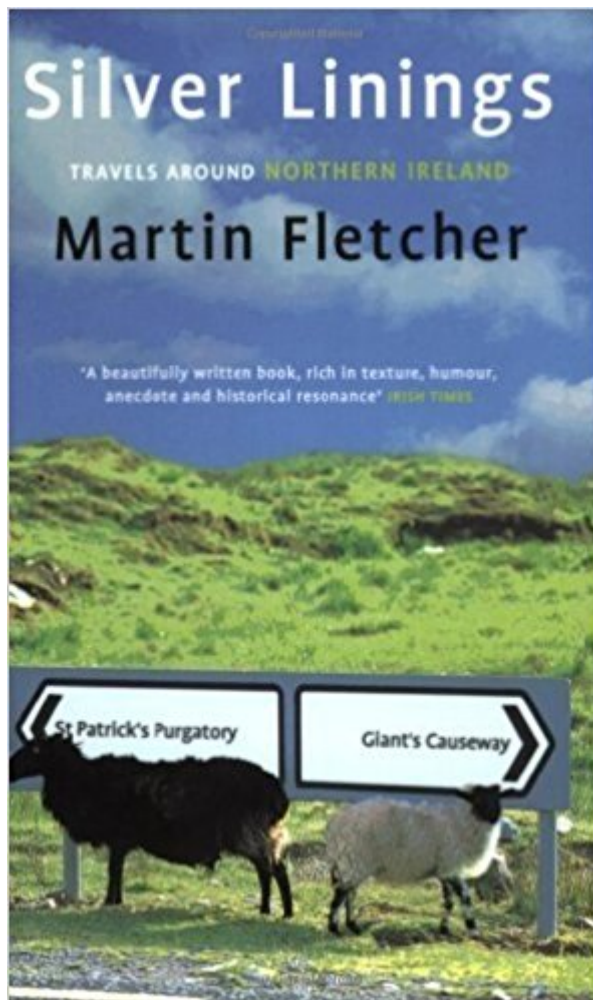




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Silver Linings



Synopsis

Northern Ireland has made headlines around the world for three decades. The province has become synonymous with conflict, terrorism and tortuous efforts to forge peace. But what is life there really like? In this enchanting and highly original book Martin Fletcher presents a portrait of Northern Ireland utterly at odds with its dire international image. He paints a compelling picture of a place caught in a time warp since the 1960s, of a land of mountains, lakes and rivers where customs, traditions and old-world charm survive, of an incredibly resourceful province that has given the world not just bombs and bullets but the Titanic, the tyre and the tractor, a dozen American presidents, two prime ministers of New Zealand and a Hindu god. He meets an intelligent, fun-loving, God-fearing people who may do terrible things to each other but who could not be more welcoming to outsiders. He describes a land of awful beauty, a battleground of good and evil, a province populated by saints and sinners that has yet to be rendered bland by the forces of modernity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Northern Ireland is not your typical travel destination, but it does have a lot to offer, as the author of this amiable book points out. Newspaper reporter Fletcher (Almost Heaven: Travels Through the Backwoods of America) spent two years traveling around the country and getting a feel for its land and people. What he discovered right away was that almost all of the people he met, even the extremists, were friendly, honest, and talkative. This gave him (and he in turn gives readers) some insight into the politics and everyday life of Northern Ireland. This is a compelling portrayal of the

gorgeous landscape, the sad history, and the warm and enduring people of the country. Fletcher's writing is straightforward and laden with fascinating facts about the cities and sites that he visited and thoroughly researched. Recommended for all travel collections. Kathleen Shanahan, Kensington, MD Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Charming
— a summer round up, DAILY TELEGRAPH
When it comes to Northern Ireland, we have not so much switched off as forgotten to change channels. Fletcher hands us the remote
— a INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY
If you read his previous book, ALMOST HEAVEN, you will know Fletcher's qualities include insight and eloquence...his compassionate, witty book is rich with insight into a place of cockfights, witchcraft, eccentricity and magic
— a SUNDAY TIMES

There are a million kitschy, clichéd books about Ireland. This is not one of them. Set in Northern Ireland not long after the treaty, the book reveals the counties that had, during the Troubles, become "quieter" for tourism, which is part the charm -- there are few plasticky tourist shops or tourist bus routes to talk about here. No tourist clichés: I read this book several years back and it (along with 2 others) sticks out as one of my favorite books to reveal all the subtle nuance particular to different aspects of life on the island. Written by a journalist stationed in Belfast, the author uses each chapter to reveal discoveries of Northern Ireland from his weekend/week excursions. Sometimes he is traveling to see a famed site for himself (Giant's Causeway), but often what is revealed are the very real people (my favorite: famed motorcycle racer who died after their meeting) and cultural traditions that take place beyond the typical tourist views. Beyond that, it is what we hope for in any travel memoir: well written with an engaging voice and intriguing stories revealed along the way. It's a favorite of mine.

I really enjoyed this book. I read it as we traveled through Northern Ireland. I learned a lot about the area through the book and understand it better. It was great seeing Belfast and Derry first hand and driving through many of the other areas. It's well written and I enjoyed the author's wit.

Martin Fletcher has captured the essence of Northern Ireland in this delightful book. He introduces us to a wonderful patchwork of characters while he describes the beauty of the countryside. He addresses the sometimes-tragic history of the province, but he also provides some fascinating historical tidbits about the connections between Ulster and the United States that should interest

American readers. Those who enjoy the work of Bill Bryson and anyone who loves Ireland, north or south, will appreciate this book. I have traveled to Northern Ireland over fifteen times since 1974, and I just happened to find this book on the last day of my recent five-week holiday. I have never read anything else that mentions so many of the people, places and things that I love about the country. I certainly share the author's hope that there are some "silver linings" on the horizon for this special corner of the world.

I just finished reading Martin Fletcher's book about his travels around Northern Ireland. I'm so sorry my wife and I didn't know about this book before we visited Ulster in September 2002. The author correctly goes out of his way to let the reader know that there's more to Northern Ireland than bombings, religious strife, and high unemployment. A trip to the British province is an educational experience -- a wild and complex history, beautiful countryside, and warm people who welcome visitors. It's not surprising that Travel Weekly magazine, "The Travel Industry's Leading Newspaper" (as it calls itself) highlights Belfast in its 10FEB03 article, "The Next Big Thing -- Up and Coming Destinations." Silver Linings opened my eyes to the opinion that the USA probably wouldn't be what it is today were it not for its links to Ulster. If you read this book and like it, you'd probably enjoy reading one of the "Incidents of Travel" books written by John Lloyd Stephens about his travels throughout Mesoamerica and the Middle East during the 1800s.

This book was incredibly insightful and detailed, almost to the point that I couldn't wade through it. However, once I sort of "got over the hump" after the first chapter or so, I became completely enthralled. The author weaves interesting facts with sobering history and relatable characters. I finished this book on the plane into Belfast and am so glad I did. I found myself quoting facts to my friends who lived in Northern Ireland, and we used the book as a reference for history of the area. Not only that, we remembered to look up a couple of locations he suggested as we were out and about. Definitely worth it if you live in the UK or the republic, and a good tome to peruse before visiting.

Call me picky for marking down an outstanding book like "Silver Linings" for two omissions that probably aren't even in the author's control, but so be it. A combination between a travel guide and a collection of memories, this book badly needs at least one more detailed map of Northern Ireland than the small ones provided at the start of each chapter. Fletcher makes the reader truly wish to visit many of the sites he describes, but one could never find them with the maps provided. Second,

a few pictures, even black and white, would add immensely to the impact of Fletcher's words. That said, this is a terrifically entertaining and informative book that I'd recommend, "Go you out and purchase it!"

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