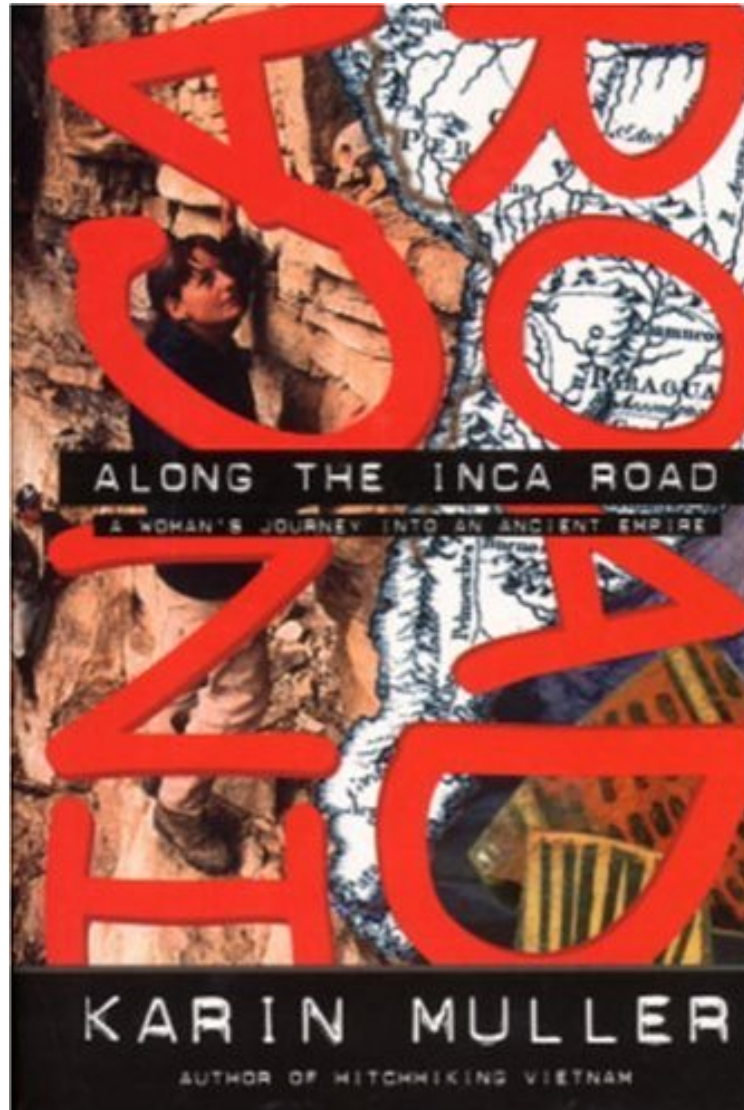


(Download) Along the Inca Road: A Woman's Journey into an Ancient Empire (Adventure Press)

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Karin Muller

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#3109121 in Books 2000-09-01 2000-09-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.32 x .93 x 6.141, #File Name: 079227685X304 pages Condition: New | File size: 24.Mb

Karin Muller : Along the Inca Road: A Woman's Journey into an Ancient Empire (Adventure Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Along the Inca Road: A Woman's Journey into an Ancient Empire (Adventure Press):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. very good price, very good photosBy JUANInteresting book, very good price, very good photos, very useful to planning a trip.8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Wonderful romp through a significant part of South America. By fdoamericaMuller is a wonderful travel writer with the ability to make even the mundane come alive. Her way with words ("The main square was full of Saturday-night drunks all walking like wobbly bowling pins") keeps you reading on to find out where she will land next, and among whom. From helicopter crashes to street festivals, Karin Muller follows this ancient road, and allows serendipity to play its hand. She encounters not only the absurd and strange (having your head beaten with a guinea pig to find out your disease or ailment), but the beautiful and sublime ("people who reached out to help a stranger through a day of violence and despair"). Her travels follow the famed Inca Road. This ancient highway reached from Equador down to Chile, and played a critical role in homogenizing the Inca Civilization. I have been to South America over a dozen times in the past six years and her highly entertaining stories ring true. There is a significant weakness to this book - the lack of maps. I find it a bit baffling, that National Geographic, curator of some of the world best maps, failed to include any quality maps of a journey that snakes down and around South America. Rather, National Geographic gives you one decrepit and confusing black and white map of South America. BUT! They do include 26 excellent color photographs. Go figure. In 'Along the Inca Road', Karin Muller gives you more than just a great read, she furnishes you with provocative and informative insights into both the history of the Inca and their culture. This is a wonderful book and will be enjoyed by all who appreciate the Inca culture, South America and great travel writing. You should read this book. 4 1/2 Stars Recommended 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Her daring, humor and poetic descriptions are stunning. By Niki Collins-queen, Author Karin Muller chronicled her over six month 3,125-mile journey through Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Peru in her memoir "Along the Inca Road: A Woman's Journey into an Ancient Empire." National Geographic's television division assigned John, a part-time cameraman to help Karin document the trip when she was awarded a grant. He was a vegetarian in his mid 40s. Karin says there is not one Inca Road but many. She used the famous High Road that runs down the spine of the Andes as the backbone of her journey. She also used a second road that keeps pace with the High Road along the coast and the 15,000-mile network of connectors that crisscross the Inca empire like a spiderweb. The towering Andes and the colorful people provide a breathtaking backdrop to her story. When not footslogging or backpacking Karin and John used motorbikes, trains, trucks, buses, horses, mules, military vehicles, planes and a reed boat. Karin skillfully weaves South America's past history with her own odyssey. I enjoyed reading her chapters about meeting and hiking with a young Peruvian named Ricardo Espinosa also known as "El Caminante" or "the Walker." He is famous for backpacking 2,400 miles along the great Inca desert route of Peru in just over five months in 1995. Karin's curiosity, daring, humor and poetic descriptions are stunning. I could just picture her trying to capture a struggling vicua, whose prized soft golden fleece was once reserved for the Inca god-king. Karin wrote, " I grabbed two handfuls of fleece halfway down his back and off we went. He bounded along on powerful deerlike legs...I sailed around him like an airborne water-skier." I also enjoyed Karin's visit with a family at a Shuar village between Ecuador and Peru. To make chicha the boiled cassava is fermented with human saliva. It is the women's job to sit and stir the mash, suck in mouthfuls and spit them back out. Karin said it tasted like potatoes soaked in lemon and spiced with spit. After two glasses she said she'd swallowed enough saliva to digest her next three meals. Karin said she thought she had embarked on a "hero's journey" filled with obstacles, success and failure and new found knowledge. Except she discovered she was not the hero but the chronicler. The true heroes were the people she met along the way. I disagree. Karin is both a chronicler and a hero. Her adventuresome spirit and keen observations paints a breathtaking portrait of faces and places along the ancient Inca Road. A precious gift to posterity. Karin said the history books have it all wrong. The Inca Empire was never really conquered. It's alive and well.

One of the engineering wonders of the world, the Inca Road was built more than five hundred years ago to link the far-flung outposts of a fabled empire -- an empire that ruled in golden splendor until the conquistadors arrived to plunder El Dorado and put a swift, cruel end to its extraordinary culture. But its legend survives in the masterful masonry of its paving blocks and the ruined glory of ghost cities such as Cuzco. In this vivid, free-wheeling expedition, Karin Muller travels the ancient route to explore its dramatic history and discover new adventures along its length and breadth. "Along the Inca Road" shares the stillness of sunrise in the haunted aerie of Machu Picchu, clings to the roof of a rattletrap bus skirting the vertiginous precipices of the Andes, carouses through the streets of an Altiplano city on Carnival, and inches warily forward as Ecuadorian soldiers probe for land mines with bayonets. Muller's ready for just about anything, whether it's challenging the Pacific surf in a traditional Inca reed boat, locking horns with a bull in a cheering Peruvian arena, or joining a crack Bolivian anti-narcotics team on a hunt for clandestine cocaine labs deep in the jungle. She initiates us into the mysteries of the spirits at a shaman's rite involving hamsters, hallucinogens, and copious libations of moonshine, and high in a mountain meadow captures a struggling vicuna, whose prized silky fleece once was reserved for the Inca god-king alone. And these are only a few of the traveler's tales from a 3,125-mile odyssey encompassing four countries and every form of transportation under the sun, from footslogging, mule train, and motorbike to state-of-the-art military vehicles. As she spins the wool of her stories into a modern tapestry of faces and memories, Muller intertwines a chronicle of the ancient Inca from their race's mythical birth on an island in lofty Lake Titicaca to their sudden plunge from the height of imperial power at the hands of a ragtag band of Spanish

soldiers of fortune. We learn how they lived, worshipped, and warred, and why such a magnificent culture proved so vulnerable to invaders. As spectacular as the mountainscapes that are its breathtaking backdrop, "Along the Inca Road" is a wonderful panorama of past and present -- the kind of sharply observed portrait of a unique part of the world and its colorful people that displays the art of travel literature at its best.

.com What's an American woman doing shaking a pink cape at a bull on a hillside in Peru? Ask Karin Muller, a self-described vagabond who is game for anything, especially if it's a traditionally male task in strictly sex role-divided South America. After years of contemplating the thin red line of the Inca Road on her map of the world, Muller takes off with a grant from the National Geographic Society (which also supplied a cameraman) for a six-month jaunt through Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Chile. Along the way, she searches for remnants of the ancient stone-paved road and jumps headfirst into whatever adventure she can find. First stop, a cuy doctor whacks her on the back and head with a whimpering guinea pig, then offers her a diagnosis based on the quality of the animal's intestines. She's tear-gassed in an indigenous antigovernment protest, and dresses in an orange cloak, gold sparkles, and black face paint (a concoction made of tar and animal fat) to pull a 200-pound roast pig during the Festival of Mama Negra. In a surreal moment, she witnesses the mysterious crash of a Brazilian military helicopter in the Andean highlands, and in a horrific one, crawls through a mole-like tunnel deep into a mountainside where men spend years digging for gold, leaving only to eat, wash, and haul their ore 423 steps to a giant crushing machine. She even watches a military crew clear live mines planted by Peruvians during the Ecuador-Peruvian border war. Throughout her adventures, Muller weaves a lively history of the rise and fall of the Incan empire. While the old road is hard to find, the Incan legacy is everywhere, from curanderismo (shamanism) to roundups of golden-fleeced vicunas by villagers spread in human chains to the farming of coca leaves. Her explication of the coca tradition is particularly interesting: the "quintessential Andean sacrament" and the ultimate marker of indigenous identity, chewing coca leaves is akin to sharing a cup of coffee. Of course, she also joins a Bolivian special forces drug patrol in the to see the more familiar face of cocaine. While Muller doesn't slow down long enough for introspection or much genuine human connection (and you have to occasionally wonder about her cultural sensitivity), she does have a remarkable knack for putting herself in the middle of events, and an unflagging enthusiasm for taking risks most tourists wouldn't dream of. --Lesley Reed

From Publishers Weekly Hoping to embark on a "hero's journey," Muller (Hitchhiking Vietnam) makes the most of a National Geographic grant to explore the ancient Inca Highway that runs through the Andes. Explaining her intention, Muller writes that heroes "are not the strongest nor the bravest, nor even the most deserving. But they all share one trait: They are traveling into the unknown." In this spirit, Muller travels over 3,000 miles through Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile for "six unscheduled months to take advantage of every opportunity that comes my way. To spend time with farmers plowing their fields and cross the high plains with a llama caravan." Muller's enthusiasm and interest are unflagging whether in the midst of a dangerous political protest in Quito or undergoing a traditional guinea-pig healing session elsewhere in Ecuador. ("A razor blade materialized and the animal was slit from chin to tail, its skin pulled off like a glove.") While Muller admits difficulty in abiding by some cultural practices encountered, "the trouble was my own upbringing," she admits, "the only real religion in my family was science." As she proves fearless and open-hearted, loath to pass up any experience. Muller even goes out of her way to join a physically and emotionally grueling patrol to remove land mines in the Cordillera mountain range, never complaining that what was said to be a "demonstration" was actually a field of live mines. "That night I dreamt of wandering through a field of exquisite purple flowers," she writes. "I leaned down to pluck one and vaporized." Muller weaves substantial bits of South American history, geography and current events throughout the text, a fitting tribute to an extraordinary odyssey. 16 photos. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

The multilingual Muller is best known for Hitchhiking Vietnam, a book and PBS Special based on seven months of traveling around Vietnam. For her next challenge, Muller decided to follow the ancient Inca Road from Ecuador to Chile, this time with the help of National Geographic, which provided her with funding and a cameraman. The results of the trip are an upcoming documentary and this thorough and enjoyable book, which paints an interesting portrait of the people the author meets. Despite the often rough and very uncomfortable conditions on the trip, Muller never complains. Instead, she focuses on the warm hospitality of the people, the turbulent history of the region, and the beauty of the countryside. Her daring spirit compels her to take part in several adventures, such as participating in ancient festivals, going down into a gold mine, trying her hand at bullfighting, and accompanying the Bolivian army on a cocaine raid. Muller's account is a lot of fun for armchair travelers but would also be worthwhile for anyone interested in learning about the region. Recommended for all travel collections. DKathleen Shanahan, Kensington, MD Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.