

KHUMBU

Gateway to Mount Everest PATHWAYS TO KINSHIP



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By Peter Laurenson, published by Bateman Books 2021, hardback 220 pages, RRP \$69.99

Reviewed by Andy Carruthers, NZAC Wellington Section

I was instantly captured by the image of dramatic, steep landscapes with hanging villages and the world's highest mountains as the backdrop (DPS page 144-145). I can't wait to visit.

For over three decades, photographer Peter Laurenson has repeatedly visited Khumbu, the Nepalese gateway to Mount Everest and home to the Sherpa people. A chance meeting with a Sherpa family sparked a friendship that grew as Peter brought his three sons to trek through this amazing region.

I have followed Peter for many years and enjoyed his photos and writing in *Wilderness*, *Backcountry* and *Vertigo*. Peter explores many mountainous regions and always brings home a story and an amazing collection of photos. He inspires many kiwis to get out into our wilderness areas.

Peter's first visit was almost by accident after political unrest closed trekking trails in West Bengal. Looking across the valleys and ridges towards Kanchenjunga, Peter's instincts were to get closer to the Himalaya.

“During our approach to Nepal, I felt an unexpected sense of wonder that intensified as we drew closer. While India had offered a fascinating tsunami of humanity, here in Nepal nature seemed to play the more dominant role. By the time we reached Lukla, the gateway to Khumbu, I was hooked – far more so than I knew at the time.”

I really enjoyed the story of the Sherpa families, especially daughter Phura and her life journey dotted throughout the book, her story of moving away to study, finding work and how she increased the bond between the families.

I loved the father son adventures – Peter took each of his three boys to Khumbu as they reached 15 years of age; this inspires me to create more adventures with my kids. Peter, Ben, Ed and Will shared incredible journeys in spectacular landscapes.

The photography is outstanding, Peter is a master of splicing together photos to show off incredible mountain panoramas. The photos make you feel like you are there. Khumbu is full of the most amazing vista's that have me looking forward to my first visit.

Peter is passionate about exploring off the beaten path, his energy for exploring area's less travelled is inspiring. As readers we are taken to remote vantage points to see Khumbu's beauty.

Great adventure books need great maps and Peter's collaboration with Roger Smith of Geographx adds an extra dimension to the book. I found myself often referring back to maps that showed the route and the key points in the area, at the start of each chapter. In addition, the many photos marked up with mountain names and routes makes it easy to understand each location.

I felt sad about the impacts of rapidly increasing human activity on Everest and the growth in tourism in the region. We face some of the same issues in our beautiful country.

With each of the journeys the book took me deeper into the essence of Khumbu, I looked forward to reading the next chapter to find out how Nima and her family were, what Ed's experience would be like, and which area would be explored next.

I think the book is a fantastic achievement, with beautiful photos, an interesting story about the friendship between two families and adventures in one of the remarkable regions of the world. People looking to visit Khumbu, like me, will get insights into the opportunities to explore deeper than the normal 'ants' trail'. I expect people who have visited will enjoy being taken back there with the photos and Peter's story; it might inspire another trip. My copy is sitting on my coffee table and is getting lots of attention. This is a must purchase for mountain lovers.

FMC's Mountain and Forest Trust and NZAC's DOW Hall fund provided publication grants to support the book. By quoting coupon code NZAC01 at the shopping page on www.batemanbooks.co.nz NZAC members can buy a copy of *KHUMBU Gateway to Mount Everest Pathways to Kinship* with not only a 20% discount (\$56.00), but free freight within New Zealand.