



A Most Hostile Mountain : Re-Creating the Duke of Abruzzi's Historic Expedition on Mount St. Elias

Jonathan Waterman

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In 1897 an Italian nobleman--Luigi of Savoy, the duke of Abruzzi--set out to climb North America's second-highest peak, the 18,008-foot Mount St. Elias (known to the native Tlingit people of Alaska as Yasetaca). A century later, the author of *A Most Hostile Mountain* attempts to recreate this same land-sea journey by sailing north out of Seattle and into the Gulf of Alaska. While Abruzzi traveled with an army's worth of supplies and numerous porters to shoulder creature comforts fit for a duke, Jonathan Waterman chooses the relative quiet of a single companion in his attempt to retrace the duke's historic expedition. Once on the mountain, after a hectic passage via a small sailboat, the climbers endure a variety of difficulties: harsh weather conditions, avalanches, a lack of food. As their circumstances become increasingly dire, Waterman finds refuge in the journals of the duke and his men. Taking his cue from these voices of the past, the author seeks solace in ideals held worthy in the Age of Exploration--a pure desire for adventure and knowledge that transcends the more modern notions of ego-driven success. The result is an engaging narrative that has its crampons firmly imbedded in the ice.

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