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Beyond Belfast: A 560-Mile Journey Across Northern Ireland On Sore Feet



Synopsis

Offbeat, charming, and filled with humour and insight, *Beyond Belfast* is the story of one man's misguided attempt at walking the Ulster Way, "the longest waymarked trail in the British Isles." It's a journey that takes Will Ferguson through the small towns and half-forgotten villages of Northern Ireland, along rugged coastlines and across barren moorland heights, past crumbling castles and patchwork farms. From IRA pubs to Protestant marches, from bandits and bad weather to banshees and blood sausage, he wades into the thick of things, providing an affectionate and heartfelt look at one of the most misunderstood corners of the world. As the grandson of a Belfast orphan, Will also peels back the myths and realities of his own family history—a mysterious photograph, rumours of a lost inheritance. The truth, when it comes, is both surprising and funny.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Great scenery, oddball characters and much hilarity." - National Post
"A modern-day journey through Ireland with tongue firmly in cheek . . . Wildly funny." - Ottawa Citizen
"A smart, engaging travel memoir about sore feet, Northern Ireland and coming to terms with who you are and from where you came." - Winnipeg Free Press
"His thoughts are informed by a fair amount of reading, a keen sense of observation and a humane disposition | funny, intelligent, and well worth hearing | Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to walk the Ulster Way. Instead, buy this book, take off your shoes and socks, sit down by a warm fire, pour yourself a glass of whisky, and walk with Will Ferguson, step by vicarious step." - The Globe And Mail
"Travel at times can be no laughing matter. So

it's always a good idea to pack a book that is like, say, *Beyond Belfast*. Great scenery, oddball characters and much hilarity ensue. - The National Post

"A thoughtful travelogue chronicling the author's arduous journey across Northern Ireland in a bid to uncover his grandfather's long-buried Northern Irish roots. - Maclean's

"He tells his story intelligently and kindly. - The Leacock Foundation's Award Committee

"The humour is subtle and usually self-deprecating. For anyone who has never been to Northern Ireland and is planning to go, *Beyond Belfast* is a great primer to understanding the people, places and problems. - Vancouver Sun

"Like with most other Will Ferguson books, don't forget a box of tissues to wipe your tears of laughter. - Campbell River Mirror

"*Beyond Belfast* by Will Ferguson is, in this reader's opinion, the best book Will Ferguson has penned to date. I shouted "Wow! I gasped and I giggled and at least a dozen times I laughed out loud. I couldn't put it down. The story held me from page to page as if I was right there slogging through the Irish bogs with the author. Ferguson's insights are superb. - Indian Head-Wolseley News

"Hilariously rewarding. A choose-your-own-adventure book where the choices were perhaps the worst ones, but certainly the most adventurous. - See Magazine

"A sharp and witty picture of the land and its people. - Niagara Magazine

Travel writer and novelist Will Ferguson is the author of several award-winning memoirs, including *Beyond Belfast*, about a 560-mile walk across Northern Ireland in the rain; *Hitching Rides With Buddha*, about an end-to-end journey across Japan by thumb; and most recently the humour collection *Canadian Pie*, which includes his travels from Yukon to PEI. Ferguson's novels include *Happiness*, a satire set in the world of self-help publishing, and *Spanish Fly*, a coming-of-age tale of con men and call girls set amid the jazz clubs of the Great Depression. His work, which has been published in more than twenty languages around the world, has been nominated for both an IMPAC Dublin Award and a Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and he is a three-time winner of the Leacock Medal. www.willferguson.com

Some authors write history books, some write travel narratives, others write books of humor, but author Will Ferguson, combines them all into his travel books. As good as *Hitching Rides with Buddha* was telling the story of the authors hitch hiking odyssey from the south of Japan, all the way to the very north end, *Beyond Belfast* is even better! A 560 mile walk around Northern Ireland,

encompassing as much of the geography, the people, the history and the culture as is possible. The author does his best to explain what caused "the Troubles" from the very beginning of the country up through the 30 years of the troubles and beyond. He does the whole book in a very entertaining and readable style, that at times will have you laughing out loud- such as death by sausage- to the somber tone when discussing the senseless butchering of often times innocent people during "The Troubles". The descriptions of what a beautiful country Northern Ireland is and the warmth and hospitality of the people Protestant and Catholic alike as well as the quirkiness and craziness that is there, makes for an exceptional piece of storytelling. This is definitely a book worth reading!

Engaging writing style, fascinating subjects, great storytelling. Recommended for anyone who likes books similar to those of William Least Heat-Moon.

i am off to ireland in sept. something to do when i retire. this book gives you a good idea of where to go and what you will see and experience when touring around the north of ireland. it describes lots of the possible walking bits of any tour around the north of ireland and is a good all round read of someone out on an adventure. heard the author interviewed on cbc radio so i ordered the book. i liked it.

Beyond Belfast: A 560-Mile Journey Across Northern Ireland on Sore Feet I had never heard of Will Ferguson until he won the Canadian book award, the Giller Prize. Planning to read his award winning novel, 419, I checked out his page, and amongst his many works, I came across Beyond Belfast. Being a fan of any walking tour book that includes humorous asides, à la Paul Theroux and Bill Bryson, I ordered a copy. I am very glad that Will decided to walk the Ulster Way, thereby saving me from ever having to consider doing it myself! I can only echo another reviewer who suggested the reader should relax in front of a warm fire, nursing his or her favourite beverage, and let poor Will do the walking. Not only will you save yourself from the frustrations of dodgy directions, missing and sometimes non-existent signage, mud, bogs, hostile dogs and more rain than you can ever imagine, you will also learn a great deal about the history and geography of Northern Ireland. A double benefit that places Beyond Belfast high up on my list of favourite travel books.

About a quarter of the way into this book I began to compose a review that ended with the sentiment that I would be unlikely to read this again. My first impressions were not overly negative; I just didn't find much that excited my interest to any great degree. Mostly, I found myself comparing this author

to Bill Bryson, one of my favorite travel yarn writers. This is, after all, the sort of book you can well imagine Bryson writing, except that whereas with Bryson I might get belly-laughs, here I just got the odd chuckle once in a while. The comparison, of course, is not a very fair one and at about the half-way mark into the book I found that I had become gripped by the narrative in spite of my first impressions. Ferguson is quite skilled as a 'visual' writer, but his low-key delivery makes that fact easy to miss at first. What seems like a very light-hearted romp of a book actually covers some very serious stuff and the lightness is often counter-balanced by a real darkness in subject and tone. Particularly moving is the passage where the author attends the public inquest into the infamous bombing in Omagh. All in all this is a good 'wee' book (as they might have it in Ulster). I will read it again sometime.

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