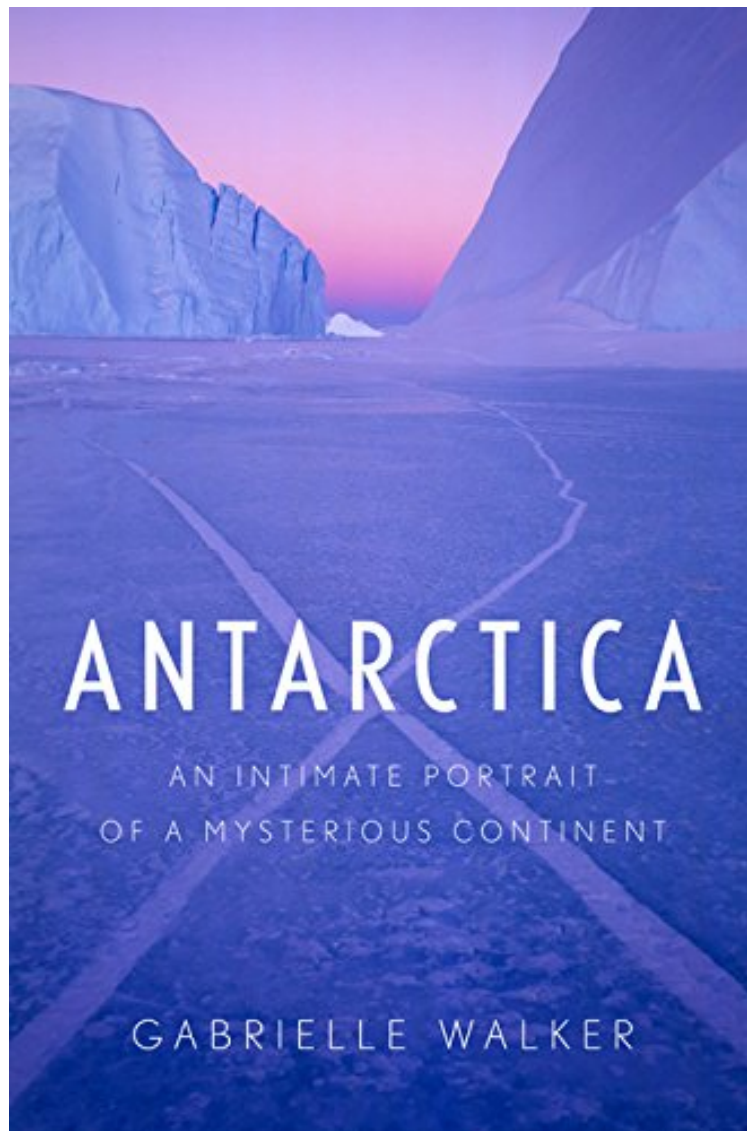


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Antarctica: An Intimate Portrait of a Mysterious Continent

Gabrielle Walker

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Gabrielle Walker : Antarctica: An Intimate Portrait of a Mysterious Continent before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Antarctica: An Intimate Portrait of a Mysterious Continent:

Antarctica is the most alien place on the planet, the only part of the earth where humans could never survive unaided.

Out of our fascination with it have come many books, most of which focus on only one aspect of its unique strangeness. None has managed to capture the whole story until now. Drawing on her broad travels across the continent, in Antarctica Gabrielle Walker weaves all the significant threads of life on the vast ice sheet into an intricate tapestry, illuminating what it really feels like to be there and why it draws so many different kinds of people. With her we witness cutting-edge science experiments, visit the South Pole, lodge with American, Italian, and French researchers, drive snowdozers, drill ice cores, and listen for the message Antarctica is sending us about our future in an age of global warming. This is a thrilling trip to the farthest reaches of earth by one of the best science writers working today.

From Booklist Who travels to Antarctica, and why? Setting aside tourists who sail to the relatively accessible Antarctic Peninsula, Walker (*An Ocean of Air*, 2007) addresses her curiosity to the scientists and support personnel at stations various nations maintain on the ice-encased continent. During several separate journeys, she stayed at a half-dozen outposts operated by the U.S., the UK, Russia, France, Italy, and Argentina and learned the protocols of cold-weather survival, accompanied scientists on their fieldwork, and observed how people cope with the environmental extremes and awesome geographical isolation of Antarctica. Accenting particular individuals she met, Walker notes their motivations to come to Antarctica usually professional for the scientists and often an interest in adventure for construction workers and cooks while also paying attention to women who challenged no-girls attitudes on staffing Antarctic stations. Together with the human-interest element, science propels Walker's narrative, which refracts scientists' explanations of their research into penguins, glaciology, geology, astronomy, and climate change. Interspersed with historical vignettes of Antarctic exploration, Walker's account affords a vibrant vicarious experience of traveling around the place on earth most like an alien planet. --Gilbert Taylor "Gabrielle Walker describes very well current activities on the vast ice sheet, from the constant discovery of new undersea life to the ongoing hunt for meteorites, which are relatively easy to track down on the white ice. For anyone who has ever wondered what it's like to winter at 70 degrees below zero, her account will be telling...Absorbing." Bill McKibben, *New York Times* "A dazzling array of narratives throngs Antarctica...Antarctica is still the 'world's most mysterious continent,' as it remains the only one on which humans have never lived permanently. Walker captures that mystique through interviews with people who have made Antarctica part of their lives." *Nature* "Walker's a clear explainer and engaging guide, her descriptions evocative...The true protagonist here is Antarctica itself, and in Walker's rendering it easily carries that leading role." *Tampa Bay Times* "Walker tells in rich detail what it's like to survive and do science on the only continent never inhabited by human beings. She spends time with dozens of investigators, revealing both their work and the inner workings of their minds...Walker offers a diverse sampling of the seventh continent and the science done there." *American Scientist* "A vivid portrait...We are all anxious Antarctic watchers now, and Walker's book is the essential primer." *The Guardian* "Walker gained access to a variety of fascinating places and projects. There are fresh and informative sections on the fauna and microflora of this harshest of all habitats, on the use of Antarctica as a terrestrial and cosmic observatory...Walker is also good at sketching the oddly beguiling world of the scientists and support workers who return year after year to Antarctic research stations." *The Telegraph* "Hugely informative...Walker uses direct speech to render the material digestible, allowing her protagonists to speak for themselves. She has a gift for lay analogy, as a popular science writer must." *The Spectator* "The fascinating story of Antarctica, from the hardships of exploration to its future survival." *The Ecologist* "Walker's account affords a vibrant vicarious experience of traveling around the place on earth most like an alien planet." Booklist