



Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality

Mabel Dodge Luhan , John Collier Jr. (Foreword by) , Lois Palken Rudnick (Introduction)

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In 1917 Mabel Sterne, patron of the arts and spokeswoman for the New York avant-garde, came to the Southwest seeking a new life. This autobiographical account, long out-of-print, of her first few months in New Mexico is a remarkable description of an Easterner's journey to the American West. It is also a great story of personal and philosophical transformation. The geography of New Mexico and the culture of the Pueblo Indians opened a new world for Mabel. She settled in Taos immediately and lived there the rest of her life. Much of this book describes her growing fascination with Antonio Luhan of Taos Pueblo, whom she subsequently married. Her descriptions of the appeal of primitive New Mexico to a world-weary New Yorker are still fresh and moving.

-I finished it in a state of amazed revelation . . . it is so beautifully compact and consistent. . . . It is going to help many another woman and man to 'take life with the talons' and carry it high.---Ansel Adams

Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality Details

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From Reader Review Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality for online ebook

Elly Sands says

I totally lost myself in this book. I loved it. Living in the Southwest for over 20 years and loving it, I could relate to the author. Mabel Dodge Luhan, a renown artist's patron and elitist, moved to Taos, N.M. in 1917 seeking a "real life." She found it in the magnificent landscape and the Pueblo Indians, one of whom she married. This book is filled with her philosophical thoughts and although sometimes overly flowery I still found them poignant. This is a book I will probably read again. I like where it takes me.

Tara says

Reading about Mabel Dodge Luhan's renunciation of a New York life of artists and talk and pretensions in favor of the "real" life of Taos Pueblo is riveting reading while in Taos itself (not so much otherwise). The text is a bit repetitive and overly rapturous at times but generally strong and spare in its account of how one woman changed her life and her landscape.

Virginia says

I found the first 150 pages or so fascinating, with sumptuous descriptions of early (from the European point of view) Taos. Unfortunately, Mabel then lapses into mysterious, noble Tony/Native American musings.. It was rough going.

Susan Dahle says

It's a well written memoir. If you are interested in southwestern history and culture, art, the development of Taos NM (as I am) then I think you will find it worth reading. If not then you will probably be bored with it.

Robert Vaughan says

A fascinating story about a woman who passed a legacy on, creating such a vibrant life carved out of the American West. You can feel her presence on the campus of the Mabel Dodge Luhan House. Just visit it to find out!

Jules says

This is Mabel's point of view - sweet and touching at times, yet she highlights the best part of her life without

the tragedy. Inspiring to see what life was like in Taos when she arrived.

Karen says

An amazing personal story of life in the Southwest in the 1920's. I travel to this area each year and continue to search for books written in and about Taos and New Mexico in general.

franciszka says

an amazing way to get a sense/feel for a taos / northern new mexico as it was blooming in the early 1900s (through the eyes of a white artist/socialite landing there who can get real tokenizing about the native population).

Debra Lambert says

love the lodge...love the story.....can't wait to read the other books mabel has written.....

Mary says

Good portrait of Taos. A bit too taken with her "new" life. Winter in Taos is a far better book.

Sara Gray says

Three and a half stars. While slow at times, this engaging memoir about a New York boho socialite moving to Taos in 1917 made me desperately homesick for the desert west. Luhan had many lovely descriptions of the landscape and the daily life of the Indians and other denizens of Taos I found interesting, and I had to laugh at her silly socialite ways as she adapted to the different pace of life in Taos. And, as forward-thinking as she was then about preserving the Indians' culture and beliefs, she errs on the side of over-idolizing the Indians until they resemble (in her text) the New Age totems that well-meaning, yet clueless white people try to emulate even now. Still, at least her heart was in the right place, and she tells of it in interesting, funny, sometimes catty, sometimes lovely prose.

Katy says

I read "Edge of the Taos Desert" after visiting northern New Mexico recently. We stayed in a B&B that grew

out of a home where Mabel Dodge Luhan lived when she first arrived in Taos, adjacent to the Taos Pueblo, with a view of Taos mountain. I intended to skim the book, but after reading a few pages of the beautifully written memoir, I was hooked. Mabel Dodge Luhan wrote three previous memoirs of her life before Taos, when she was a wealthy woman first living in Buffalo, Italy, and NYC. She had an entourage of radicals and intellectuals around her constantly (one of her former lovers was John Reed, the role played by Warren Beatty in the film "Reds").

Luhan came to Taos in 1917 from the east, seeking to change her life. This book is her impression (written in 1937) of that transformative time in her life. She began to visit the Taos Pueblo and made friends with the women and girls by teaching them knitting. Most importantly, she met Antonio Luhan, a Taos Indian, and their relationship develops in a subtle, non-verbal way. They become "soul-mates" in the truest sense, and she built an adobe house with him and remained in Taos for the rest of her life. There are descriptions of wagon and horse rides into the mountains, and south to the Santo Domingo Pueblo. And an amazing story about her treatment with "medicine" (peyote) by her friend (future husband), Tony Luhan.

Luhan also famously hosted many well known artists and intellectuals in her Taos home, including D.H. Lawrence, Willa Cather, Ansel Adams, and Georgia O'Keeffe. But this book is about her personal and philosophical transformation, the beauty of the high desert, and her deep connection to the Pueblo Indians. It is a book that took me away to another place and time, and I will read it again. The sequel to this memoir is "Winter in Taos", the last in the series of Luhan's memoirs.

Bob Finch says

A well-written memoir of an idle-rich spoiled heiress seeking meaning in her life. Seems she found it in Taos, New Mexico, after marrying a native of the pueblo there, primarily by playing host to artist such as Blumenschein who were making a name for the Taos art community.

Nicolena Johnson says

good capture of the taos area

Joanne says

Mabel, no matter what fancy terms you used for your affair with Tony, cheating is cheating. I did enjoy the descriptions of Taos, the meals, and the locals. I didn't enjoy reading that Mabel taught Tony's wife to knit, all the while coveting her husband.
