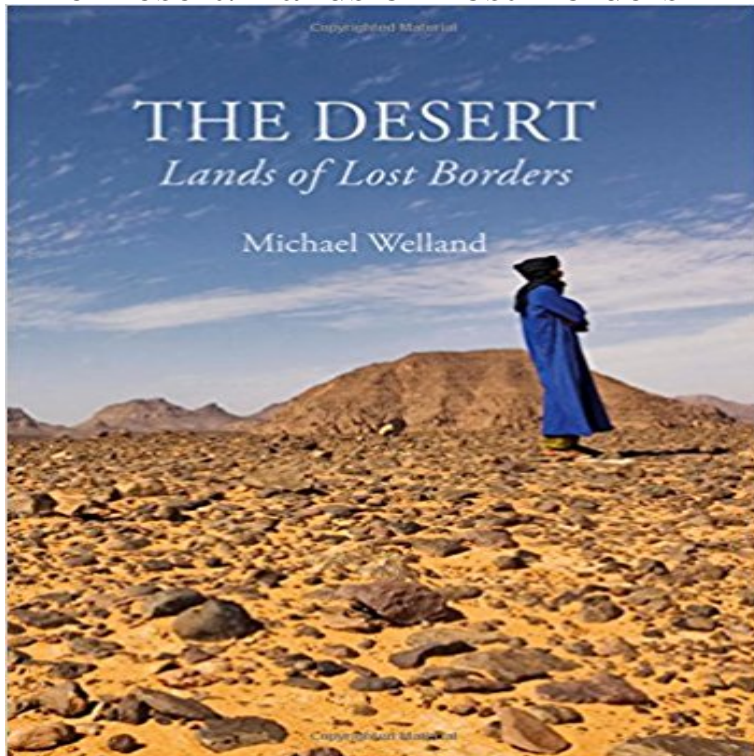


The Desert: Lands of Lost Borders



From endless sand dunes and prickly cacti to shimmering mirages and green oases, deserts evoke contradictory images in us. They are lands of desolation, but also of romance, of blistering Mojave heat and biting Gobi cold. Covering a quarter of the earth's land mass and providing a home to half a billion people, they are both a physical reality and landscapes of the mind. The idea of the desert has long captured Western imagination, put on display in films and literature, but these portrayals often fail to capture the true scope and diversity of the people living there. Bridging the scientific and cultural gaps between perception and reality, *The Desert* celebrates our fascination with these arid lands and their inhabitants, as well as their importance both throughout history and in the world today. Covering an immense geographical range, Michael Welland wanders from the Sahara to the Atacama, depicting the often bizarre adaptations of plants and animals to these hostile environments. He also looks at these seemingly infertile landscapes in the context of their place in history as the birthplaces not only of critical evolutionary adaptations, civilizations, and social progress, but also of ideologies. Telling the stories of the diverse peoples who call the desert home, he describes how people have survived there, their contributions to agricultural development, and their emphasis on water and its scarcity. He also delves into the allure of deserts and how they have been used in literature and film and their influence on fashion, art, and architecture. As Welland reveals, deserts may be difficult to define, but they play an active role in the evolution of our global climate and society at large, and their future is of the utmost importance. Entertaining, informative, and surprising, *The Desert* is an intriguing new look at these seemingly harsh and inhospitable landscapes.

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