

Walking

CHRISTINE BROOKS COTE



I’ve walked the beaches of southern California—in summer and winter; under a bright-blue sky, skirting crowds of people, the sand hot under my feet; under a starry sky, feeling the rhythm of the crashing waves, appreciating the solitude, smelling the smoke from campfires on the beach.

I’ve walked the beaches to inhale the salty ocean air and allow the advancing waves to wet my feet just moments before they quickly recede, enjoying the back and forth motion of the water.

I’ve walked the beaches while wrapped in a blanket of fog so thick that I couldn’t find my way back.

I’ve walked the beaches with joy in my heart, and I’ve walked with tears streaming down my face. I’ve walked the beaches to find myself in the magic and mystery.

CHRISTINE BROOKS COTE founded Shanti Arts in 2011 to revel in nature, art, and spirit. She has called Maine her home for the last thirty years.

image info



I’ve roamed city streets—San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Denver—finding local landmarks, neighborhoods famous for their history and culture, beautiful buildings and bridges. I’ve roamed city streets and parks, taking a seat and watching people pass by. I’ve roamed city streets for the best of local foods, the finest bakery shop in the city, and the coffee shop with exceptional lattes.

I’ve roamed city streets for the excitement of it—encounters with street musicians, artists, poets, parades; people who don’t look or speak like anyone in my town; the sounds of traffic, buses, police cars; the smells from food carts, vehicle exhaust, rain on the pavement.

I’ve roamed city streets to enjoy the cacophony, to feel stretched and invigorated by the enormity and brilliance of it all.

I've climbed the granite mountains of Maine and New Hampshire—easy, gradual ascents as well as steep climbs that took everything I had to give; on easy-to-follow trails worn by the thousands of feet that came before mine; over and around massive boulders that at times had me crawling along on all fours; past the tree line to discover the beauty of the alpine meadows, home to tiny grasses and sedges, and lichen that not long ago supported herds of caribou.

I've climbed the granite mountains to be rewarded by breathtaking views at the top . . . but found that the real reward was the effort, making slow progress, putting one foot in front of another over and over again; the real reward was the moose and bear and hawks and toads encountered along the way; the real reward was the pleasure of sitting on a rocky ledge for a few minutes to eat crackers and peanut butter and drink some water; the real reward was the combination of tiredness and exaltation that filled my body and spirit.



I've tramped through the forests of northern Maine—through softwoods . . . white pine, spruce, hemlock; through hardwoods . . . maple, ash, birch, beech, aspen. I've tramped through the forests on my way to a pond or lake, dragging my kayak behind me. I've tramped to watch my beautiful red dogs run through the woods as they enjoy the sights and smells. I've tramped to find a log to sit on just to watch and listen to what is around me . . . animals, blooming wildflowers, falling acorns or dead tree branches, the wind in the trees. I've tramped just to see where the trail ends.

I've tramped through the forests, smelling the heavenly scent of spruce trees, crunching dry leaves underfoot in the fall, moving silently on fallen evergreen needles in the summer, and squeaking on a thick base of snow in winter.

I've tramped through the forests to deepen my love for them.



I've walked to be in the moment, to let go of whatever difficulties and confusions occupied my mind, to feel the physicality of the experience, to absorb the natural world, to seek and find pure pleasure.