



Lands of Lost Borders: A Journey on the Silk Road

Kate Harris

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Lands of Lost Borders carried me up into a state of openness and excitement I haven't felt for years. It's a modern classic." —Pico Iyer

A brilliant, fierce writer makes her debut with this enthralling travelogue and memoir of her journey by bicycle along the Silk Road—an illuminating and thought-provoking fusion of *The Places in Between*, *Lab Girl*, and *Wild* that dares us to challenge the limits we place on ourselves and the natural world.

As a teenager, Kate Harris realized that the career she craved—to be an explorer, equal parts swashbuckler and metaphysician—had gone extinct. From what she could tell of the world from small-town Ontario, the likes of Marco Polo and Magellan had mapped the whole earth; there was nothing left to be discovered. Looking beyond this planet, she decided to become a scientist and go to Mars.

In between studying at Oxford and MIT, Harris set off by bicycle down the fabled Silk Road with her childhood friend Mel. Pedaling mile upon mile in some of the remotest places on earth, she realized that an explorer, in any day and age, is the kind of person who refuses to live between the lines. Forget charting maps, naming peaks: what she yearned for was the feeling of soaring completely out of bounds. The farther she traveled, the closer she came to a world as wild as she felt within.

Lands of Lost Borders is the chronicle of Harris's odyssey and an exploration of the importance of breaking the boundaries we set ourselves; an examination of the stories borders tell, and the restrictions they place on nature and humanity; and a meditation on the existential need to explore—the essential longing to discover what in the universe we are doing here.

Like Rebecca Solnit and Pico Iyer, Kate Harris offers a travel account at once exuberant and reflective, wry and rapturous. *Lands of Lost Borders* explores the nature of limits and the wildness of the self that can never fully be mapped. Weaving adventure and philosophy with the history of science and exploration, *Lands of Lost Borders* celebrates our connection as humans to the natural world, and ultimately to each other—a belonging that transcends any fences or stories that may divide us.

Lands of Lost Borders: A Journey on the Silk Road Details

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From Reader Review Lands of Lost Borders: A Journey on the Silk Road for online ebook

AnnLouise says

Loved this book and would highly recommend; adventure, comedy and educational all wrapped up in one delightful read.

Ron S says

From small town Ontario, Kate Harris went on to study at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, and earned science degrees from UNC and MIT. The passion driving her was space exploration but once she ended up in a lab she took off to explore the Silk Road by bicycle and reinvented herself as a nature and travel writer. Her writing style, powers of observation and academic background, along with her thirst for exploration, are such that this memoir deserves to sit with authors like Rory Stewart, Pico Iyor and the sort of classics that Harris includes in her select bibliography. And beyond its considerable entertainment value for the armchair traveler, it should be noted that this book very much does what the best of the genre does: it makes you want to get outside and explore.

Ann says

Such an interesting, funny, informative book. I really enjoyed reading about the authors many journeys; such an exciting life!

Rick Meier says

“Kate Harris packs more exuberant spirit, intrepid charm, wit, poetry and beauty into her every paragraph than most of us can manage in a lifetime. Whether writing of Pony Club or remotest Tibet, her longing for Mars or her days at Oxford, she braids heart, mind and spirit with a wide-aware vitality that inspires wonder. Lands of Lost Borders carried me up into a state of openness and excitement I haven’t felt for years. It’s a modern classic.” —Pico Iyer

“Kate Harris arrives among us like a meteor—a hurtling intelligence, inquiring into the nature of political borders and the meaning of crossing over. The honesty behind her self-doubt, her championing of simple human friendship, and her sheer determination to explore what she does not know, compel you to travel happily alongside her in Lands of Lost Borders.” —Barry Lopez

“This is a hymn to the pure love of travel: a brave and astonishing journey.” —Colin Thubron

Will Byrnes says

The end of the road was always just out of sight. Cracked asphalt deepened into night beyond the reach of our headlamps, the thin beams swallowed by the blackness that receded before us no matter how fast we biked. Light was a kind of pavement thrown down in front of our wheels, and the road went on and on. If you ever reach the end, I remember thinking, I'll fly off the rim of the world. I pedaled harder.

Some lights shine brighter. The sky is full of stars, all with their distinct glow, color, and twinkle. But there can be no denying that, as breathtaking as are all the lights we can see after sunset, some call your attention at least a bit more. There are some on which you fixate. Kate Harris is one of *those*. She burns radiantly with obvious intellectual brilliance, which combines with a broad knowledge of science and humanities, glows with an impressive poetic gift for descriptive language, and is possessed of an incredible store of determination.

Lands of Lost Borders is Kate Harris's telling of a bike trip she took with her from-pre-teen-years bff Melissa Yule. Nothing much, really, just a leisurely jaunt across the Silk Road. Be home in time for dinner, dear. Ten months and ten thousand biking kilometers later, they were. Actually, the journey was broken up into two trips, (so, back in time for lunch?) and took over a year in total. This book focuses on the longer chunk of their ride.

I wanted to bike the Silk Road as an extension of my thesis at Oxford: to study how borders make and break what is wild in the world, from mountain ranges to people's minds, and how science, or more specifically wilderness conservation, might bridge those divides.

There is drive and then there is DRIVE!!! Most of us have it in modest quantities, sometimes in spikes, sometimes it barely registers. Mine has been of the spike sort. Finding, on occasion, a target, something that fills or I thought would fill a need, I found the wherewithal to make it happen. One, when I was still a teen, was tracking down a young lass I had seen at a frat party. Another was finding a study abroad program when I was tending to a broken heart, and was looking to heal somewhere far away, a third was plotting a cross country trip in an old Postal truck with a small group of peers. Not exactly riding the Silk Road, but maybe a small taste of the joys to be had when what has been dreamt of crosses the border into reality. Of course, once across that frontier, the new land in which one finds oneself may or may not be what one had imagined. But getting from here to there, setting and accomplishing a goal is a glorious experience. One that I expect all of us have had, to one degree or another. And hopefully one that we all nurture and renew at least somewhat through the course of our lives. There are some people, however, who set their sights slightly higher, sometimes beyond the bell curve, outside the box, off the beaten path.

Happiness is a red Hilleberg tent pitched among snowy mountains - Image from Harris's FB pix

The higher we climbed onto the Tibetan Plateau, the better I could breathe. I felt a strange lightness in my legs, an elation of sorts. Each revolution of the pedals took me closer to the stars than I'd ever propelled myself, not that I could see them by day, when the sky was blue and changeless but for a late-morning drift of clouds. The shadows they

cast dappled the slopes of mountains like the bottom of a clear stream, so that climbing the pass felt like swimming up towards the surface of something, a threshold or a change of state. Earth to sky, China to Tibet.

Harris writes of her early upbringing, hanging with her brothers, moving several times, particularly enjoying remote places. It did not take long for her to set her sights beyond the horizon, well, beyond the planet, actually. She had decided as a teen that she wanted to go to Mars, under the impression that all of her home planet had already been pretty much explored. She gained some notice from the Mars Society after she sent a letter to dozens of world leaders urging them to support a manned (womaned?) mission to the Red Planet. She went on a few Outward Bound adventures, and translated her particular gift for grant writing into third-party funding for projects of various sorts across the world. Toss in an early passion for biology as well.

Melissa Yule and Kate Harris - image from Explore-mag.com

Harris and Yule had been teaming up for sundry adventures since they were classmates as pre-teens. Science fair projects eventually gave way to other pursuits. They ran in the NYC marathon, *on a whim*, according to their bios in *CyclingSilk.com*. Who does that? These two, apparently. They also biked across the USA in 2005 and rode bikes across Tibet and Xinjiang in 2006. (the earlier piece of the Silk Road trip.) I guess they were just getting warmed up. In 2011, three Masters degrees between them later, Harris's from Oxford and MIT, they combined their endurance-athlete inclinations, a permanent desire for adventure, and an interest in protecting imperiled landscapes and ways of life to try to ride the entire Silk Road, or at least as much as was possible, beyond what they had already ridden. Some borders are real, though, defended by people with guns, and require one to set off in an unplanned direction. So, there were interludes that had them on trucks, buses, trains, and planes.

Longing on a large scale,” says novelist Don DeLillo, “is what makes history.” And longing on a smaller scale is what sends explorers into the unknown, where the first thing they do, typically, is draw a map.

There are passages throughout the book on nature conservation, and the irrelevance of political borders to biological realities, but I got the feeling that this was far secondary to the ecstasy of adventuring. It seemed to me that Kate's prodigious talent at writing grant applications, and no doubt Mel's as well, had secured necessary funding (a \$10K grant, plus considerable other support) for their odyssey, but reporting on conservation along the ride, while constituting the labor required to justify the grant, was something less than a passion. (*I was smitten with wildness, and only incidentally with science.*) Of course, it could be that Harris and Yule's reports back to their sponsors on the more scientific details of the pair's extended field trip was the channel for most of that material. *This book* focuses on the adventure of exploration and, remaining true to the title, a consideration of borders, literal and figurative.

From Harris's Facebook pages

The more I learned about the South Caucasus, with its closed borders and warring enclaves, the more the place seemed like a playground game of capture-the-flag turned vicious, all in the dubious name of nationalism. And yet political fortunes, while sometimes solid as brick, are finally only as strong as shared belief.

Harris provides spot-by-spot descriptions of the places through which they travel. She notes the sorts of things you would expect, the landscape, the architecture, the weather, the physical conditions of the area, the

traffic, the colors and textures, the friendliness (or not) of the locals and the pair's interactions with them. The history of the places they traverse comes in for a bit of a look. The origins of the word "Tibet," for example, a consideration of whether Marco Polo actually traveled as far as he claimed, and disappointment that his motivation was solely mercantile and not exploratory. One source of inspiration was an intrepid female explorer from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Fanny Bullock Workman, a mountaineer and explorer also fond of the bicycle.

this particular stretch of salt and wind, nearly uninhabited and widely dismissed as a wasteland, is one of the most contested territories in Asia. Tibetan by cultural heritage, Indian by treaty claim, and Chinese by possession, the Aksai Chin is caught in this territorial tug-of-war owing to its strategic location between nations. It all began when China furtively build a road across it in 1957, the very dirt track we were on, roping like a slow-burning fuse for more than 1,600 kilometres over the emptiness of the plateau. India only clued in to Highway 219's existence half a decade later, and their discovery detonated a war over the borderland.

image from NatureNeedsHalf.org

She fills us in on some of the logistical challenges involved, the hurdles to be jumped in getting the correct papers to cross from here to there, the difficulty of communicating when there is no common language, the struggle to find food, water and shelter, replacements for lost or broken pieces of this or that. One surprise was the absence of any reports of serious sexual predation, although she does report on the need to move quickly at times to evade potential unpleasantness. There are several reports of wonderful, warm experiences, as locals take the pair under their wings for a meal and a warm place to sleep. They are even joined for a time by a stray dog, and are swarmed by a herd of Tibetan antelope.

Anyone can recognize wildness on the Tibetan Plateau; the challenge is perceiving it in a roadside picnic area in Azerbaijan.

Harris's telling is not just the travelogue of seeing this, then that, but includes ongoing philosophical meanderings, about her own experiences and the wider human variety, about not only the political borders with which people must contend, but personal edges, where they begin and end, or don't. Her intellectual explorations are bolstered by a rich trove of quotes from literary classics, both prose and poetry, and from some of the authors you would expect, like Thoreau and Muir, Wallace, Darwin, and Carl Sagan. But finally, it is Harris's gift for language that elevates this book to Himalayan heights. Combining intellectual heft with an inquiring mind is amazing enough, but to be able to communicate both the inner and outer journeys with such sensitivity and beauty is a rare accomplishment indeed.

After being on an achievement bender most of my life, the prospect of withdrawal, of doing anything without external approval, or better yet acclamation, kept me obediently between the lines I couldn't even recognize as lines. Isn't that the final, most forceful triumph of borders? They make us accept as real and substantial what we can't actually see?

image from NatureNeedsHalf.org

I would not want you get through this review without at least a few roadblocks. I really wanted for each chapter to include a map of the travels contained therein. There is a map provide at the beginning, but

chapter-by-chapter additions would have been most welcome. I would have liked a bit more science in the book, even if it added a fair number of pages to the total. A quibble. I wonder, though, if Harris was aware of the issues faced by Fanny Bullock Workman, who also wrote of her travels, having greater popular success with work that focused more on the travel than the scientific findings.

Whether buttressed with dirt roads or red tape, barbed wire or bribes, the various walls of the world have one aspect in common: they all posture as righteous and necessary parts of the landscape.

This is not your summer trip to Europe. You will not be familiar with most of the places these two riders visit. The larger entities, sure, country names, some mountain ranges, but most of the local place names will be unfamiliar. Part of the fun of reading this book is that it sends you off on a journey of discovery of your own, looking up this town, that river, or an unheard-of plain or valley. In this, the book very much succeeds in sparking a bit of the exploratory impulse in most readers. You may or may not want to schedule a trip to many of the places she notes, but you will definitely want to learn more about them.

The true risks of travel are disappointment and transformation: the fear you'll be the same person when you go home, and the fear you won't. Then there's the fear, particularly acute on roads in India, that you won't make it home at all.

image from Explore Magazine – shot by Kate Harris

It may be grueling, surprising, filled with up and downs, demoralizing, exhilarating, exciting, stunningly beautiful, and rich with landscape, exterior and interior. *Lands of Lost Borders* may not wear out your arms or legs, your back, or any other muscle group, (ok, maybe the muscles that control your eyes) but it will stimulate your mind, lift up your spirit, and stimulate your need to pedal through darkness into knowing. *Lands of Lost Borders* is a stunning literary memoir you will not soon forget.

Exploration, more than anything, is like falling in love: the experience feels singular, unprecedented, and revolutionary, despite the fact that others have been there before. No one can fall in love for you, just as no one can bike the Silk Road or walk on the moon for you. The most powerful experiences aren't amenable to maps.

Review posted – April 6, 2018

Publication date – August 21, 2018

EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter and FB pages

Melissa Yule's Twitter page. Yule holds a Master's degree in International Development from the University of Guelph. Her interests include community development and environmental science. Here is her profile on the *CyclingSilk.com* site.

There is a lot of information available at *Cycling Silk*. I strongly advise you to check out the site.

A brief (11:43) video of their trip

In case you missed the link in the body of the review, it is worth checking out Fanny Bullock Workman, one of Harris's heroes.

The Golden Record – it was sent on the Voyager mission to let far-away civilizations know we are here. Harris talks about it a fair bit at one point in the book

What's on it - image from Wiki

The Harper Book Queen included a bit on this book in her TBR Tuesdays FB live broadcast from 8/21/18 - at 11:47

Interviews

-----The Globe and Mail - In a tiny B.C. cabin, Kate Harris penned tales of travel along the Silk Road - by Marsha Lederman - 2/15/18

-----Explore Magazine - The Way of the Wolf: Lands of Lost Borders, With Author Kate Harris

What was the hardest part of the journey?

Coming home and writing about it. Mel and I spent over a year total biking the Silk Road on two different trips. Writing a book about the journey took me half-a-decade. And while I love the exposure to new places and new people that you get by travelling by bicycle, I find there's as much (or even more) intensity and thrill and a sense of discovery when I'm sitting back at my desk, trying to put those experiences to words. Words and the world go very much hand-in-hand for me: I traveled vicariously through books long before I had the chance to travel anywhere myself, so I wanted to write something worthy, I hope, of the books that galvanized me out the door in the first place.

The Harris Mansion - image from the Globe and Mail article

400 square feet of paradise in Atlin, B.C. suits the author just fine. Not surprising that she is comfy in what most of us might consider roughing-it quarters. She *is* a descendant of William Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame.

Sorry, I could not help it. There were just so many quotes from the book that I wanted to use. But it was not possible to fit them all in. So off we go to EXTRA EXTRA STUFF right below here in Comment #1

Wendy Cosin says

Finished this book the same week that bicyclists were murdered in Tajikistan. I can only imagine how horrified and sad this must have made the author.

I don't know why it took me so long to read *Lands of Lost Borders*. My unfamiliarity with the area made it more slow-going, as did the lack of maps (and my laziness not looking up the countries or looking for more resources that the author has available). That said, it is very very good and I hope to read it again in the future after I lend it to my many biking and traveling friends who will undoubtedly love it.

I can't add anything to Will Byrnes' fabulous review on Goodreads, so I will finish with the mandated acknowledgement that I received a free copy of the Advance Reader's Edition.

Krista says

Beyond avenging my childhood ideals of explorers, and figuring out how to be one myself, I wanted to bike the Silk Road as a practical extension of my thesis at Oxford: to study how borders make and break what is wild in the world, from mountain ranges to people's minds, and how science, or more specifically wilderness conservation, might bridge those divides. So there I was, rich in unemployable university degrees, poor in cash, with few possessions to my name beyond a tent, a bicycle, and some books. I felt great about my life decisions, until I felt terrified.

Always an overachiever, Kate Harris took a rural Ontario child's dream about going to Mars and endeavored to become an astronaut by obtaining an undergrad degree at UNC, earning a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford, and starting a doctorate at MIT. Along the way, Harris set off on many adventures by bicycle, and when the lab work became too stifling, she enlisted her longtime friend, Mel Yule, to join her in finishing a quest they had started some years before: biking the Silk Road from Istanbul to its terminus in the Himalayas. On Harris' website devoted to this trip, you can watch a highlights video described as "showcasing ten months, ten countries, and ten thousand kilometers of the Silk Road...in roughly ten minutes". And while the video does capture something of the punishing conditions the women biked through and the lovely people that the pair met along the way, it does nothing to showcase the power of Harris' written word in this book: the narrative is simply a delight to read, filled with personal anecdotes, historical perspectives, and an academically informed tying-together of the disparate bits; all written in the awe-filled voice of someone who has witnessed the ragged ends of the Earth and was changed by that wildness. *Lands of Lost Borders* is a rare and true pleasure.

The root word of the word explorer is ex-plorare, with ex meaning "go out" and plorare meaning "to utter a cry". Venturing into the unknown, in other words, is only half the job. The other half, and maybe the most crucial half for exploration to matter beyond the narrow margins of the self, is coming home to share the tale.

The obstacles that Harris and Yule faced on this trip are fascinating to read about, but not wholly unexpected: the physical challenge of carrying everything you might need – tent and sleeping bag, dry goods and cooking stove, clothes and spare bicycle parts – on the frame of your bike as you pedal down roads of varying stability; the weather that ranged from a month of sleet in a Turkish winter, to the punishing heat of a desert plain, to snow and thin air in the world's highest mountain range; attempting to interact with locals in an everchanging string of languages you don't understand; arranging visas to enter countries legally, or sneaking around the barriers to those areas that are barred to foreigners – as an adventure tale, there is much to inspire the imagination. And while I sometimes found the romanticism of Harris' writing to be a bit indulgent, I decided to submit to it as an honest expression of her own sense of wonder:

- *We savoured nubs of chocolate all the sweeter for their smallness as the sun sank behind the mountains, and when it was too dark to read birdflight into speech anymore, even the silence was like something winged.*

- *As the sun rose it tugged gold out of the ground and tossed it everywhere, letting the land's innate wealth loose from a disguise of dust.*
- *Just another night on the Silk Road, with silence settling over the fields and the crickets resuming their own strange incantations, spells that conjured beads of dew from blades of grass and lulled us to sleep under a smoke of stars.*

When Harris was at Oxford, she focussed on the history of science, and in particular, was interested in the Siachen Glacier in the Himalayas; a region of Kashmir claimed by both India and Pakistan which is not only the world's highest battleground, but has become the world highest and biggest garbage dump. It was such places of fuzzy and disputed borders along the Silk Road – like the Aksai Chin (Tibetan by cultural heritage, Indian by treaty claim, and Chinese by possession), or the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblate (majority Armenian population, claimed by Azerbaijan because of imposed Soviet era borderlines) – that Harris and Yule sought out along the way, and because they had secured some funding for their trip from wilderness conservation groups, they meet up with local experts and guides periodically to discuss those species who choose to ignore mankind's imaginary boundaries. This kind of anti-nationalism becomes the undercurrent of the narrative, and along with other progressive truisms (I don't know about calling out North America and Western Europe as the world's biggest contributors to climate change while on a road that straddles India and China), there's an anti-capitalist bent to Harris' desire to avenge her childhood ideal of explorers (as quoted in the first passage). It was the adventure tales of Charles Darwin and Marco Polo that had first sparked Harris' wanderlust when she was a child, but as an adult, she learned that all her idols had feet of clay: Charles Darwin suffered a pitiable “withdrawal from wonder” as he spent his later years close to home, churning his data in theory; turns out, Marco Polo was never a true explorer, just a greedy capitalist who was looking for trade routes; the Wright Brothers gained the sky but sold their plane to the highest bidding military (a fact Harris had taken in at Oxford “like a knife to the heart”). Even the astronauts who once so inspired Harris were never sent on missions of pure exploration:

Astronauts rave about how they can't see any borders from low Earth orbit, yet the whole enterprise of space exploration is fuelled by a rabid nationalism. The same loyalty that sparked the Cold War also launched humans to the moon. How does cynical ambition, the capacity for mutually assured destruction, give rise to something as wondrous as a stroll on the Sea of Tranquility?

My natural inclination has been to push back against someone who uses her position within the wealth and stability of western civilisation to attempt to tear down that civilisation, but Harris has studied more and seen more than I ever will and I find myself unwilling to criticise her conclusions too harshly: if Harris can really see a way towards easing deadly border disputes through cooperative conservation efforts, more power to her.

Ride far enough and the road becomes strange and unknown to you. Ride a little farther and you become strange and unknown to yourself, not to mention your travelling companion.

Ultimately, beyond the political, this journey reads as one of self-discovery for Kate Harris. For anyone who was enchanted by, say, Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*, I would say read *Land of Lost Borders*: it's more serious and reflective, better written, and challenging of worldviews. I loved this book, cover to cover.

Lucy says

After reading the 4-page prologue I wanted to cancel all of my plans and just keep on reading. After reading 10 more pages I wanted Kate Harris to be my new best friend. Kate and her friend Mel (Melissa) spent almost a year cycling along Marco Polo's Silk Road from Istanbul to the Himalayas. They didn't know anyone, didn't know the languages, and had barely useful maps. They were up for adventure, and adventure is what they got. They snuck past border guards; rode through searing heat, snow, and rain and mud; damaged and temporarily lost their bikes; and Kate even had her only pair of biking shorts stolen by a monkey. They were rewarded by the kindness of strangers who fed them and gave them places to sleep. Most remarkable of all, at the end of it all Kate and Mel were still good friends. Interesting. Well written. It almost makes me want to visit some of those hard to get to places. It definitely makes me want to read whatever Ms. Harris writes next.

Kathryn says

A gorgeous meditation on borders, travel, belonging, and wildness. Blending history and literature with adventure and reflection, *Lands of Lost Borders* is at once pensive and poetic, goofy and charming.

Lynn Luu says

I won this book in a giveaway. It's not the genre of book that I normally read (I like thrillers, mysteries and fantasy) but I was pleasantly surprised. It almost reads like fiction. Traveling the silk road, from Turkey to India, on a bike! That's just crazy! I love the stories of the people she meets on the way: the Chinese cop who instead of arresting her for illegally entering Tibet gives her cucumbers, the cute 4 year old w/ the demonic soul, the poor tea shop owner accused of imprisoning them, etc. I also enjoyed all the historical tidbits she slips in. It is done very smoothly and ties in to her story very well. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.

Wendy says

In "Lands of Lost Borders" which I won through Goodreads Giveaways Kate Harris combines travel, history and literature in her remembrance of a cycling adventure that took her along the fabled Silk Road. It begins with a young girl in an Ontario town who dreamt of exploration and decided that instead of following in the footsteps of adventurers like Marco Polo and Magellan would become a scientist and tackle space exploration, settling for a shot at being one of the first colonists on Mars.

Like all dreams Kate Harris's got curtailed with her postgraduate studies at Oxford and a Rhodes Scholarship to MIT. Yet her desire to explore never died and instead of working in a lab, Kate along with her friend Mel Yule make a bike trip along the Silk Road that has them sneaking under border check points, suffering visa problems and surviving on noodles, instant coffee and "scrapes of laughter" as exhausted, muscles aching and facing all kinds of nasty weather they experience the freedom of cycling, a clarity of purpose and the ordinary wonders of nature.

With a flowing natural writing style and unique observations like a whiskery woman sitting by a wood stove and the Georgia man insulating his barn roof with hay, Kate Harris chronicles an adventure that keeps you engrossed from start to finish. Laced with historical anecdotes, a collection of pictures and reflections on a wealth of people they meet along the way the reader is taken on an entertaining and informative journey not soon forgotten.

I thoroughly enjoyed “Land of Lost Borders” hoping that in January 2018 it will stimulate a thirst in others to explore the unique places this world still has to offer.

Heather(Gibby) says

I received an advance reader's copy fro a Goodreads giveaway.

You can't hep but admire the determination of Ms. Harris and her companion Mel to complete the bicycle journey along the Silk Road. This journey took over a year in conditions varying from freezing to scorching temperatures, and very little in the way of creature comforts along the way.

I really enjoyed her descriptions of the terrain, and the many of the historical references to the locations she travelled through, especially in the determination of the geographical borders between countries is established and the routes of some of the traders/explorers such as Marco Polo who had traveleld along the route in the past.

Ms. Harris also give an overview of her own history, and what ultimately led to her taking this journey.

I did feel that there were some unneeded side stories that I skimmed through, especially recounting Darwin's travels and adventures. having actually read Darwin's own accounts, I had no need revisiting them.

Stacey says

Thank you to Kate Harris and the publisher for sending me a copy of Lands of Lost Borders:Out of Bounds on the Silk Road. I haven't finish it, but she is such a good writer I had to leave a preemptive 5 star review.

Christine says

This book was phenomenal. Filled with imagery that transports you across continents and historical knowledge that flings you through time, Harris' delightful – if saddle sore – journey through Asia's ancient Silk Road will make you swear to take your own trip. And swear off it on the next page. Freezing weather, rain, snow, terrifying traffic, washboard roads (when there were roads at all), an eternity of living on instant noodles, instant coffee, and instant oatmeal. Harris manages to communicate her deep joy and gratitude for this experience, for every bleak vista she cycles by, while not holding back her about exhaustion, aching muscles, illnesses, and fear of detention travelling through countries with restrictive and byzantine tourism policies. In every line her brilliant writing and lyrical imagery shines through, carrying you along with her on the back of her bicycle. I feel truly privileged to have gotten a chance to read this book pre-release, having won it in a draw, and I highly recommend it to any fans of travel writing looking for new lands to explore.

Coming to a bookstore near you in January 2018.

Lisa says

I won an advanced copy of *Lands of Lost Borders* from the publisher and it arrived just as I got sick with the first bad cold of the winter. I was so excited to delve right in to this delicious read and escape my misery! This book is part memoir, part adventure travel guide, part history lesson and part science fiction (at least for me). Harris had always dreamed of traveling to Mars but found herself instead cycling from Istanbul, Turkey to Leh, India.. roughly 10,000 km in 10 months. For me, her story might as well have taken place on Mars. It seemed as remote, unfamiliar and at times, as uninhabitable, as life on another planet. I can't say her story inspired me to want to live on instant noodles for months at a time or sneak across any border check points- but it did make me want to be a more daring and inquisitive traveler. I thought a lot about what I would give up or what hardships were worth enduring in order to have some of the experiences I dream of having, as a traveler and in life in general. Harris is a true explorer with a broad knowledge of science, history and literature. As a writer, she weaves this knowledge and experience together with musings on her past relationships and choices, her quirky childhood passions (Mars and Marco Polo), her honest reflections on the people she meets along her journey and wraps it all up with a sense of humour and incredibly beautiful and original descriptions... all while inspiring the reader to question and perhaps cross the perceived borders in their own lives.
