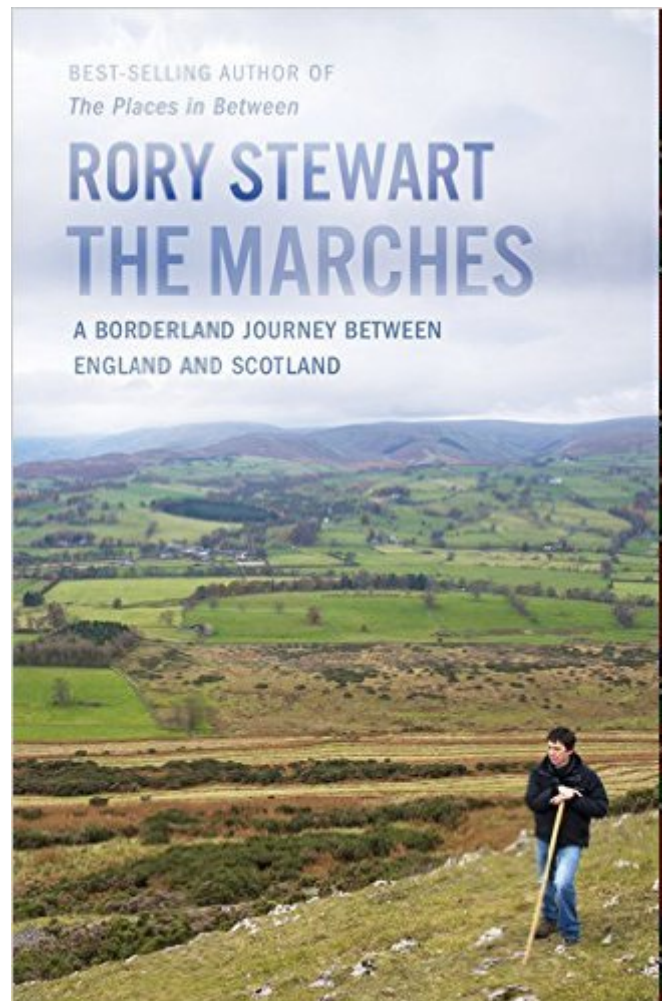


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The Marches: A Borderland Journey Between England And Scotland



Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *The Places in Between*, a *œa flat-out masterpiece* • (New York Times Book Review), an exploration of the Marches—the borderland between England and Scotland—and the people, history, and conflicts that have shaped it. In *The Places in Between*, Rory Stewart walked through the most dangerous borderlands in the world. Now he walks along the border he calls home—where political turmoil and vivid lives have played out for centuries across a magnificent natural landscape—to tell the story of the Marches. In his thousand-mile journey, Stewart sleeps on mountain ridges and housing estates, in hostels and farmhouses. Following the lines of Neolithic standing stones, wading through floods and ruined fields, he walks Hadrian's Wall with soldiers who have fought in Afghanistan and visits the Buddhist monks who outnumber Christian monks in the Scottish countryside today. He melds the stories of the people he meets with the region's political and economic history, tracing the creation of Scotland from ancient tribes to the independence referendum. And he discovers another country buried in history, a vanished Middleland: the lost kingdom of Cumbria. With every step, Stewart reveals the force of myths and traditions and the endurance of ties that are woven into the fabric of the land itself. A meditation on deep history, the pull of national identity, and home, *The Marches* is a transporting work from a powerful and original writer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first section of this book involves a hike along the course of Hadrian's Wall which the author starts in company with his eighty-nine year old father. This undertaking is not a complete success

for a number of reasons: the old chap has trouble with the rough terrain; it rains, seemingly non-stop during the four days of the trek; the wall itself, where it exists, is only a foot high. The middle section of the book has the author hiking around the borderlands between England and Scotland as he tries to discover a unique sense of identity among the inhabitants, based on the long, violent history of this part of the country. He doesn't find it. The few people he meets are too busy coping with the demands of their daily lives to be much interested in history. In the third section, we find him back in the family home where he grew up. He speaks to his father- now age ninety-four- about his difficulties with the book: "I have the first part- a Romantic child's view of Scotland, and my father, played against our work on Hadrian's Wall. And I have the second part- my solo walk- where to be honest, I think I got in a thorough muddle, and was bewildered by the people I met in the Borders.... But I haven't got the third part. I haven't got the upbeat part where I bring it all together and bring it to some kind of conclusion about what kind of country we add up to today." Well, the third part is mainly devoted to his father, his heroism during the Second World War, his career as a spy and as a colonial administrator, and his demise which happens quite suddenly and is described in a way which I found surprisingly moving. Another blow is that plans are in the works to develop a large housing estate around the Stewart family home which will become an island in a sea of houses, schools, malls and parking lots.. Maybe that is the conclusion which tells us "what kind of country we add up to today."

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