

[PDF] Terra Incognita: Travels In Antarctica

Sara Wheeler - pdf download free book



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Description:

When explorers such as Ernest Shackleton, Roald Amundsen, and Robert Falcon Scott all set off to Antarctica in the early years of the 20th century, the polar regions were among the last truly unexplored areas of the world--and arguably the least hospitable. Scott lost his life, pinned down in a howling blizzard only 11 miles from his supply depot; Shackleton lost his ship, crushed in the ice. Even those who survived the icy wastes did so only with enormous effort. And yet, there is something about Antarctica that beckons people; eighty years after Shackleton's voyage, Sara Wheeler answered the call, leaving her comfortable home for "the Great White." *Terra Incognita* is the result of her sojourn in that legendary land.

In addition to chronicling her own encounters with the people and the place, Wheeler brings the past alive as well, through vivid stories about the heroes of polar exploration: Shackleton, Scott, Amundsen, and others who practically become secondary characters in Wheeler's account. But it is her interactions with the living people who make up the community--scientists, drifters, and dreamers who have settled this forbidding landscape--that make *Terra Incognita* a rare and worthy book. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Journalist Wheeler (Travels in a Thin Country, on Chile) spent more than two years researching and organizing a seven-month journey to Antarctica, becoming the first foreigner to join the American National Science Foundation's Antarctic Artists' and Writers' Program. Her wry, lucid account of that journey juxtaposes the epic exploits of heroic early Antarctic explorers (Robert Scott, Ernest Shackleton, Roald Amundsen, Douglas Mawson, Apsley Cherry-Garrard, et al.) with her own adventures. She offers a critical survey of the literature of Antarctic exploration and provides as well insights into the historical and cultural impact of Antarctic exploration on the British and Norwegian national consciousnesses. While the hardships the intrepid Wheeler suffered are a faint echo of those endured by polar pioneers, there's still a wealth of absorbing detail to make the point: use and operation of toilets in subzero; foodstuffs and their creative preparation; transportation, be it dogsled, skis or snowmobile; proper layering of protective clothing; the leisure activities and quirks of the varied scientists and support crews ("Frozen Beards") she encountered. Along the way, she offers a rare woman's view of a thoroughly male place, tolerant of women in most cases but downright hostile in some (as in the U.K. zone). Wheeler writes elegantly and movingly about the unearthly landscape and its effects: "The twin peaks... were backlit against a pearly blue sky.... Ribboned crystals imprisoned in the ice glimmered like glowworms. It was swathed in light, pale as an unripe lemon. The scene said to me, 'Do not be afraid.' It was like the moment when I pass back the chalice after holy communion." Her book, fascinating reading for any explorer, armchair or otherwise, concludes with the recipe for her renowned "Bread-and-Butter Pudding (Antarctic Version)."

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