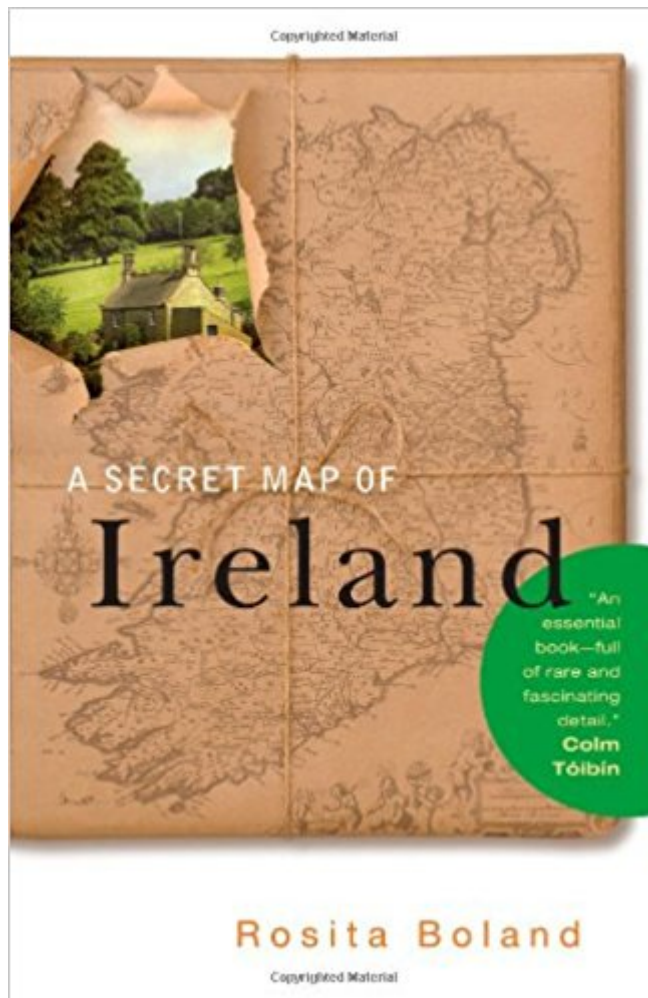


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A Secret Map Of Ireland



Synopsis

When the award-winning Irish Times journalist Rosita Boland was a schoolgirl she had? in common with all Irish children? a map of Ireland. Iconic in its pinks, greens and yellows, the Educational Company map was a staple of the Irish schoolhouse. As the author matured and changed, so did the unique country she grew to know first-hand. With deep affection and curiosity, she followed her very own map from those by-gone schooldays to take the reader on a tour of Ireland, a tour like no other. In 32 colorful essays, Rosita visits each of the counties on the island and brings back tales so unusual that they could only be of Ireland. This is not your ordinary travel guide! From the monkey who crash-landed an American B-17 en route from Marrakesh to the French mausoleum in Monivea; from Europe's most westerly , and windiest weather station to the Tayto factory in Armagh, this delightful book promises a most unusual, and engaging, exploration of a mad and marvelous land.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“An essential book - full of rare and fascinating detail.” -Colm Tóibín

Rosita Boland is a journalist with the Irish Times. She lives in Dublin.

I loved this book! I just returned from a trip to Ireland, and this was a wonderful reminder of my travels. The book makes me want to go back and explore some of these places! I was also amazed to find a place I had visited there 20 years ago. This is a great look at the less-travelled side of Ireland.

My wife and I are leaving shortly for a five week trip to Ireland. This will be our first Ireland trip and, most probably, the only such trip we will be able to make there. We have purchased a number of travel guides and have found most of them informative and of value in planning our trip. However, the book "A Secret Map of Ireland" is the only book that puts life into our trip planning experience and we strongly recommend reading it to anyone who wants to get some insight into the country and people they are going to visit! Dwight Hartman

I've been fantasizing about going to Ireland non-stop for the past two years. I bought my loved ones gifts made in Ireland for Christmas this year. All was going well till I read this part of the book last night, "Ireland is a country that is sentimentalized by virtually everyone except those who actually live in it". At that moment my heart stopped, the blood ran out of my face and time stood still. Oh my god I thought, what a twit I am! She followed up that sentence by telling us what litter bugs the Irish are and an instance of a man burning his rubbish at one of the "beauty areas" as she called it. He neglected to burn everything and they found his name and address and he was fined. She said they litter because they don't realize they live in such beauty. I can't blame her for this fact and I understand what she's saying maybe more than a lot of folks. I lived in a place like that for 20 years. It's called Hawaii. The locals there are such slobs. They throw trash everywhere. I've seen many waterfalls spoiled by appliances being thrown into the pools which make them hazardous to swim and jump in. Even the areas with heiaus (temples) are littered with appliances and junk cars and bags of trash, and beer bottles and cans. The fishing spots are nasty too with empty squid boxes, Kool cigarette packs and butts, Coors Silver Bullet cans, fishing gear packages and food wrappers. Animals that die are thrown on the side of dirt roads. There are also people there that eat black dogs and you'll find the hides just tossed here and there. I can't tell you how many I've stumbled upon. It's sad and horrifying. The locals make a big stink about respecting the aina (land) and they're the biggest offenders. Sounds like Hawaii and Ireland are very much the same. I laid awake in bed for a long time wondering if should forget about going to Ireland. I thank Rosita Bowland for giving me a reality check. We need to hear these kinds of things. I have a tower of books about the Emerald Isle and I've been Googling it daily and that one paragraph in the beginning of her book gave me more insight into the real Ireland than anything I've read in the past two years. Do I still want to go to Ireland? Yes!!! She gave me a priceless understanding that will enrich my trip and help me relate better to the locals. Because of Rosita Bowland I won't end up disenchanted and disappointed when I visit as I certainly would have been had I not read her book.

Great product

Fun approach to a country with many diverse attractions. I felt like I was seeing it with a friend who had an insider's perspective. Rather informal in a way that appealed to me. Having my Eyewitness travel guide by my side helped me get my bearings. Glad I bought it as I may find it handy to refer to when I'm there.

A longtime journalist for the Irish Times, Boland's narratives move along generally with efficiency, detail, and organization. Her style, honed at the newspaper, tends more towards that of the personal feature granted by her employer than that of her poetry. The imagery's less potent and the facts more present than I expected. The best of these short chapters, one for a sight seen in each of the thirty-two counties, reveal Boland's ability to employ synecdoche-- in which a quirky or overlooked part stands for the whole nation. For instance, the border in the Armagh visit to the Tayto factory at Tandragee Castle reveals a great detail, in impressively subtle observation and comparison, about the cultural differences on each side of the frontier. Similarly, the Fermanagh example of the border hamlets at Pettigo-Tullyhommon & Belcoo/Blacklion show the daily idiosyncracies of phone service, postal delivery, and commercial trade across a sturdy if nearly invisible divide. Another rift she enters in the Meath visit to the Columban missionary fathers' nearly empty but once filled former seminary and the graying and diminishing ranks of the Trappists at Waterford's Mount Melleray opens up deftly the fading echo of retreating Catholicism in an era of declining vocations and secularized lifestyles. At Malin Head in Donegal, I liked her treatment of how visibility for weather forecasting still depends in a technological era on a human observer looking at the sky and checking gauges on the hour no matter what. This attention for the telling detail is Boland at her best. When she gets to the Sligo "fairy theme park" run by one "Melody, Baroness of Leyne, Ph.D.," all Boland needs to place the dreadful place in its kitschy niche is a deadpan recital of its plastic (or "resin") figurines. The edge the author reveals in her portrayal, however, avoids cruelty and she manages out of a depressing sight to conjure up the appeal of how it's not what we see that makes it inspiring or tawdry, it's what we do with the sights we see that manages to transcend the banal. A tricky point, and this moment, perhaps due to its depth of meaning, makes for me the highlight of this collection. Yet, many other attractions she locates do not, in her telling, rise above the dutiful depiction of accumulated statistics or information. Staying three days on "Great" Skellig Michael, she transmits little of the gales and the sheer drops and the exhilarating vertigo that must be part of

every lucky visitor's memory. How she got there by navigating Irish bureaucracy takes up much of her account; the stay's anticlimactic. Dan Donnelly's long arm in Kildare, carols sung in Laois, a cluttered Temple of Isis in Carlow, or a Raggedy Bush in Kilkenny are examples of the topics she discusses, but while all of these are admittedly interesting, they do not leap off the page or remain long in the memory. A long recital of the intriguing journey to Africa's Mountains of the Moon by Surgeon Major Thomas Heazle Parke 1887-89 appears better suited to a non-Irish account. A monkey's afterlife fame in Cork, a cabinet of curiosities in Tyrone, or Derry's immense Lough Neagh all intermittently engage you, but the energy dissipates. I suppose the sad fate of the Millennium Tree that Boland had been issued in Wicklow may prove a metaphor for this gathering of attempts at surprising one's self with the hidden but accessible corners of one's own native land. The destination may disappoint or remain stubbornly elusive, but the sense of wonder and mystery still pulls Boland, and you, along to the next stop.

If you read the Irish Times regularly Rosita Borland is one of its writers who seems to have a relatively free rein to do the mildly eccentric, and as such is often enjoyable. However, this book tells you more about Rosita Borland and her life, what's in her display cabinet, what her family members have or have - than Ireland. I bought it because I am in a relationship with an Irishman and wanted to know more about the country ahead of my first visit, I gamely trudged through the pages, desperate for glimpses of Ireland. They were there, but not enough, Ms Borland billowed through the pages. Too self indulgent for my taste.

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