

Wild Britain: A Traveller's Guide, Wild Guides Series**Douglas Botting**

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While most people tend to think of Britain as urban and developed, the author, a well-traveled British native, said the toughest part about writing a guidebook featuring nature was deciding what to leave out.

In covering England, Scotland and Wales, Botting starts in the south (England's West Country) and finishes in the north (the Shetland Islands of Scotland) with detailed descriptions of moors, fens, heaths, islands, woods and other types of natural bounty. His charming descriptions of his childhood haunts and wartime escapades add to the delightful descriptions.

Each chapter takes on a different region, for example Northwest, and then is further divided into smaller areas such as the Lake District. The beginning of each chapter features an overview, with the author's recollections, a detailed map and listings on Getting There, Where to Stay, Activities and Further Information. The smaller area descriptions are measured on a three-eagle scale, with three eagles meaning the most "wild" or "unspoiled" areas. After the description of each area is a listing including Before You Go, which includes maps to get and websites to peruse and more detail on Getting There and Where to Stay within the specific region. There are schedules and warnings of closures.

The detail and information in this the book is substantial. It's Botting's own charm, however, that makes this book shine above other guides. His youth in Yorkshire is recollected; war stories are recounted; and comparisons to *The Wind in the Willows* and stories from his own trips give each region, each path, each beach a personal feeling. He finds the coast near gritty Liverpool enchanting, thanks to the plethora of birds that choose to live there. With gorgeous color photos, pen-and-ink animal and plant illustrations and an exhaustive index, planning a trip through "wild" England, Scotland and Wales may actually be as much fun as the trip itself.

JODEE TAYLOR (January / February 2000)

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