



A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains

Isabella L. Bird

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Isabella Lucy Bird (1831 – 1904) was a nineteenth-century English explorer, writer, photographer and naturalist. With Fanny Jane Butler she founded the John Bishop Memorial hospital in Srinagar. She was the first woman to be elected Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. In 1854 her life of travelling began when the opportunity arose for Isabella to sail to the United States accompanying her second cousins to their family home. Her father "gave her 100 and leave to stay away as long as it lasted.". Her "bright descriptive letters" written home to her relations formed the basis for her first book "An Englishwoman in America" published by Murray in 1856. John Murray, "as well as being Isabella's lifelong publisher, ... one of her closest friends. " In 1872, going first to Australia, which she disliked, and then to Hawaii (known in Europe as the Sandwich Islands), her love for which prompted her second book (published three years later). While there she climbed Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. She then moved on to Colorado, then the newest member of the United States, where she had heard the air was excellent for the infirm. Dressed practically and riding not sidesaddle but frontwards like a man (though she threatened to sue the Times for saying she dressed like one), she covered over 800 miles in the Rocky Mountains in 1873. Her letters to her sister, first printed in the magazine Leisure Hour, comprised her fourth and perhaps most famous book, A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains.

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