



Crossing Paths: A Pacific Crest Trailside Reader

Rees Hughes, Editor

Howard Shapiro, Editor

Mountaineers Books (May 1, 2022)

Softcover \$21.95 (304pp)

978-1-68051-570-1

The Pacific Crest Trail winds its way between the Mexican and Canadian borders, challenging and inspiring trekkers with its deserts and streams, dense forests, and rugged mountain slopes. In *Crossing Paths*, editors Rees Hughes and Howard Shapiro, both experienced PCT hikers, compiled a diverse anthology of stories and poems, each one relating a memorable experience.

Spanning the full range of human emotions, the collection shows how awe and wonder at nature's beauty and majesty can morph into terror when one is dodging lightning bolts on an exposed mountain ridge, or courage when the sight of a mountain lion calls up feminine power in a roar to make the animal turn tail and flee. The PCT has also hosted a trailside wedding and a series of cello concerts, and has brought solace and healing after the trauma of war and life-threatening illnesses.

Enhanced by beautiful illustrations, the anthology testifies to human hunger for contact with the natural world, for a place where the noise of civilization ceases and inner messages can be heard; where the roughness of human conflict is replaced with the kindness of "trail angels," and where solitary communion with nature dissolves strife and striving into the vastness of distant horizons. But the trail's challenges also bring reminders of mortality.

The PCT faces its own challenges, and the book warns that its growing popularity can harm fragile ecosystems; complicate trail maintenance; increase wildfire risks; and destroy pristine landscapes with infrastructure development. These, and the devastating effects of climate change, put all that the trail is treasured for at risk.

Crossing Paths is an informative, enchanting anthology of stories and poems by Pacific Crest Trail-lovers who have met its challenges and been touched by its beauty, magic, and transformative power.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2022)

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