

How Heavy is the Mountain

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How Heavy Is The Mountain, begins in 1986, as a young college graduate, Kris Westerberg, arrives in Ketchikan, Alaska for the first time. As a fresh recruit to an Alaskan touring company, he faces a summer of unknown adventure and, along with two of his companions from the Outside, gets to know southeast Alaska through his tour-guiding, excursions to sites of local color and the occasional fishing mishap. Kris returns for another summer of touring in 1987, this time to Skagway, Alaska, launching site of the Klondike Gold Rush. Here, Kris and his friends take up residence in a retired Gold Rush-era brothel and begin to dig deeply into the local experience, not only through touring but also via Slow-Bicycle Racing, sauna expeditions in the Dyea bush, Hot Red Onions and a backcountry trek over the historic Chilkoot Trail. In the summer of 1988, Kris is assigned as a guide out of Fairbanks, Alaska. He is quickly accepted into the fraternity of long-haul tour drivers as he begins to make the circuit among Fairbanks, Dawson City, Denali National Park and many other locales. Then, in the tiny hamlet of Tok, Alaska, he meets a very unlikely person: Genna, the woman of his dreams. Their ensuing romance takes them from midnight gardening to a Summer Solstice party, through a devastating forest fire and, ultimately, to a promise to spend an Alaskan winter together, in a remote cabin near Skagway. The winter of 1988-1989 tests Kris mettle in a wholly new way, as he and Genna explore the vagaries of living among the elements together. They manage to survive, and even thrive, despite indiscriminate icestorms, unheated Volkswagens and frosty outdoor privies with their relationship, and their sanity, more or less intact. And, as the springtime finally dawns, Kris begins to realize that, rather than being just a tour guide, he is becoming a true Alaskan, in every sense. How

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