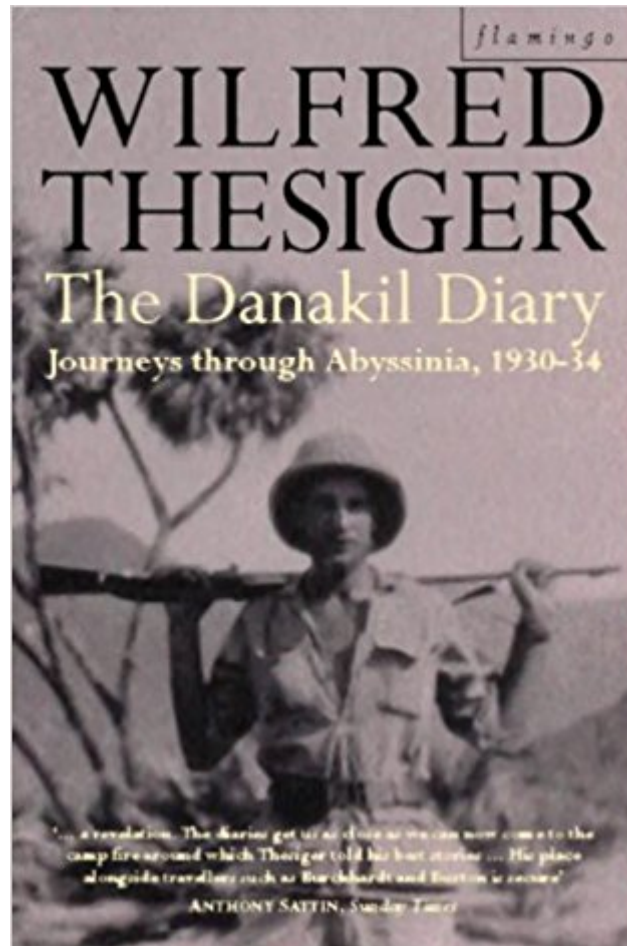




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The Danakil Diary



Synopsis

The earliest and most influential expeditions of the man now considered to be the greatest living explorer. The Danakil Diary is the account of two journeys Thesiger made into the Danakil country in Abyssinia, now Ethiopia, in 1930-34 at the age of 24 – which, today, he still regards as the most dangerous he undertook. It was an extraordinary journey and a remarkable achievement. Thesiger succeeded in penetrating country that had wiped out two Italian expeditions and an Egyptian army before him, discovered what happened to the Awash River (one of the area's last geographical mysteries to be solved) and managed to survive amongst the Danakil tribesmen, to whom a man's status depended on the number of men he had killed and castrated. Besides giving early proof of Thesiger's descriptive genius – with his portrayal of the beautiful, savage landscapes, and their varied wildlife – The Danakil Diary reveals youthful evidence of his fierce motivation and uncompromising will, which are familiar hallmarks of his sixty years of travel among primitive peoples in some of the harshest and remotest areas of the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“These diaries get us as close as we can now come to the camp fire around which Thesiger told his best stories” Anthony Sattin, Sunday Times

In 1930 Wilfred Thesiger attended the coronation of HIM Haile Selassie at the Emperor's personal invitation. Afterwards, he spent a month hunting alone in the hostile Danakil desert of

Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), which led three years later to his successful exploration of the Awash River. Aged only twenty-three, Thesiger thus became the first European to travel through the fabled Sultanate of Aussa, an expedition which he regards as the most dangerous he ever undertook, and which established the reputation of a man now considered by many to be the century's greatest living explorer. A vivid compelling narrative, 'The Danakil Diary' records how the young Thesiger surmounted overwhelming obstacles and survived the constant threat of death and mutilation by the Danakil, warriors whose tribal status depended on the number of men they had killed and castrated. Interspersed with letters to his mother, Thesiger's diary is illustrated with original sketch maps and drawings and many of his previously unpublished photographs. As a description of the barbaric splendour, savagery and colour of Abyssinia and its people, and the attitude of a young English explorer already confident of his place in the world, it is brilliant. PHILIP KNIGHTLY, 'Mail on Sunday'

An upcoming trip to Ethiopia sparked the recommendation of this book from friends who had read it. It was not easy to find, as it is out of print etc., but I located it through . It was a fascinating read primarily because, due to a childhood in post-colonial Addis Ababa, he enjoyed access to a culture and area at a time (pre-WW II) when this was virtually unheard of. His writing skills were limited (lots of "lists", but, after all, it IS a diary!), but the narrative voice was strong. Cultural and political situations were very revealing, keeping in mind that the author's upbringing and existence are British Empire personified. The black and white photographs are a documentary unto themselves, a testament to his skill and bravery. Overall, a very interesting glimpse into a part of the world that has remained largely wild and under the radar.

What an amazing trip! Those were the days of true adventure. Thesiger was lucky to make it out alive. Too bad all the wildlife in that area is gone today.

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