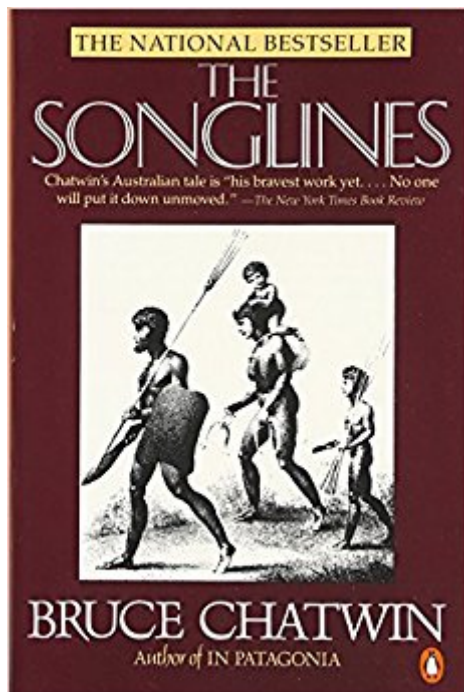


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# The Songlines



## Synopsis

Bruce Chatwin-author of *In Patagonia*-ventures into the desolate land of Outback Australia to learn the meaning of the Aborigines' ancient "Dreaming-tracks." Along these timeless paths, amongst the fortune hunters and redneck Australians, racist policemen and mysterious Aboriginal holy men, he discovers a wondrous vision of man's place in the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The late Bruce Chatwin carved out a literary career as unique as any writer's in this century: his books included *In Patagonia*, a fabulist travel narrative, *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, a mock-historical tale of a Brazilian slave-trader in 19th century Africa, and *The Songlines*, his beautiful, elegiac, comic account of following the invisible pathways traced by the Australian aborigines. Chatwin was nothing if not erudite, and the vast, eclectic body of literature that underlies this tale of trekking across the outback gives it a resonance found in few other recent travel books. A poignancy, as well, since Chatwin's untimely death made *The Songlines*

PW praised Chatwin's "entertaining" and "resonant" reflections on the distinctions between settled people and wanderers, and between human aggression and pacifism, as he searches central Australia for the pathways along which aborigines travel to perform their cultural activities. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Chatham clearly writes this book in a hurry. The publisher did so too; my copy (1988 I think) duplicates pages 171-234. But this is a fascinating and brilliant read looking backwards in time on Chatwin's speculations. As an evolutionist many of his speculations have borne fruit. It is absolutely stunning to read his thinking post-Dart and Lorenz on the impact climate (and population bottlenecks) have (probably) had upon the human species. If you are looking for some insight in the oldest existing human culture on the planet, this read has some problems as it is limited to primarily central Australia. Nonetheless the recent dehydration deaths of two Aboriginal "Elders" in the Kimberley's, when their car ran out of gas, possibly because they couldn't read the songlines to water in the area through which they were traveling, underscores one of the major and important themes Chatwin discusses. Chatwin wasn't an anthropologist and I think the reviews that criticize him on his book because of this, miss the point of the book. This is a speculative treatise on the human species and Chatwin's interjections of other thinkers on human origins only greatly enrich your reading of this book. I only sorry I read the book ten years after my own trip to Australia.

Mr. Chatwin provides an interesting look into the "Aboriginals" of Australia. It is a fascinating culture. Frequently, the author goes off on a tangent and one wonders what has happened to the story line, but then he manages to connect the piece with the rest of the dialogue. It is a most interesting adventure he takes us on...the people and the landscape are incredible.

This memoir / travel log / philosophy book was a huge pleasure to read. The author tells of his encounters with Australian aboriginals and others in the outback. He details what he learned about Songlines. And, later in the book, he mixes in notes from his many travels. Among many fascinating subjects, he describes an encounter with Konrad Lorenz and the discussion of Lorenz's "On Aggression."

I purchased this book hoping to learn more details about Aboriginal Songlines. It does contain some information, however, much of the book involves stories of other travels and I came away feeling that the author did let me down somewhat. It should be titled The Songlines and other tales of my travels. The copy of the book that I received was as advertised in quality. It was in good shape and from that standpoint it was a good buy. If you are interested in a memoir of travels through Australia, Africa, and other locations; you may find it to be a good read.

I was disappointed in this book and only read half before I put it away. I may go back later to finish

but I was hoping for more info on the aborigines and more details about the songlines and dreamtime. From what I read the story line is more about the author and his associations with his friends and travels. It was slow getting into what little bit I read about the use of songlines in the aboriginal culture.

I first read this 30 years ago when it came out. Dear Bruce Chatwin felt like a friend sending me a letter from far away. It made me want to join him. It inspired so much travel in my own life. And now, in this digital always-on age, his message about the ancient art of walking around has become even more relevant. Such a great story-teller. Such a great message. Timeless.

Chatwin always delivers a good story.

Chatwin's weaving of narrative and anthropology (speculation) is unusual and makes for an inspiring and thought-provoking reading experience. I now want to see about Patagonia.

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