



## Meetings on the Edge

*Mags MacKean*

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Meetings On The Edge is a travel memoir by Mags MacKean, a once-frustrated journalist for the BBC, who took the plunge and abandoned a ten-year career to follow her dream to become a mountaineer. The book explores the impact of a solitary journey as well as unexpected encounters with some fascinating people along the way. The different natural environments she encounters mirror the demands of an evolving quest. The many lessons of nature's classroom are set against a background of adventure, discovery and undertaken with considerable personal risk. Like all quests, the incidental insights and surprising events challenge the romantic idea of adventure. Stories from Alaska, the Pacific North-West, the Himalaya and New Zealand's Southern Alps are interwoven into the central adventure of traversing the French and Spanish Pyrenees alone. Tales to highlight include encountering a naked and all too aroused flasher far off the beaten track, a colourful relationship with Nepal's most famous civilian, a film star, two weeks after the massacre of the royal family, and summiting Denali, North America's highest peak, while the expedition dwindled from 9 to just 4 due to life-threatening illness and mishap. But it was after a chance meeting with a wise Maori man and a solitary encounter with a 2000-year-old Kauri tree in an ancient forest, that the author experiences an epiphany: that a restless, goal-driven life is not the most fulfilling. The book ends in the foothills of the Pyrenees, where the freedom she has experienced is in marked contrast to the security-conscious existence of those living there. The electric gates, fencing and hedgerows project a community in fear of those very open spaces which had broadened her horizons. This is travel writing of a high and insightful order and marks Mags MacKean as a new and exciting proponent of this genre.

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