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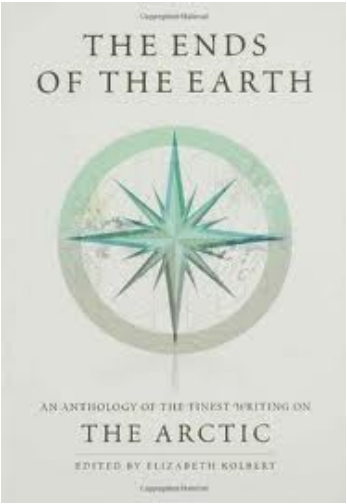
The Ends of the Earth: An Anthology of the Finest Writing on the Arctic and Antarctic



OK, here's my technique to get through these incredibly hot days. Wet your hair--I mean really soak your mane without drying it, fill a huge glass with ice cubes and read a book about the arctic or antarctic. In five New Orleans' summers, I covered a lot of very northern and very southern territory including many of the authors represented in The Ends of the Earth [1].

Many were not primarily writers but explorers: Roald Amundsen, Frederick A. Cook, Robert Falcon Scott, Richard Byrd, and Robert Peary. They describe the heroic age, where men (and they were usually only men then) struggled by boat, dogsled and foot to reach the furthest and coldest ends of the earth. Quite a few of them died in the process including Scott. It's fascinating to read how many letters Scott wrote in his last couple of days and left inside his tent. He even wrote consolation letters to the widows and parents of the dead members of his party as they lay in death beside him.

For those primarily interested in nature, essays by Barry Lopez and Gretel Ehrlich provide a close look at the inspiring landscapes of the polar regions, while Elizabeth Kolbert gives an introduction to life in the Inupiat village of Shismaref, Alaska.

There are detailed accounts of miseries endured: little food, epic treks over glaciers, surviving (and not) intense blizzards. Always interesting are the strong rivalries between men representing various nations hoping to get to the poles first.

The collection is cleverly designed as two books in one: hold it one way and you read about the Arctic; turn it upside down and discover works about the southern polar areas.

By the time your hair is dry and the icecubes are all melted or chewed, you will feel as though you have visited the coolest of places. Other good reads are Margaret Murie's Two in the Far North [2]and Four to the Pole!: The American Women's Expedition to Antarctica [3] by Nancy

Loewen and Ann Bancroft.
For the Love of Reading[4]Information, Answers & Reviews [5]Adventure [6]Nonfiction [7]Science & Nature [8]The ends of the earth : an anthology of the finest writing on the Arctic and the Antarctic [9]Winter [10]

Posted by Dory L. on Jul 21, 2011

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