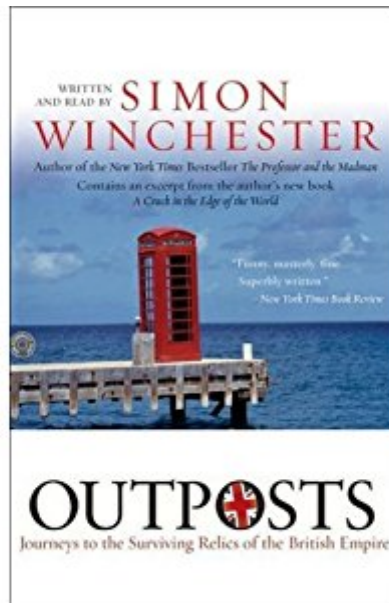




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# Outposts: Journeys To The Surviving Relics Of The British Empire



## Synopsis

Simon Winchester, struck by a sudden need to discover exactly what was left of the British Empire, set out across the globe to visit the far-flung islands that are all that remain of what once made Britain great. He traveled 100,000 miles back and forth, from Antarctica to the Caribbean, from the Mediterranean to the Far East, to capture a last glint of imperial glory. His adventures in these distant and forgotten ends of the earth make compelling, often funny reading and tell a story most of us had thought was over: a tale of the last outposts in Britain's imperial career and those who keep the flag flying. With a new introduction, this updated edition tells us what has happened to these extraordinary places while the author's been away. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Love this book. You are always going to get great quality writing from Simon Winchester. The question with Winchester is whether or not the story he is telling is of interest to you specifically. This one shifts gears so many times that there is no question but that there will be something of great interest to you. Also, the story of the journey itself is inherently interesting. One thing that I would love to have from Winchester, that he hints at toward the beginning, is a full blown book on Northern Ireland.

In 1914, the globe was spanned by the British Empire, on which the sun truly never set. As a boy, I collected stamps, and I was in awe of the number of faraway and exotic places that featured the

likeness of the British monarch on their issues. It was, perhaps, these colorful bits of paper, along with the tales of Robin Hood, Richard the Lionheart, and King Arthur that engendered in me a lasting love for and fascination with Great Britain. I've visited the mother island on more than a dozen occasions; I long to be there now. Simon Winchester's OUTPOSTS took me in a different direction - outward to the last vestiges of Empire. British Indian Ocean Territory, Tristan da Cunha, Gibraltar, Ascension Island, St. Helena, Hong Kong, Bermuda, Turks and Caicos Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Montserrat, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, and the Pitcairn Islands. These, minus Hong Kong - OUTPOSTS was published in 1985 - are now all that are left of the once proud imperial possessions. Simon visited them over a three year period, except the inaccessible Pitcairn, and tells us about his odyssey in this sterling travel narrative. Winchester, a Brit himself, is ambiguous about the Empire. On one hand, he apparently feels that the Crown's dominions, protectorates, trustee states, mandated territories and colonies were better left to go their separate ways, if only for the sake of political correctness. On the other hand, he maintains that, of all the European colonial empires, Britain's was the one administered with the greatest degree of good intentions. And, Simon isn't above becoming sentimental, as on Tristan da Cunha, a dependency of St. Helena, during a visit by the Colonial Governor: "A bugle was blown, a banner was raised, a salute was made, an anthem was played - and the Colonial Governor of St. Helena was formally welcomed on to the tiniest and loneliest dependency in the remnant British Empire. I found I was watching it through a strange golden haze, which cleared if I wiped my eyes with the back of my hand: the children looked so proud, so eager to please, so keen to touch the hand from England, from the wellspring of their official existence." The volume contains a rudimentary map of each colony visited, but no photographs - a deplorable deficiency in any travel essay, I think. I had to go onto the Web to satisfy my curiosity for visuals; the Tristan da Cunha, St. Helena, and Falkland Islands websites are particularly helpful in this regard. OUTPOSTS is, of course, dated; Hong Kong has long since reverted to the mandarins in Beijing. Luckily, I was able to visit the place in 1994 when it was still a jewel in the British crown. Oddly, the chapter on HK is surprisingly short considering the size and importance of the place at the time the book was written. Winchester didn't even mention one of the best E-rides in the world, the short Star Ferry trip from Kowloon to Hong Kong Island. One of the best reasons to read OUTPOSTS, if you're interested in the subject, is the author's brief, chatty history of each colony. And then there's the occasional trivia. Did you know, for example, that during the Falkland Islands War a team of Argentine frogmen arrived in Spain with plans to blow up Royal Navy ships anchored off Gibraltar? They were arrested by the Spanish police on a tip from British Intelligence. And, do you know the location of the only land border

between Holland and France? It's not where you might think. OUTPOSTS grandly took me to places I shall likely never visit, and I'm indebted to Winchester for that.

This is a terrifically entertaining book. I recently went to hear Simon Winchester speak about his latest book "The Men Who United the States" and was so captivated by his personality and the glimpses of his own life that he offered during the talk that I began searching through his other titles and decided that this one would be a book that I'd enjoy because it would take me to exotic locations, provide me with a history lesson at each location, and entertain me at the same time. I was not disappointed. Mr. Winchester has a keen eye for the small telling detail as well as for the larger picture. Having visited some of the locations in the book, it was very apparent that the things he observed in 1984 when he wrote this book, in many instances, are still true today. Many times the statement is made that on any journey -- many times it's the "getting there" that is half the fun and that's true in this book also because Mr. Winchester certainly had to expend a lot of effort and endured some very interesting circumstances while attempting to get where he was going. Mr. Winchester isn't the first writer to try to determine why the British Empire melted away until now there are only remnants of it scattered around the world but I believe that he is the first writer to visit those distant and scattered and in some instances almost forgotten shores and to report back on what remains at the end of the day.

I picked this book for adventure, perhaps travel, a bit of learning. I am so glad that my small wishes were so exceeded by the great and great many stories. There is too little space here to wax on,, so I must say that here is a book that should be required reading for most all of us out here, especially politicians, travelers, Naval persons, and all who might be, or are not. It is a warm book you need for a long winter's night. And if you have lived in the West of the USA outside of all the cities, maybe on a ranch or farm or small struggling town of 287 souls, it is perfect, for the vast plains and desert are much like the great oceans. A place for the mind, home for the soul and a purpose for the life too many others see as small. Wade Rumney Camano Island

This was a gift for my husband, and he is spellbound. For him it is fascinating learning about all these remote sites from the past. Most are located in the South Atlantic between South America and Africa, an area that is not frequently covered.

Very interesting piece on the far-flung, and diminished, British Empire. Unfortunately, it is dated: the

reader is left guessing what has become of Hong Kong, Bermuda, the Falklands. (A follower of history knows there answers, but 'Outposts' leaves you with wondering about much of the people and places.). Well written and informative as are all Winchester books. A more up-to-date version would be appreciated.

Older but still a useful look at the remnants of the British Empire. Some hilarious exploits and some that just seemed damned foolish. Fairly kind to the inhabitants. I learned lots about ports like Gibraltar, St Helena, Diego Garcia, And more , Some I had been to (Falklands) but most I won't. Thanks Ean Jackson for tipping me off to this!

Much as I love Simon Winchester he is a bit of a bleeding heart. Did the British Empire do more harm than good? Simon says yes!

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