



You are Awful (But I Like You): Travels Around Unloved Britain

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A hilarious account of an odyssey across 'unloved Britain'.

It began with an accidental daytrip to an intriguingly awful resort on the Thames Estuary, and ended 3,812 miles later: one man's journey through deep-fried, brownfield, poundshop Britain, a crash course in urban blight, deranged civic planning and commercial eccentricity. Following an itinerary drawn up from surveys, polls, reviews and lazy personal prejudice, Tim Moore goes to all the places that nobody wants to go to -- the bleakest towns, the shonkiest hotels, the scariest pubs, the silliest sea zoos. He visits the grid reference adjudged by the Ordnance Survey to be the least interesting point in Britain, and is chased out of the new town twice crowned Scotland's Most Dismal Place. His palate is flayed alive by horrific regional foodstuffs, his ears shrivelled by the 358 least loved tracks in the history of native popular music. With his progress entrusted to our motor industry's fittingly hopeless finale, he comes to learn that Britain seems very much larger when you're driving around it in a Bulgarian-built Austin Maestro. Yet as the soggy, decrepit quest unfolds, so it evolves into something much more stirring: a nostalgic celebration of our magnificent mercantile pomp, and an angry requiem for a golden age of cheerily homespun crap culture being swept aside by the faceless, soul-stripping forces of Tesco-town globalisation.

You are Awful (But I Like You): Travels Around Unloved Britain Details

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Tim Moore

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Paul says

Moore has excelled himself with this book. It is almost as good and as funny as french revolutions.

He takes himself on a tour of some of the worst parts of Britain, in one of the worst cars made, an Austin Maestro, with the worst 358 songs as his sound track. It takes him up the east of the country around Scotland and back down the west side and into Wales. He stays at the hotels and guest houses that have only just managed to score a single star.

And yet through all this he still finds things and places that he likes. Very funny, his wit (read sarcasm) is excellent, but the depths that some of these parts of the country have got to is despairing.

Andrew says

As a big admirer of Tim Moore's 'Continental Drifter', I was expecting an entertaining, informative & amusing tour around contemporary Britain, with pungent asides about Man's Inhumanity To Man, as encapsulated by Modernity (architecturally-speaking, above all). But this book was close to pure genius.

Moore chooses to travel around our sceptred (septic?) isle in an embarrassing black Austin Maestro, nicknamed 'Craig', (probably the worst car ever conceived & manufactured by a British car-maker & an escaped lunatic!), accompanied by a Sat-Nav with Ozzy Osbourne's dulcet Brummie tones & a compilation of the worst 'popular' music British artists & performers could endlessly excrete!! Moore's first port-of-call reminds the reader of the defunct British Leyland...the wind-swept environs of Leysdown-on-sea in Kent...a.k.a. Leysdown-and-dies! Moore nails another dozen-or-so places where the circus has well-and-truly left town, including Middlesbrough, Hull, Cumbernauld, Rhyl & the Pontins holiday camp at Southport, where Moore suffers the inane & desperate act of the execrable Keith Harris & Orville in all its awful orvilleness! "Cringe along with me!", Moore seems to say; "Contemporary Britain really is this awful!...but take pride...it's heroically awful!!". If your humour is tinged with cruelty, you will lap-up this book like the worst culinary feast (and Moore samples more of these than can be healthy!) & make regular visits to the toilet to bring-up the half-digested nuggets of listeria-coated chicken, in paroxysms of uncontrolled mirth. The writing is wonderfully sharp-bladed, & even Sheffield Stainless Steel is no match for Moore's swashbuckling style!

A travel book like no other; but, amongst the squalor & hopelessness, Moore says something essential about our awful island...when all hope is lost, let's wallow in our own by-products!! I'm only glad he didn't visit Thornton Heath!!

Ash says

I was really looking forward to this book, I read an extract in a newspaper (The Telegraph?) and it seemed light hearted and amusing. I was also delighted to discover that Tim Moore co-wrote teletext game review magazine Digitiser back in the 90s, which I used to be a big fan of.

Disappointedly I gave up on this book about 100 pages from the end. This is unusual for me, especially so close to the end, but I just couldn't muster the energy to carry on. Having spent over two weeks slogging through, I had to face facts, this book wasn't for me.

To a smaller degree I think the book was weighed down by Moore's bloated use of words. But my main problem was with the complete lack of positivity about anything - Moore just moves from one place to the next moaning about all the bad points, whilst eating the worst food and listening to the worst music - I just found it a bit tedious and repetitive. Kind of like someone punching themselves in the face repeatedly and then complaining about it after every blow.

I think I was expecting a book that makes fun of the bad points of the UK but also highlights the surprising good points too, which would give the book a more hopeful, likeable tone.

I like Moore's descriptions of certain places and the terrible food he ate, and there are bits in here which made me chuckle, I just ultimately found it a struggle to finish.

Similar books that I'd recommend include "One Man and His Bike" by Mike Carter as he makes a similar journey around the UK. Dark Tourist by Dom Joly and also any travel book by Bill Bryson as I think he really has a knack of writing light hearted comedic travelogues.

Lisa says

Inspired by an accidental visit to Leysdown-on-sea, this is an amusing odyssey through the crappiest towns in Britain, reached by driving the worst car (an Austin Maestro), soundtracked by the worst songs and flavoured with the worst food - as voted by the Great British public.

Visiting town after dying town - decimated by the death of industry in Britain and with pound shops, monolithic supermarkets and Greggs plugging the gaps left behind, while chuckling at Moore's plight this also had the unexpected side effect of occasionally making me feel unbearably sad. So much of this country seems to be on its arse, with no-one giving enough fucks to try and fix it, that it really makes you wonder what kind of a shit heap we'll be living in in another decade's time, when the annihilation of industry, education, employment and community is complete.

Given how I felt on finishing (devoid of hope and wondering why we bother carrying on breathing), I should probably check that I haven't missed taking my antidepressants.

Ian Mapp says

This was always going to be a winner for me when early in the book, the author chose his vehicle of choice to complete an odyssey around the worst part of Great Britain. He chose an Austin Maestro based on a 1993 fly on the wall documentary, where a sales man had had his company car changed from a Cavalier to a Maestro.... went home and physically cried with his wife. I watched it in my early twenties and thought it hilarious. Rewatching it now (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMCFe...>) has raised its status to beyond epic. I would love to know how this man's life panned out.

So, in his Maestro, Tim hits the worst parts of the UK. Inspiration is taken from surveys, Sky TVs "Britains Hardest Series" (another gem) and his own personal recollections of grim places. He stops in the worst hotels. He eats in the worst restaurants (the "Stonner" will stay with me for a long time) and he listens to the worst music on his in car radio.

I thought this would be a knock about comedy, with little substance to it. It was very well written - consistently laugh out loud funny - and also very well researched. It wasn't just poking fun at the underclass of society - there was some serious discussion on how places had ended up the way they were. Always as a result of progress - sometimes unavoidable - such as the loss of the coal pits - other times more by chance - the little place that ran the no longer required ferry on the humber, since replaced by the Bridge.

I also like the running theme that sometimes crap pubs, restaurants, shops and hotels need to be cherished as we move to towncentres where everything is blandly uniform. These places are disappearing fast and it will be to Britain's loss.

One of the best books of its type that I have read. A real joy.

russell barnes says

Out of all the authors in the world, Tim Moore is the one whom I've given away the most copies of his books - and usually French Revolutions at that. Going on holiday, watching Eurovision, walking with a donkey - there is no situation a Tim Moore book can't cover.

Like everything, I can totally accept he's an acquired taste, as my wife's often-bemused expression testifies whilst I'm quoting some pithy Moore-ease through gales of tears and snot-spattered sniggers, but he's to my taste. In fact in many ways I consider him *my* author: His interests (cycling, travelling, that prosaic 'Keep Calm and Carry On' mantra that has become a slogan for Blighty) are my interests. He lives in West London as do I, and I am convinced should we just bump into each other - over a low-priced budget coffee say - we'd be amazing friends.

Clearly I'm mad, but whenever I see a new book I get very excited. Sometimes he's let me down, and Null Points was pretty appositely titled, but this one contains a Greatest Hits of his touchpoints, on a trip around the arse-end of Britain: travelling with something entirely unsuitable to the task, awful music, hastily-cobbled together historical scene setting, taking the piss out of his wife's Scandinavian roots, and his compulsive lurching to the budget end of the scale. Even better, he visits my in-laws home towns as part of his mission to visit the worse places in the Country, so I clearly won't be taking the piss out of them anytime soon.

I could go on, but instead I'm now going to fill up my quotes section with pretty much most of the book, so beware.

Jo says

I picked this up because it features Doncaster, my hometown. Imagine my surprise when I get to the section with my town in only to find that the author actually liked the place! So, the premise of the book is that the

author travels the UK visiting the least loved towns/cities, driving a crap car whilst listening to the crappiest ever songs. This was such a quick fun read and I enjoyed the author's style.

Stephen says

brillant and funny book about the author trip in an austin maestro around unloved britain ranging from kingston-upon-hull to walsall but interesting and well worth reading

John says

I love Tim, I really do. However, this book was largely "just okay" with some really funny bits here and there. Maybe you have to be British, because the places he visited more-or-less melted into each other. On his new offering due out in a few days ...

Scotchneat says

Probably a 3.5 but some absolutely snort-worthy passages.

Tim Moore decides to tour the worst towns in Britain, as voted on travel sites, UK polls and Location, Location, Location (also Location, Vocation, Procreation). Now, to do this properly, he vows to stay at the worst hotels, eat the worst food and he buys the worst car in UK history (the Maestro) to get there. And if that's not enough, he gets Ozzie the GPS to give him directions (next F-f-f*in' LEFT) with musical interludes by the 300+ worst songs ever recorded by British artists.

Along the way, Moore finds himself in the midst of many an architectural atrocity, more than a few pubs, and lots of fog.

He sees some strange and interesting sites along the way, including a kind of game of "Uncle" involving 2x4's, and the entire range of inebriated perambulation available to the men of Wales.

Underneath the fun, though, is a sad and up-close look at the post-industrial age for those towns and cities in Britain that were the lifeblood and source of British pride for many years.

Tomgirl deni says

I loved this, it reminded me of some awful places I'd stayed and places I'd rather not go thanks. Some parts were hilarious and some I feared for his life! Great fun, I'd read another one of his definitely.

Greg says

God Forsaken (their choice), without hope, personal responsibility and in terminal decline, there are people in some parts of Britain that you feel cannot exist much longer, at least so it seems if you believe Tim Moore's account of the worst places in Britain. Although prone to over exaggerate, beneath the mocking humour, he provides a useful and very readable sociological snapshot of the worst towns, as voted by Location, Location, Location, the worst hotels, and several other worsts and makes some valuable observations along the way.

Places where, as Tim writes, "you'd struggle to spend over a pound unless you fancied a second Greggs Steakbake or a tattoo." Why does the new tradition of town planning just encompass "an outlying belt of Harvesters and Premier Inns, then the Lidl's and Tile Depots, the Polish grocers and the pound shops."? It seems that we are determined to destroy many beautiful city centres and replace them with poorly built examples of some urban designers idea of how a town should look, but who doesn't actually have to live in his or her design, which ages as almost as quickly as it falls apart. I suppose that we should be grateful that some older buildings have been "Wetherspooned" rather than bulldozed and replaced with a construction that becomes "a genuine contender for the title of Britain's Most Loathsome Urban Edifice Outside Cumbernauld". So many of the places he visits grew from nothing in the early 19th century, to thriving large communities, out of the trade brought about by the industrial revolution. Now that we no longer mine much coal or any iron ore, or manufacture anything, the inhabitants seem, to Tim, to consist largely of the unemployed.

How he came to set off on this journey, is a great story in itself, as is how he became the Austin Maestro driving "Angel of Death".

When did we stop making things that the world wanted and started concentrating on selling each other consumer goods instead, and is it sustainable? It would seem not. How many more giant Tesco's and giant shopping centres can we build before our international credit rating falls through the floor?

Although written as humour, this book provides an essential update to Orwell's "Road to Wigan Pier", but in a far less serious and lowbrow way. I did find Tim's book difficult to put down. Did I enjoy it? In a guilty way, yes, very much so despite its, at times, unnecessary crudeness. I think that even Orwell would have enjoyed this book, in a thought provoking way, although he would not admit it, or give it to his maiden aunt for Christmas.

Geraldine says

More a 3.5 than a straight 3. I'm quite puzzled that GoodReads top review (at the time of writing) was from an American saying "Maybe you have to be British, because the places he visited more-or-less melted into each other". For a while I felt angry at 'John' but I realised - it's an accurate comment, and I don't suppose he expected it to make GoodReads top spot.

I'm puzzled why an American would want to read it. It would be like me reading about the arse-end towns of Germany or Portugal. I have no spatial or social context into which to place it.

I've never been to Leysdown and probably never will, except as an odd tribute to Tim Moore. But it's been a running joke for years with my partner. We know a couple, who really are common, not a word I use lightly to describe people. They have a caravan at Leysdown - "a chalet" hisses the woman of the couple. That in itself is reason enough not to go. She's actually quite nice, but he's truly horrible - not least because he's a serial groper.

I went to Great Yarmouth on a day trip from Kessingland near Lowestoft as a child. It wasn't unpleasant then. But that was 1982! I did an audit in Grimsby as a young trainee, and was pleasantly surprised. But that was 1990! My brother did a stint as a junior doctor in the hospital in Hull and later lived in the rural hinterland, as his in-laws still do. They're not exactly full of praise of Hull, but do enjoy the rural hinterland, and bro's father-in-law had a good job as a pilot on the Humber after work dried up in his native Liverpool. I did weep at how Hull Council had spunked the proceeds of selling Kingston Communications. I'm a former Labour councillor myself and I am beside myself when I read of municipal bad governance, incompetence and so on. Sort of makes one slightly sympathetic to a particular Tory point of view.

Southport I know because my Grandad's family hailed from those parts; I visited not too long ago, again on business. But not Pontins! Rhyl was the arse end of nowhere even back in the day. We had a couple of holidays in Rhos-on-Sea and Colwyn Bay, and Llandudno for day trips. It's good to read that Llandudno has embraced genteel retro-ness.

After that he seemed to whizz through the rest of everywhere - except Merthyr Tydfil - rather half-heartedly. I think perhaps he knew in his heart of hearts that he was oversimplifying the grottness of Britain. The great failing of the book was not to stop and talk to locals or try and get to the heart of the community. Twenty years ago I read Nick Danziger's *Danziger's Britain: A Journey to the Edge*, in which he carried out a similar journey but in a more serious vein. I had forgotten about this actual book, but not about its essence and what I learnt, until I read Tim Moore.

I've been to places in England which you think ought to be more trendy than they are: Littlehampton, West Sussex as an example. Or towns in Cornwall that seem down on their heels even in the height of the holiday season.

But who needs town centre shops now - a combination of the big supermarkets, which are horrible, but do what they do and I wouldn't be without them; farm shops etc; and internet shopping? Town centres are nice for coffee shops &c - we can lament the death of the pub, but I've never known an industry take quite so long to commit its own suicide.

The traditional urban British pub has deserved to die for decades, with its institutional sexism, inherent racism, poor choice of products massively overpriced, neglected (and often dirty) toilets, and its refusal to notice that 'the market' is changing and to move with that change. Those that prosper do so by serving good quality food, welcoming people of all backgrounds, and by being alert to local needs.

In all the areas he visited, despite high unemployment, a lot of people are working. Perhaps only in minimum wage/zero hours Macjobs, but many more to support the local infrastructure: Health and Education, council and local Central Government, or the big centralised data and call centres for public and private sector. Tim Moore wasn't meeting those people, because they're out working, or at home with their kids, or minding the grandchildren, or enjoying being with their partners. His was a male view of a largely male world, and by choosing the worst pubs, indeed by choosing pubs, he was ignoring much of the population.

Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that there are areas of Britain, notably the East Coast and South Wales that have been economically devastated by the decline and destruction of metal bashing industries. It's hardly a revelation, nor is it revolutionary to notice that regeneration by local and central Government has been hit and miss. He wrote well about Cumbernauld. I've never been and don't wish to, but he captures well the car car dependent nature of too many places. In towns like Ipswich and Southampton I have found the walk from the town centre to the Railway Station horrible and, in the dark of a winter's evening, frightening. And his description of Maid Marian Way in Nottingham, where I spent my three student years, was helpful. I took for

granted took that juxtaposition on ghastly inner ring road with the historic city; he has explained how I never quite learnt my way round Nottingham City Centre in all that time.

I enjoyed reading the book & he'd obviously done his research. It takes bravery to stay in some of the hotels he stayed in, although he missed three of my unfavourites (In Fort William, Stockport and Cardiff - if you've ever stayed in those hotels you will give thanks for Trip Advisor).

I think you do have to be British to enjoy this or even appreciate this, although fair dos to the American woman who acknowledged that about 30% went over her head and was sanguine at this. But I also think you have to be the sort of Briton who has been to some of these places, or places like them, or can remember them in better days. And you need also to know the nice places. Not the city centres, which are all much of a muchness, even the Great Cities. I mean the small towns in Dorset, Northumberland towns such as Alnwick and Seahouses that have their flaws but welcome visitors and have plenty to offer even smug elite Metropolitan types

Sho says

I liked this a lot. Mostly because it dissed my husband's home town (Middlesbrough) more than mine (Sheffield - in fact only one part of Sheffield and it really is most dire indeed so nobody can blame Tim Moore for not liking it)

This is the sort of eccentric travel writing I love. It's about places (generally) that I either know, know of or know roughly approximately where they are. It has a unifying theme. And the writing is lighthearted but still imparts knowledge. The guy knows what he's doing.

So having already read Tim Moore's romp around London using the Monopoly board, and followed his travails with a donkey (see what I did there, you language buffs?) along the Camino Santiago, this time we travel around Britain with Tim exploring the most rubbish stuff.

In his rubbish car, driving to the worst places (judged on various criteria and put together from various sources), staying in the worst hotels and B&Bs and eating the worse food, Tim Moore entertains, gives us a bit of a history lesson (there is a reason Coventry town centre is horrible, other places don't have that excuse) and offers some observations on life, in general and British life, in particular.

All in all it's an affectionate look at my home country, and a jolly good read.

And people of my generation or older will spot the catch phrase in the title.

Tim Roast says

This book is a recollection of a journey by the author taking in some of the awful places of Great Britain such as Great Yarmouth in England, Methil in Scotland and Merthyr Tydfil in Wales. To make the journey as awful as possible he took it in the worst car, did it whilst listening to the worst music, think novelty hits and albums, and was directed by the worst sat-nav voice, that of Ozzy Osbourne. He stayed at the worst hotels and ate the worst foods whilst visiting the worst tourist attractions. And he did it all at the worst time

of year - in the bleak mid-winter.

Initially this book works. I particularly liked the story as to why the Austin Maestro was selected as the transport. However after the umpteenth town visited where the reason for it being awful was that it had some industry which had now disappeared made the book get a little repetitive and a bit stale as it went on. Other running themes in the book were that he'd visit a place, say a pub or museum, and it would close shortly after he'd been there. It became a bit sad after a while.

The selection of towns for the awful places was a bit random too. For example Hull was selected because it was voted worst town in the publication "Crap Towns" (in part it must be said) yet Luton wasn't selected despite being voted worst town in "Crap Towns II". Similarly Skegness was chosen by the author simply for its name sounding, to him, awful. Admittedly there was also a lot of research that went into the selection of other places, mainly through a Location, Location, Location list, but I think the final selection was made to make the most convenient journey around the country for the author.

Then at the end the last few towns were whizzed through in a rush so all you residents of Coventry, Northampton and Slough may feel short-changed.

The book was best when it involved people rather than just descriptions of the places themselves. For example there was an altercation with a Scottish Ned that was gripping. Also the author did well to get regional accents across when he did meet people.

Other plus points were that I was able to follow the descriptions whereas with other travel books I have sometimes struggled to get the words to form the correct pictures in my head. Also there is a useful map on the inside front cover of the journey he took so if your town is on the route you may want to delve into the book.

Overall I felt the book could have been made better by being made shorter. For example there is one part where the author can't take it anymore and makes for home. That would have made for a good ending - Britian, you were so awful that you defeated me - but as it is it is too long resulting in the story getting stale with the issues getting repetitive.
