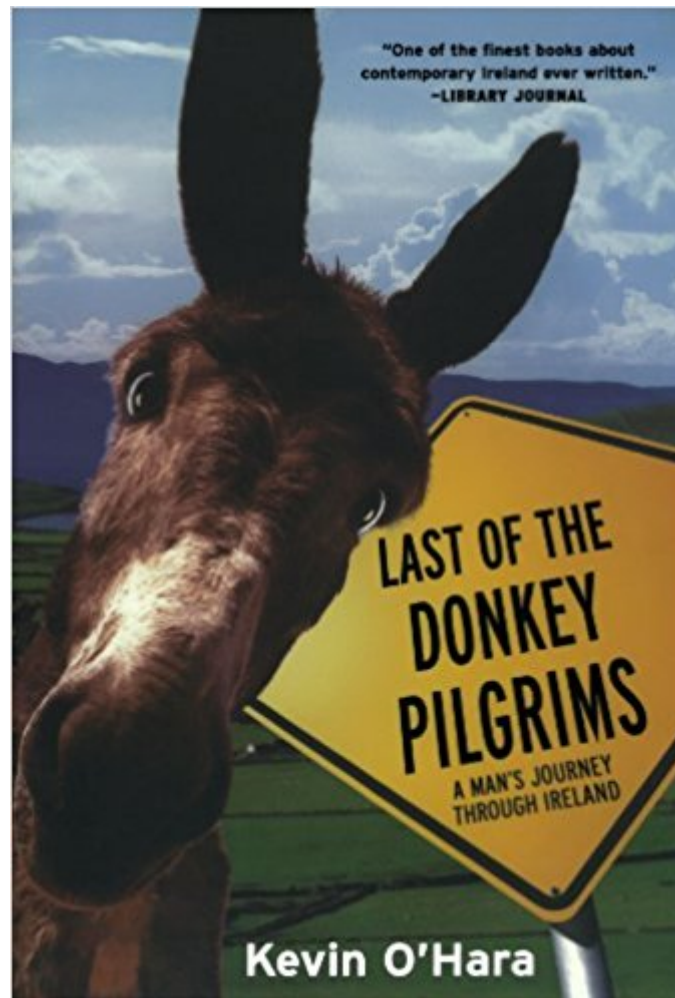


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Last Of The Donkey Pilgrims: A Man's Journey Through Ireland



Synopsis

Kevin O'Hara's journey of self-discovery begins as a mad lark: who in their right mind would try to circle the entire coastline of Ireland on foot—and with a donkey and cart no less? But Kevin had promised his homesick Irish mother that he would explore the whole of the Old Country and bring back the sights and the stories to their home in Massachusetts. Determined to reach his grandmother's village by Christmas Eve, Kevin and his stubborn but endearing donkey, Missie, set off on 1800-mile trek along the entire jagged coast of a divided Ireland. Their rollicking adventure takes them over mountains and dales, through smoky cities and sleepy villages, and into the farmhouses and hearts of Ireland's greatest resource—its people. Along the way, Kevin would meet incredible characters, experience Ireland in all of its glory, and explore not only his Irish past, but find his future self. One of the finest books about contemporary Ireland ever written...In a style evocative of Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, O'Hara writes memorably of his most unusual way of touring his ancestral home of Ireland. —Library Journal

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Customer Reviews

One of the finest books about contemporary Ireland ever written...In a style evocative of Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, O'Hara writes memorably of his most unusual way of touring his ancestral home of Ireland. —Library Journal A witty, whimsical walk around an Ireland before the 'Celtic Tiger' of the European Union found its economic legs, before the roads were improved, and before battalions of Audis and Mercedes replaced the donkey carts, farmers, and unhurried pedestrians of another day. —Boston Globe A delightful book to be enjoyed by everyone on a

life pilgrimage. • Catholic Library World • Kevin O'Hara is neither a madman nor a saint; he is an original. The story he tells will be an inspiration to any person who has ever tried to patch a broken life. • Morgan Llywelyn • Skillful piece of travel-writing; like the Irish fog, it's both glowing and lightly pushed by an unacknowledged melancholy. • Kirkus Reviews

Kevin O'Hara has spent the last twenty years working as a psychiatric nurse at the Berkshire Medical Center. He lives in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Kevin O'Hara who lived in the U.S. had trouble forgetting the time he spent in Vietnam. In 1979, the year he turned 30 years old, he went to his grandmother's home in Ireland. He planned to stay one year and he hoped to have an adventure that would help him forget the worst of the mental pain of being in Vietnam. In a local Irish pub he came up with the idea of taking six months to travel the perimeter of Ireland in a donkey cart. A trip of about 1,700 miles. With expert help Kevin purchased a cart and a donkey and with less than 100 pounds in his pocket he and Missy started their journey. Kevin was a very kind soul and could not bear the thought of beating his donkey to keep the cart moving at an acceptable speed. So, he decided he would make the trip walking next to his donkey and he would never hit her again. He met many generous Irish people who fed him and let him stay on their property no matter how little they had. There were many evenings spent in pubs and a lot of evenings entertaining the families who fed and boarded him with stories of his travels which Kevin felt helped him earn his keep. When Kevin weighed himself at the end of his journey he was surprised to find that he had only lost a few pounds. Despite feeling hungry much of the time along the way he must have been fed plenty to keep his weight up. (And plenty to drink too.) This book was published in 2005 which was 26 years after Mr. O'Hara's journey. It's still a very interesting story and hasn't suffered from the 38 year gap between the journey and my reading it. I think the writing was excellent. What I didn't like was the epilogue supposedly written by the donkey mostly about the donkey. I would have much rather had an epilogue that also included Kevin and how he fared back in the United States after his trip. Hopefully, better than Missy. I hope he has had a good life and that he has kept his wonderful sense of humor and generous spirit. I want to be clear that this book is not always a page turner. It has monotonous moments, but overall it is very entertaining.

I loved this book! It's a heartwarming and wonderfully told account of Kevin O'Hara's 1979 walk around Ireland with an unlikely companion, a donkey named

Missie. Kevin and Missie are on a quest to circle the entire Irish coastline, some 1800 miles, but their journey is so much more than just the ambitious walk. Self-discovery and true grit are hallmarks of Kevin's story, as are the warmth, wisdom and generosity of the Irish people. You will smile (maybe cry a little too) as you read Kevin's rich character profiles of the people he meets, and you will take great pleasure in his gorgeous descriptions of the scenery, the pub and home life, some difficult and dangerous treks up and down mountain passes, and a fair number of long days of inclement weather and/or other physical, mental and financial obstacles to his ultimate success. Kevin and Missie walked right through northern Ireland at a particularly tense time during the Troubles. The timing was shortly after the IRA attacked and killed Lord Mountbatten while he was on vacation in County Sligo, and I could feel Kevin's trepidation. His account of those days on his journey was both moving and unnerving. I'll sum up my thoughts this way: if you already know and love Ireland, you'll be planning your next trip after reading this book (I'm doing just that). If you haven't yet had the pleasure of getting to know Ireland, you will fall in love for sure!

This is a much better book than I expected. Reading the preview I thought this would be a comic tale of a daft "Yank" who got it in his head that it would be a good idea to see Ireland by donkey. To some extent it is that, but there is more to it. It's a story of a man and his donkey - - really. We get involved in plight of Kevin and Missy as they make their trek around the perimeter of the Island. Apparently, among the many things that donkeys hate to do, is travel, that is, be away from a home. In the end this may be a greater feat for the animal, than even the man who struggled to care for her. They meet many people, see many things, and accomplish much. With the help of generous and humane individuals, Kevin and Missy surmount physical, medical, and emotional obstacles, including a very tense situation in Northern Ireland at the height of "The Troubles". While being very entertaining, Kevin O'Hara gives us a unique insight into the land, the people and the culture of Ireland. A wonderful read on many levels.

Ireland Revisited "Last of the Donkey Pilgrims" is one of the most entertaining books I have ever read. I have been to Ireland twice. The first trip we did the southern loop and the second trip was Northern Ireland the west coast down to Galway. We traveled many of the byways and saw many of sights that Kevin and Missie trek through. It was great way to revisit the memories of our trips. If you haven't been to Ireland the book is a great way to find out about places you may want to visit. One last note the book took a long time getting to print and is very well written.

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