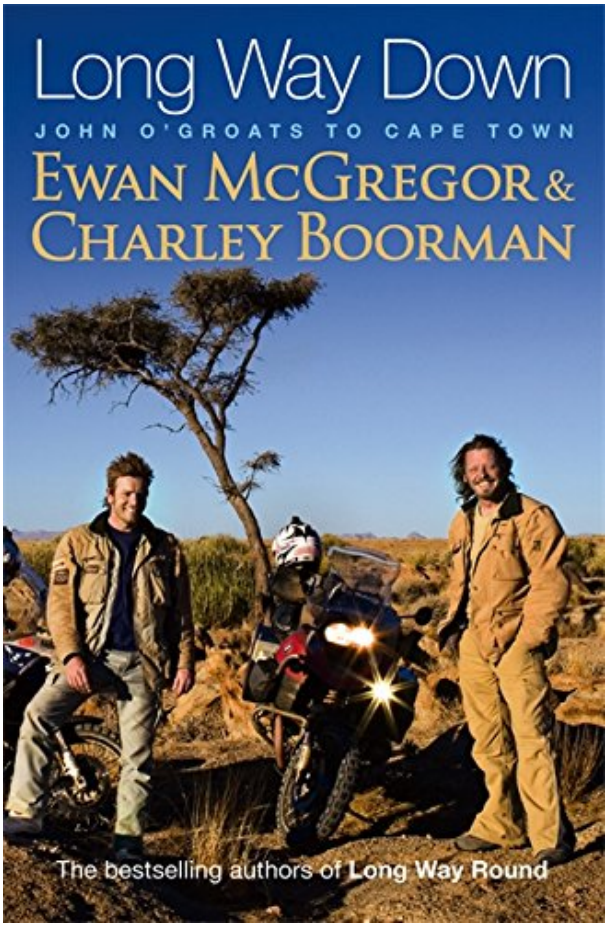
LONG WAY DOWN BY CHARLEY BOORMAN' 'EWAN MCGREGOR



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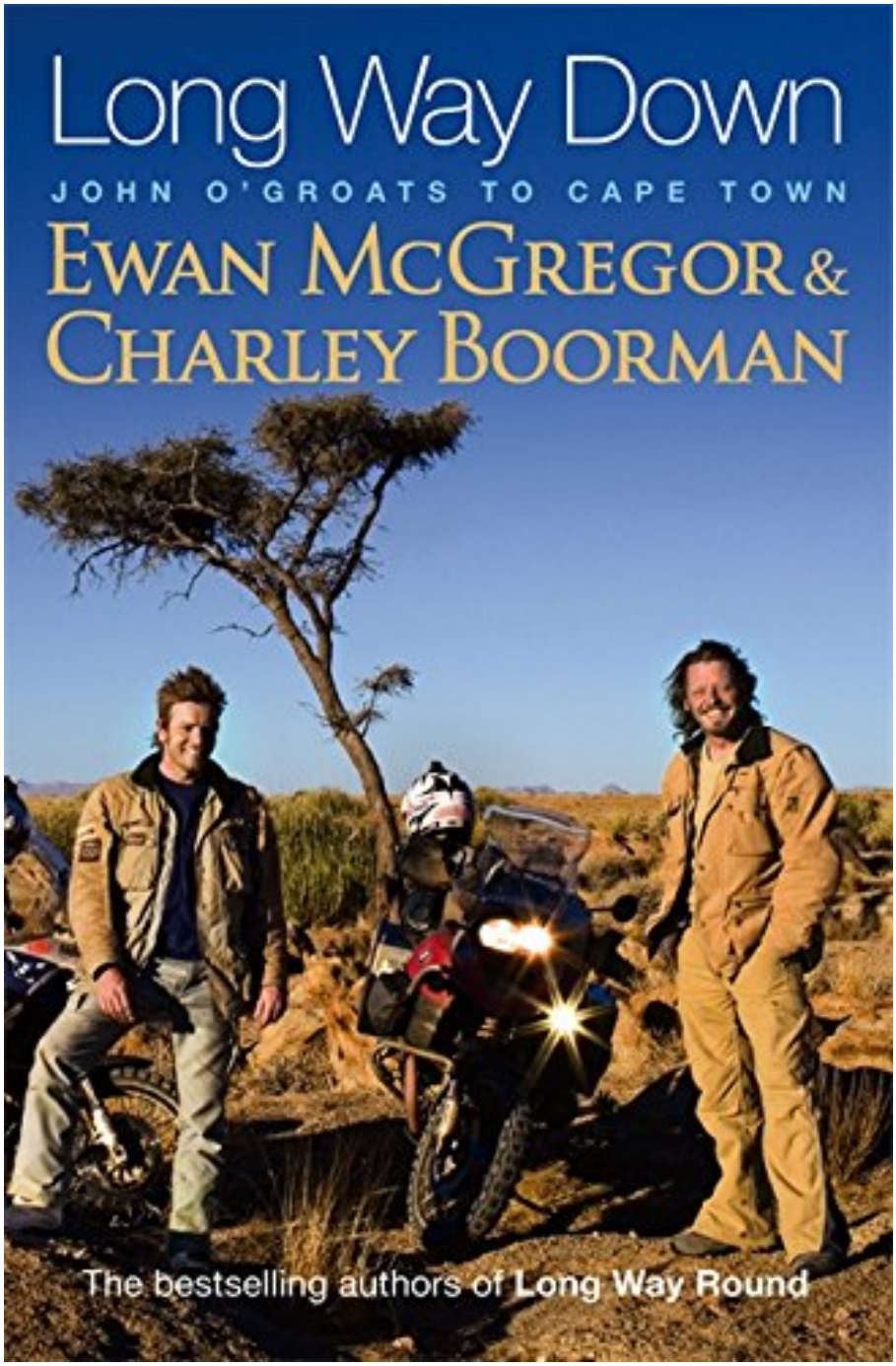

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Review
'A great book' BELLA

About the Author
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'We'd like to follow the Nile,' Ewan added. 'It's one of those journeys, you know; one of the great trips of the world.'

She nodded. 'Sudan is pretty unstable and so are parts of Ethiopia. You'll need to be up on your paperwork.'

I rolled my eyes. 'Jesus, paperwork. The Ukraine, Ewan. Remember?'

'You mean when we waited nine hours to get in - how could I possibly forget?'

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'Good,' the instructor said, 'because I'm going to walk on it.'

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After their fantastic motorcycle trip around the world in 2004, bike fanatics and best friends Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman couldn’t shake the travel bug. The result was a 15,000-mile adventure throughout the entirety of the African continent on the backs of their trusty BMW motorcycles. Captured here in more than 100 exclusive images are the duo’s most memorable experiences, from managing some of the toughest terrain in the world to meeting a bevy of friendly people and encountering astounding natural beauty. With images taken by Ewan and Charley themselves as well as by internationally renowned photographer Julian Broad, this beautifully illustrated edition vividly documents a trip of a lifetime.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 352 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.
Not great literature, but an enjoyable ride nonetheless
By Luke T. Evans
I've enjoyed both of the "Long Way" books. They're an enjoyable read even if they aren't great literature or

exceptional travel writing. Ewan and Charley seem like two great guys and their humanity and down-to-earth natures really show in these stories. Some of the reviews here have been negative, with many of them criticizing the trip's supposed lack of purity in that Ewan and Charley had a support team and a few sponsors. Whatever. If you ask me, the support team was pretty thin, and it's clear that many times they were just winging it and improvising as they went along. This was emphatically not a Camel Trophy-type extraveganza, with flocks of accompanying helicopters, spare vehicles, and squads of mechanics standing by with truckloads of spare parts, and it certainly didn't appear to be a luxury trip by any stretch. Call it a compromise between a full-on expedition (complete with porters and truckloads of "essential equipment") and a threadbare by-the-seat-of-our-pants penniless slog taking many months or even years. Sure, in a perfect world you'd take two years to undergo such a journey, and thus provide yourself with plenty of time to see everything and get to know the people and cultures in great detail. But let's face it, 99.99 percent of us will never be able to pull that off, either due to: 1) family/career obligations; 2) a lack of time; 3) a lack of money; 4) a lack of balls; or 5) all of the above. That's just the way it is. But these guys went out and did it, however imperfectly. That's just fine in my book. Jolly good, blokes!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
A well received sequel!
By Kevin J. Brigandi
In Long Way Round, Charlie and Ewan set the stage for two best friends and their motorcycle journeys across the globe. You get to know the cast and crew in a personal way and see the journey through the eyes of avid adventure motorcyclists. In Long Way Down, they've ditched the whiney trip doctor from the first trip and replaced him with a doctor who better fits the spirit of the team. This film feels more personal to the viewer. Charlie and Ewan are more emotional this time around and the scenery and imagery is amazing. The stories of the journey are heartfelt and you really get a different perspective of how people live with each other and their environment throughout several different countries in Africa. The language is colorful at times for a younger audience (Charlie uses the F word extensively) but the story and journey are worth it. If you are not a motorcyclist, you will probably still enjoy the movie. If you are a motorcyclist, you'll be planning your next trip!

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.
Another great journey.
By Nathaniel J. Kuhn
Due to scheduling complications with the ferry for the first 1/3rd of the trip, Long Way Down (LWD) had a rushed and more stressful feel to it in comparison to Long Way Round. This led to a slightly less enjoyable experience for the reader/viewer in my opinion.

Nevertheless, this voyage is still Ewan and Charley at their best. These guys enjoy motorcycling and traveling on them so much that they make the best out of any situation.

The way they document the trip is so honest, and really opens you up to their personalities - something you rarely get to see with famous people. It's so honest and humble, yet funny and appropriately opinionated at the same time. The quality of the book - the editing, the photos and the writing are superb in their natural style.

The fact that they take time to do charity work as well as show the world things that most choose to ignore is wonderful. Plus, like the LWR trip - it's an incredible way to show the beauty of our world and politeness of so many of the people in it.

The books and movies are true magic on film - whether or not you like motorcycles or not (i am obsessed), it is nearly impossible to not fall in love with these two guys and their journey of a lifetime.

See all 54 customer reviews...

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But it did. A late-night conversation became a dream, the dream became an adventure and that adventure proved to be a pivotal point in my life.

I grew up in the movie business, but I'm dyslexic...and I mean badly: if it hadn't been for my dad taking a year out to teach me to read, life could've been very hard. Even so, reading for acting parts could be difficult sometimes. Historically I'd enjoyed success in movies like The Emerald Forest, but after Long Way Round the direction of my life altered completely. I found myself in places like the pit lane of Moto GP circuits with heroes like Kenny Roberts grabbing my arm and telling me how much he'd enjoyed watching our journey.

I was no longer just John Boorman's son - in fact my dad rang me up the other day to tell me he'd introduced himself to someone and they'd said, 'Oh, Charley Boorman's dad'.

My career was now in motorcycling - albeit not in a conventional way - and the success of Long Way Round enabled me to live another dream. Ever since I can remember I'd always wanted to race bikes, so together with Russ Malkin, a very good friend and producer/director of Long Way Round, I entered the world's most dangerous race: the 2006 Dakar rally - five days in January where I rode ridiculous distances at ridiculous speeds before an innocuous crash tipped me off and I broke both my hands. (I never made it to the sand dunes and I've unfinished business there.) That dream was over for now, but another was just beginning.

Ewan flew in for the end of the Dakar to congratulate us all (my fellow teammate Simon Pavey had made it all the way to the finishing line). He was joined by film maker David Alexanian, the fourth member of the team that created Long Way Round. There we were in Dakar - all together again. And there in the scorching sun we confirmed what we had first mapped out over a year before in Bulwer Street. The adventure was on again - John O'Groats to Cape Town: we would ride the Long Way Down.

Once my hands were healed, the first thing Ewan and I did was return to the Royal Geographical Society in London, the place where we'd mapped out the first trip. Our bikes parked outside, I took my helmet off. The old red brick building seemed very familiar.

'So here we are again, Ewan. What do we say to them this time?'

He laughed. 'How about: Hi, remember us? We're back for more.'

Inside I quickly recalled how solemn the place felt; the arched windows, blue carpets and the magnificent ancient maps that decked the walls. One in particular dated from 1920 and at the bottom it was engraved with images of the old continent, names and places going back to colonial days when just about every European country fought for a share of the spoils. Ewan pointed to a picture of a guy in a pith helmet in a pretty compromising position with a tribesman. 'Hey, Charley,' he said. 'Here's how you made friends with the natives back then. See, you grabbed a man by his willy.'

In the journey-planning office we met the same assistant we'd spoken to before and she had yet more large-scale maps spread on a mahogany table.

'Have you decided on a route?' she asked us.

I shook my head. 'Nothing definite yet, but we're going to ride down through Europe, I think, probably cross from Sicily.'

'We'd like to follow the Nile,' Ewan added. 'It's one of those journeys, you know; one of the great trips of the world.'

She nodded. 'Sudan is pretty unstable and so are parts of Ethiopia. You'll need to be up on your paperwork.'

I rolled my eyes. 'Jesus, paperwork. The Ukraine, Ewan. Remember?'

'You mean when we waited nine hours to get in - how could I possibly forget?'

'Ethiopia is absolutely beautiful though,' the assistant went on, 'and despite the problems they're really trying to build up tourism. Sudan is full of open spaces, the Africa of the movies, if you like.' She smiled then, a little warily. 'There are security issues, however.'

I cast a glance at Ewan. She was right, as we knew only too well. We'd only just started investigating the route and already knew we'd need armed guards to get us through places like northern Kenya. We were thinking about going into the Democratic Republic of Congo, and weren't sure whether we'd have to go through Zimbabwe. This was going to be a very different journey from Long Way Round, and I think we were only just beginning to realise how different.

Having reacquainted ourselves with the Royal Geographical Society we headed for the wilds of Devon and a weekend's survival course. The weather was shit, a cold, drizzling rain, and to make things even more miserable, Ewan had his tent up before me. He was crowing about it. I mean, he never gets his tent up before me. It was galling. There was some consolation however: he'd put it up at the bottom of a hill and it was raining, which meant there was every chance he'd have a river running through it before long.

After that, we got lost in the 'wild wood' whilst hunting for strategically placed survival rations, and then we had to build shelters from fallen branches and bits of foliage.

Not that we're competitive or anything, but my A-frame and ridge was up, the sides constructed and I was already onto the roof whilst Ewan was still going on about a 'long ridge pole' and the 'bell end' being big enough. After making a wall of branch and fern, the last layer was leaves. Lying inside I could still see daylight and my feet stuck out, though I only discovered that when the instructor kicked them. He proceeded to tell us about a friend of his who went to sleep with his head sticking out of a similar shelter in Africa, only to be woken by a hyena ripping off his face. Our instructor liked telling those kinds of stories: he liked to tell them a lot.

He was complimentary about my shelter, however, testing thestructural quality by climbing right over it while I was lying inside. In his own words, it didn't budge an inch.

Ewan was arranging leaves and ferns and other bits and pieces; like a boy scout he was, having a whale of a time. 'Colour coding confuses your enemy,' I heard him mutter.

Finally he was finished, the branches covered with sprays of fern and leaf. He was stretched out inside and the instructor asked him if he felt confident that it was structurally sound.

Ewan replied that he did.

'Good,' the instructor said, 'because I'm going to walk on it.'

He'd barely shifted his weight when the 'bell end' Ewan had been so proud of collapsed, showering our Jedi Knight in broken branches.

For a moment there was silence. Then from the depths we heard him: 'Yeah, well, I think obviously there's room for improvement. But generally...' We could see his hands, gesticulating from under the crushed ridge. 'I was quite happy with its...you know, I liked the feel of it and it smelled really nice.'

On cue and not without a certain sense of ceremony, the rest of the shelter collapsed; a few moments later Ewan emerged: half a beard, his woollen hat askew.

'Shame,' he said. 'I put a lot of love into that.'

EWAN: What Charley didn't mention was that his A-frame was put together by the instructor. That's why it was so solid. I did mine myself. Not quite the same thing, is it?

The instructor really did like his tales of horror: hyenas eating people; elephants trampling our campsite; not to mention the machete-wielding madmen lurking outside every bar. Having said that, he also told us that despite our laid-back attitude, I was 'wily' and Charley was really 'industrious'.

From Devon, hyenas and elephants, it was Essex and a replica of the border between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Driving down a track in a 4x4 we had the feeling we were about to be ambushed. We were right - just as we were considering potential escape routes a mine exploded in front of the truck.

David Alexanian, who would be joining us on the real trip, was driving. He immediately started backing up. More flash bangs went off, mines, or grenades maybe, exploding behind us.

Now we heard the rattle of gunfire and a man appeared on our right. Heavily built, he approached the vehicle at a crouch, wearing camouflage and carrying an AK-47. We dived for the doors on the passenger side only to find another guy bellowing at us and brandishing not a gun, but a couple of vicious-looking axes.

We piled out of the vehicle. Hands in the air, we tried to talk to the gunmen - a whole gang of them now. We tried to explain about UNICEF, and what we were doing. They weren't listening or didn't understand: they didn't care. Before we knew it we were forced away from the vehicles, our captors demanding money, jackets, our watches.

We'd discussed such a situation with our instructors and they had advised us that in really dangerous areas, convoys of vehicles were put together under armed guard. Our trip was high profile ...

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