He can be as protective as a watchdog – especially toward Shi La – sniffing the air when he senses something wrong. He sure knows how to put on the “puppy eyes” to get goodies from our friends – though he would never be commanded like a dog. When he is agitated he hops or flutters about with the quick darting actions of a sparrow.

In any case, he follows his instincts and is primarily out to have a good time. He is greedy (why settle for one grape when you can get the whole bunch?) and curious (crawling into pockets, pots and boxes – which might hold sweets).

He is very close with, and protective of, Shi La, and he gets along very well with Luigi – the two become food-buddies. Marco is another story, however. Fu Fu sees Marco as a rival for Shi La’s affections and friendship – and because of this, sometimes does not treat the young explorer very well. Chinese medicine lore states that bats possess healing powers and this sometimes brings him into the cross-hairs of trouble when others desire his abilities to use or sell in the markets.

Fu Fu is a hedonist on the surface, but underneath it all, he is a hero in his own way.



STORYLINES



Episode 01 – Shadows of the Past

Marco, Shi La and Luigi learn that Shi La is not an orphan. Her mother is alive and the friends set out to find her.

Episode 02 – Mulan

On the way to Hangzhou Marco and his friends meet the brave soldier girl Mulan. Together they uncover a traitor's evil plans.

Episode 03 – High Hopes in Hangzhou

Marco, Shi La and Luigi hope to find Shi La's mother in Hangzhou, but instead they are greeted by gangs that demand taxes for everything and anything.

Episode 04 – Descending Dragon Bay

Marco and friends help to scare away some bandits by conjuring a 'real' dragon in Ha Long Bay.

Episode 05 – Gold and Rice

Marco, Shi La and Luigi reunite a family separated by gold fever and make a surprising discovery: Sometimes food is more valuable than anything else!

Episode 06 – The Temple City of Angkor Wat

In Angkor Wat, our heroes meet a young stone cutter who is much better as a cook, and a young cook who is better as a stone cutter.

Episode 07 – The Angry Mountain

On the island of Java, everyone is in a hurry to get away from a volcano that is about to erupt. Shi La's mother, however, has left long since left for a new destination.

Episode 08 – People of the Sea

Our heroes meet the Orang Laut, the sea people, and save the port of Malacca from a pirate attack.

Episode 09 – The Sea of Glass

Caught in a dead calm, Marco and friends encounter butterflies at sea just before a storm hits them.

Episode 10 – Buddha's Tooth

The Burmese King has prohibited all ships from leaving the harbor because a valuable relic has been stolen. Marco, Shi La and Luigi must find the thief to continue their journey.



STORYLINES



Episode 11 – The Elephant Boy

With the help of a boy and his baby elephants, the friends return Buddha's Tooth to its rightful owner.

Episode 12 – The Pearls of Malabar

At the Malabar Coast, our heroes must win a pearl diving contest.

Episode 13 – The Elephant Flute

Marco and friends try their hand at street performances in Delhi and Shi La discovers a surprising talent that saves the day.

Episode 14 – Tailor Troubles

In Gujarat, our heroes accidentally damage a set of valuable saris and must help a young tailor to replace them.

Episode 15 – The Wild Horse of Qalhat

Our trio land in Oman and meet Hamal, who is afraid of horses but must win a horse race nonetheless.

Episode 16 – The Desert City

Marco and friends are mistaken for horse thieves in the city of Shibam. They take a breakneck route across the rooftops to escape.

Episode 17 – The Rose-Red City

Our heroes are caught in a sandstorm in the Jordanian desert. Together with a nomad girl, they discover the abandoned city of Petra.

Episode 18 – Danger at the Coral Reef

At the Red Sea, the friends meet a sponge diver named Faris. But diving has become very dangerous recently because there are sharks at the reef.

Episode 19 – Squabblers in Cairo

Shi La hopes to be reunited with her mother in Cairo. On the way to the citadel, however, the friends get on each other's nerves.

Episode 20 – Valley of the Ancient Kings

In the Valley of the Kings in Egypt, our heroes find a hidden tomb and stop a group of greedy grave robbers.



STORYLINES

Episode 21 - The Secret of the Red Berries

Our heroes meet an old man who researches the secrets of nature and a young boy who wants to become his apprentice.

Episode 22 – Snow on Kilimanjaro

Marco, Shi La and Luigi best a leopard, altitude sickness, and ice and snow in Africa as they climb the mountain with the famous cartographer Al-Idrisi.

Episode 23 – Monkey Business

A little girl is kidnapped by wild monkeys. To find her, our heroes must venture into the jungle and her brother must overcome his fears.

Episode 24 – The Lost Mines of Solomon

At the Zambezi River, the friends encounter Raffuzio – the man who once tried to steal Marco’s family’s fortune. Now he claims to be a changed man, though.

Episode 25 – Voyage of the Zatarra

In order to get to Madagascar, our heroes make an old ship seaworthy again.

Episode 26 – Madagascar

Our heroes arrive in Madagascar. Now they must free Shi La’s mother from the pirates who supposedly hold her captive.





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