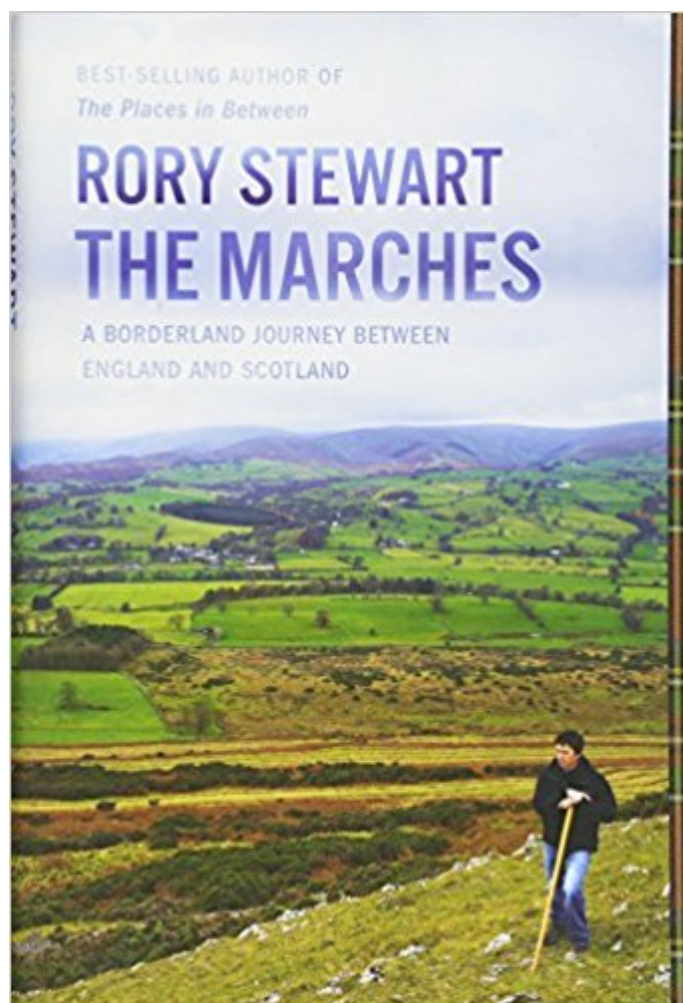


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# The Marches: A Borderland Journey Between England And Scotland



## Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *The Places in Between*, “a 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

“Stewart proves to be a captivating tour guide. He brings archaic languages and traditions vividly alive, wrestles with nationalism and nationhood and, in a poignant closing section,

traces his father's war years and last days | Beautiful, evocative and wise, *The Marches* highlights new truths about old countries and the unbreakable bond between a father and son.

• *Malcolm Forbes, MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE* "The miracle of *The Marches* is not so much the treks Stewart describes, pulling in all possible relevant history, as the monument that emerges to his beloved father.

• *NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW* "Stewart demonstrates a deep historical understanding of the land and describes the flora and fauna that he encounters with the precision of a botanist | Stewart is a careful and thoughtful observer

• *CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR* "[A] modern-day Lawrence of Arabia | a sensitive exploration of what borders mean and don't mean... the book is held together by Mr. Stewart's writing, with his short chapters moving skillfully from history to personal encounter."

• *Andrew Lownie, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL* "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* will be regarded as one of the best books of 2016.

• *WAMC-FM*, "the Roundtable" "Captivating | Stewart writes movingly and honestly about his father, who was 50 when Rory was born but possessed a remarkable vigor and a keen interest in his son that readers will feel throughout the narrative. It's a fitting end to this powerful exploration of personal and national lineages and landscapes.

• *BOOKPAGE* "As a writer, Stewart has a fine sense of the nature of the physical spaces he traverses, as well as the human stories (past and present) that play out in these landscapes.

• *SIGNATURE* "An unforgettable tale.

• *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* "[Stewart] paints vivid portraits... [he] anchors his lively mix of history, travelogue, and reportage on local communities in a vibrant portrait of his father, who was both a tartan-wearing Scotsman and a thoroughly British soldier and diplomat. This is a subtle, clear-eyed, ardent case for the United Kingdom's future, one that recognizes cross-border divisions but deeply values ties that bind."

• *PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY* "Fascinating | Stewart provides wonderful insights as he visits Roman fortifications, medieval castles, and Hadrian's Wall. This is an informative, thoughtful, and timely mix of history and travelogue.

• *BOOKLIST* "There are few authors whose books are automatic purchases, whatever the subject . . . [Stewart's] greatest talent is in getting people to speak to him and actually listening to what they say, a skill on full display in his previous books about Afghanistan and Iraq. . . . Throughout, Stewart makes it a joy to learn every tree, flower, and butterfly, to explore where Roman forts stood, and to understand the

ancient histories of the region. Another winner from a consistently engaging author. **KIRKUS REVIEWS** (starred review) "Stewart bubbles with geopolitical knowledge... [His] walk across the Middleland brings Cumbria brilliantly alive... this is travel writing at its best | Perhaps more than anything else, more than the exploration of a landscape, or an attempt to define the prickly concept of empire, or to ask what it means to be Scottish, *The Marches* is a portrait of a man. Of an energetic, loving father; of a gentle man, yet feisty; of a man who loved to dance and to laugh and to sing, and whose son was the apple of his eye. **THE GUARDIAN**(UK)

RORY STEWART is the best-selling author of *The Places in Between* and *The Prince of the Marshes*. A former director of the Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy and a Ryan Professor of Human Rights at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire for services in Iraq. He is the Conservative member of Parliament for Penrith and The Border, a constituency in Northern Cumbria, where he lives with his wife.

I love Mr. Stewart's writing. Adored his book about walking across Afghanistan. This one is interesting especially comparing the Roman Wall in Britain to modern tactics in the Middle East. Mr. Stewart's father is one of the kind of whom it might be said that we will not see his like again. In the end it was too long and began to drag.

It is not often, in fact extremely rare, that I do not finish a book once I start it. I made it half way through, but this book defeated me. Absolutely nothing had happened. The framework of the book appears to be a walk along Hadrian's Wall with the author's father, but since the father, due to age, doesn't actually walk the wall, and the author quits after a few days, the entire enterprise seems to be nothing more than a Wikipedia version of how the wall was built, interspersed with digressions about his past adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, and how special his father is. But then Book Two is an unrelated walk in the same general area (sans Dad) that occurs a year later. Desultory descriptions of flora and fauna, followed by desultory conversations with the locals (sheep farmers, etc.) just about did me in. This couldn't even be boiled down into a decent New Yorker article, as there is no there there. Once I realized the book was going nowhere, that I was learning nothing, and that I wasn't even enjoying the writing, I bailed out. Perhaps if you live in the Middlelands, as Stewart calls the area, you'd find this book of interest; for everyone else, I'd say: proceed with extreme caution.

I like Rory Stewart book a great deal, but I don't find this up to his usual standards

The Marches is a term used since time immemorial for the borderlands between England and Scotland. On maps the area doesn't appear to be particularly large or impressive, but that is misleading. Beginning as a frontier between the Roman Empire and the unconquered North of Britain, and then continuing for hundreds of years as the border between two rival and often hostile kingdoms, the Marches is one of the most complex and fascinating regions in the British Isles. Rory Stewart, traveler, hiker, and true born son of the Marches, is the ideal chronicler for this beautiful and historic land. Stewart has divided his book into three segments. In the first he chronicles his days walking along Hadrian's Wall, accompanied in part by his 90 year old father. The elder Stewart led a long and colorful life, serving in the British army, fighting in Normandy, then serving in the diplomatic and intelligence services for many years thereafter. Although he was already 50 when his son Rory was born, the two men had a close and loving relationship that included much travel as well as long and fruitful conversations which were a delight to read. The second segment is the longest, describing a number of different hikes and walks taken by Stewart across the Marches, encountering forests, farmland both active and abandoned, crowded housing estates, busy motorways, small villages, castles, and manor houses. Stewart met a wide variety of people on both sides of the Border and recounted his conversations with them. These ranged from political discussions over the then looming question of Scottish independence to linguistic and genealogical history. Although England and Scotland have been unified under the Crown for over 400 years, there are still sharp differences which become obvious as soon as travelers cross the border. The third segment continues the story of Stewart's relationship with his father, who lived on a small estate in the middle of the border lands, and concludes with the older Stewart's final days, quiet passing, and funeral. Rory Stewart is also the author of the well known *The Places In Between*, the story of his long walk through Afghanistan. Although his journeys in The Marches were less hazardous, there are many similarities, including how to best deal with the after effects of conflict and the decline of empire. Stewart is a member of Parliament who currently serves as undersecretary for the environment. While Britain is fortunate to have his thoughtful leadership, I certainly hope that his political work will not keep him from exploring and then writing about our world for many years to come.

love it

I found this to be a rather dull book; part memoir, combined with history (reaching far beyond England and Scotland). Not much of it was about his actual walks in England and Scotland, as the subtitle lead me to believe. What is presented lacked in details and did not give the

“you are there” feel that other writers have achieved. The book is rather scattered, offering tidbits of this and that and jumping around a lot. Much of the book is about history, but the coverage is neither deep nor insightful. Although the subtitle says “England and Scotland”, the book goes far beyond those borders, into China, Afghanistan, and more. There is a lot in here about Stewart’s ancestry, which I did not find was presented in an interesting way. This was, in large part, a tribute to his father, which is certainly not how the description the publisher provides describes it. I was looking forward to a book about a man’s walk along the Scottish English border, but that is not what I got. There is little about the nature or culture, or Stewart’s experience as he walked, in this book. If instead, you enjoyed the author’s earlier book, *The Places In Between*, then you may be more satisfied with this book than I was. (This is why I give the book 3 stars rather than 2.)

Rory Stewart does a great job of talking about the mutual areas of England and Scotland.

This book deserves to be read widely by Borderers and all those who have contact with borders. It contains a fascinating analysis of the schizoid cross border identities of those who live there.

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