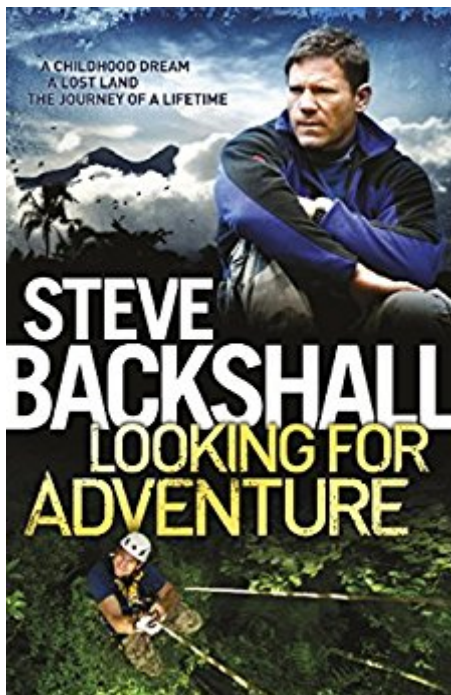


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Looking For Adventure



Synopsis

A Childhood Dream. A Lost Land. The Journey of a Lifetime. How do you become an explorer? It's a question every child has asked. And, Steve Backshall was no different. But after a rainy-day visit to an exhibition of artefacts from Papua New Guinea, it was a question that began to obsess the seven-year old Backshall. Due to this childhood interest, the vast, untamed wildness of Papua New Guinea was where Backshall forged his unlikely path. From crushing lows of early failures to the extraordinary highs of the BBC's Lost Land of the Volcano expedition, it was this dark island which gave Backshall his opportunity. Full of incredible wildlife, extraordinary wilderness, jungles, cannibals, pitfalls, triumph, danger and excitement, Looking for Adventure is the irresistible, inspiring story of a little boy who let his heart rule his head.

Book Information

File Size: 11181 KB

Print Length: 372 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0857820117

Publisher: Swordfish (August 18, 2011)

Publication Date: August 18, 2011

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0857820117

ISBN-13: 978-0857820112

ASIN: B005FVNKT2

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #2,108,434 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #75

inÂ Books > Travel > Australia & South Pacific > Papua New Guinea #4625 inÂ Kindle Store >

Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Travel Writing #11274 inÂ Books > Reference > Writing,

Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Travel

Customer Reviews

anything done by Steve Backshall has 100 percent commitment from this intrepid adventurer and conservationist. worth every cent in postage and purchase price

I recommend this book for every one who loves adventure. The book is well written, and I hope you will enjoy reading it.

In *Looking for Adventure*, British adventurer and TV presenter Steve Backshall relates his tales of travel on the island of Papua New Guinea, first in 1997 as a travel writer, then in 2007 as part of a documentary-making team for the BBC. Tales of adventure and adversity are interspersed with anecdotes from Backshall's early life, natural history facts and his thoughts on various subjects. Sounds dry, doesn't it? It's not. Backshall, a borderline misanthrope who fancies he would rather have been born in the nineteenth century, was haunted by PNG since childhood and desperate to travel there. He endured an awful lot on the journey, and his emotion as his fortunes wax and wane against the backdrop of the huge, dangerous island is well conveyed. Nothing went as he'd hoped on that first trip, and he left PNG feeling like a failure. So his chance to succeed, in his own eyes, the second time round was essential to him. Travelling with him to that achievement, which is sometimes under threat from external forces and sometimes from his own stupidity, is well worth the read. It's not all danger and worry, though. If you've watched the wonderful *Deadly 60 - Deadly Top 10 - Series 1* [Region 2 DVD] you'll be aware of Backshall's enthusiasm for the natural world, and it shines through in this book. *Looking for Adventure* is very readable, but it needed one more round with the editor to iron out a few problems. Backshall at times wanders between past and present tense for reasons that aren't clear, some information is repeated across chapters, and sometimes the end of a story isn't quite filled out. Though maps and colour photos convey something of the landscape and people, for myself, I would have preferred more precise details within the text - dates, distances, names and numbers - so I could better picture what was happening. I have no doubt Backshall knows his natural history, but some of his pronouncements on other subjects I would take with a pinch of salt. Read this if you're interested in the challenges and dangers of jungle exploration, in PNG, in the process of making natural history documentaries, or in the struggle to fulfil a heartfelt ambition in the face of immense obstacles. Read it if you're a fan of Backshall's TV work and want to learn more about him. Be warned, though, this isn't a book for children, even if they're fans of Steve. Violence and plenty of adult themes feature here - not because of Backshall himself, but purely as a by-product of the land he's travelling in. I do have one caveat, though. I really did enjoy *Looking for Adventure*, but I did find myself irritated at points.

Backshall's opinions on a number of subjects struck me as facile, even smug, with a number of unresolved contradictions. To take one example, Backshall travels looking for "genuine cultures unsullied by the demons of Western civilisation" and rails against development in PNG. He says of the people of PNG, "They own little or nothing, but are genuinely happier than most people I know back in the Western world". But how does he know that? Especially when a significant chunk of his book is spent describing the ignorance, poverty, malnutrition, disease, squalor, corruption and brutal violence rife there? And if people choose to put something ahead of happiness? More education and development could alleviate the problems facing PNG's people and provide money and incentive for that better environmental protection Backshall wants to see. Development and social change in the Western world gave him choices, choices that putative nineteenth-century version of himself would likely never have had. The diseased and malnourished old Korowai man, the hundreds who starved to death around Wamena, the woman he saw murdered, the children taken as slaves after their parents were hacked to death - they had none. It's not about whether I agree with Backshall. It's about presenting the best piece of writing that you can because you've fully explored your ideas in the light of evidence and other points of view and attempted to resolve their contradictions. If Backshall writes another book about his adventures - and I really hope he does - this is something I'd like to see him do.

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