

Books



Mustering by motorbike
Hamilton cattle station, on
South Australia's northern
border, by Thijs Heslenfeld

Outback tales

Two new books explore one of the world's most inhospitable environments

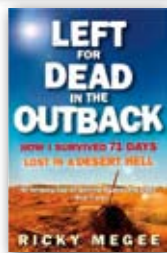
Few dare spend more time in the Outback than absolutely necessary. With temperatures touching 50°C, dirt tracks that are dodgy to navigate without a 4WD and poor-to-no phone signal in this vast hinterland, it's no wonder 90% of Australians live on the coast and most travellers don't venture much beyond iconic Uluru.

Here, though, are two books that take us on lengthy, intimate journeys through this hostile landscape – one with photographs, the other with words.

To shoot *Hot* (buy online through Amazon or www.hot-the-book.com, £29.50) Dutch photographer Thijs Heslenfeld drove from South Australia along 10,000km of dusty tracks to the Northern Territory over a period of two months. He set off with no itinerary, schedule or plan other than a desire to pay homage to the region's beauty.

But the beauty he captures is not simply one of dramatic landscapes. Rather Heslenfeld is an alchemist, transmuting the blood, sweat and grit of the outback into something spectacular. Close-ups of

human and animal detritus – dead bird's claws, a bloodied calf and dumped tyres – take on a magical quality. Together with portraits of the extraordinary people who populate the Outback – Aborigines, sexagenarian cowboys and a couple whose nearest neighbours live 100km away – they tell a story of the struggle to survive in a place 'where Mother Nature is still in charge'.



A much more in-your-face endurance tale is Ricky McGee's *Left for Dead in the Outback* (Nicholas Brealey, £8.99). Robbed and dumped in the desert without shoes, food or water, McGee lasted 71 days before help arrived. Subsisting on a diet of frogs ('fresh and tangy'), cockroaches ('putrid') and caterpillars ('a much-needed sweet treat'), he dropped from 100kg to just 46kg.

With a style that veers from sensationalist ('no-one could save me from an excruciating death') to stoic ('avoid drinking piss – it doesn't taste very nice'), this is a real page-turner, offering an insight into the kind of personality it takes to make it through such an ordeal. **Gabrielle Jaffe**

CLASSIC JOURNEYS Great Brits abroad

Publisher IB Tauris is building an impressive roster of paperback travel classics, and three new titles out now add to that list.



Now you can pop in your pocket *Kipling Abroad* (IB Tauris, £19.50), in which former foreign correspondent Andrew Lycett gathers Rudyard's writings from Burma to Brazil.

Also transformed into lighter travelling companions are Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Silverado*



Squatters (IB Tauris, £9.99), a revealing memoir of his unusual honeymoon in an old mining town in San Francisco, and

Old Calabria (IB Tauris, £12.99), a timeless account of a lesser-visited region of Italy from Norman Douglas,

“The Spider's House will soon be made into a film – viva the classics!”

DH Lawrence's contemporary who is best known for his controversial novel, *South Wind*.

Not to be outdone on their modern classic patch, Penguin are soon to publish the Paul Bowles collection in paperback. This will include *The Sheltering Sky* (Penguin, £9.99) with an introduction by Paul Theroux.

Made into a film in 1990, starring John Malkovich, Bowles's first novel sees three naive Americans lost in Algeria. Equally cinematic and soon to be made into a film by the director of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is Bowles' *The Spider's House*

(Penguin, £12), the story of an illiterate Muslim boy and an ex-pat living in Fez, during Morocco's struggle for independence. Viva the classics!

