



Map Addict

Mike Parker

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'My name is Mike and I am a map addict. There, it's said...'

Maps not only show the world, they help it turn. On an average day, we will consult some form of map approximately a dozen times, often without even noticing: checking the A-Z, the road atlas or the Sat Nav, scanning the tube or bus map, a quick Google online or hours wasted flying over a virtual Earth, navigating a way around a shopping centre, watching the weather forecast, planning a walk or a trip, catching up on the news, booking a holiday or hotel. Maps pepper logos, advertisements, illustrations, books, web pages and newspaper and magazine articles: they are a cipher for every area of human existence. At a stroke, they convey precise information about topography, layout, history, politics and power. They are the unsung heroes of life: Map Addict sings their song.

There are some fine, dry tomes out there about the history and development of cartography: this is not one of them. Map Addict mixes wry observation with hard fact and considerable research, unearthing the offbeat, the unusual and the downright pedantic in a celebration of all things maps. In Map Addict, we learn the location of what has officially been named by the OS as the most boring square kilometre in the land; we visit the town fractured into dozens of little parcels of land split between two different countries and trek around many other weird borders of Britain and Europe; we test the theories that the new city of Milton Keynes was built to a pagan alignment and that women can't read maps. Combining history, travel, politics, memoir and oblique observation in a highly readable, and often very funny, style, Mike Parker confesses how his own impressive map collection was founded on a virulent teenage shoplifting habit, ponders how a good leftie can be so gung-ho about British cartographic imperialism and wages a one-man war against the moronic blandishments of the Sat Nav age.

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April Little:

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Sandra Kelley:

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