

Challenging Australia Reviews:

5 stars Diane Scott Lewis “Exciting Australian Adventure”

Set in 1840s Australia, a land fraught with hardship, Ms. McGill writes a well-researched story of adventure and romance.

Jo and Tim forge a life in this wild land, overcome many dangers as the author weaves in the settling of New South Wales. I enjoyed learning about the history of Australia. This is book three of the Settlers series but can be read as a stand-alone.

5 stars “A Journey through History” Rosemary Morris

Some of the characters in Mystic Mountains and Distant Mountains feature or are mentioned in Challenging Mountains the third novel in the Settlers series set in 1840 in the colony of New South Wales. The colony is expanding now that convicts are no longer transported to the East Coast, and free squatters settle on lands between Sydney and Port Philip in the south.

Tim is bored by his position in a government office. Jo, whose parents were killed at the gold mines by bush rangers, is equally bored with her life. When Tim is about to leave for Port Philip with his Uncle Carlos, Jo, dressed as a boy, accompanied by Billy, a native, who wants to find his family, arrives. She is determined to join them and insists she can cope with the month-long-journey, says she has enough money for her needs and that Billy, who promised her father to look after her, will be an asset. In search of adventure and a new life in Port Philip, a new settlement, they set out. Jo thinks she can take care of herself. She ignores Tim’s advice about avoiding predatory males. “Despite Jo’s, at times, stubborn ways, she is a beautiful, talented woman.” Tim cannot decide if he wants to marry her. “There were times when he thought Jo was wise beyond her years. In comparison he was like a green youth. Then again she would offer him challenges he would relish.”

The author introduced me to the history of New South Wales, which I knew little about. She also took me on an interesting journey from place to place, during which the characters encountered ‘the good, the bad and the ugly’. After naïve Jo, dressed as a young man, is assaulted, they are deserted by their wagon master and his team. From then on, they encounter almost naked natives, are attacked by bushrangers, make dangerous river crossings and are horrified by a murder. Halfway to Port Philip, they no longer think of their expedition across challenging mountains as an adventure.

When I reached the end of Challenging Mountains, I was completely satisfied and, with regret, parted with Tim and Jo.

4 stars “rather like an Australian goldrush...great story” our town book reviews

What I thought in maybe the first 20 pages was going to be a good read of young people and life turned out to be a really good read of all ages facing the challenges of life in a new land. People of all ages enduring the hardships of moving to a land the government said they could take for a pittance. Of course, it happened to be land inhabited by natives. Sound like the United States taking away and settling land that many thought belonged to Native Americans? It is somewhat the same idea but not your same old story.

This story told by Tricia McGill has intense characters. Strong characters you’ll enjoy and some bad ones you’d just as soon do without. Not much different than life is it? It’s listed as being of the historical romance genre. Many of you have seen me write here that I am not a romance genre girl and I’m still not. It’s true that in the journeys of this story a few people fall

in love. This too is not much different than life. But I didn't have to read about their intensely personal bedroom feelings. Was it implied or even mentioned a little? It was, but somehow it all seemed a part of the flow of the story.

It all seemed to blend in to one of those stories that keep you turning the pages as fast as you can. I didn't want to take a break with this book, and I didn't take many.

4 stars "An Era's Ending" Janet Walters

20 August 2019 - Published on Amazon.com

"I enjoyed reading the final book in this trilogy about the mountains of Australia. Both the hero and heroine bring different challenges to the story. Along with their adventure, the hero's uncle has his own challenges. Reading about the frontier days in Australia showed me many things I didn't learn in school about this wide and varied land. **The heroine and hero both have strength and courage.**"

4 stars Reviewed by Long and Short Reviews.

<http://www.longandshortreviews.com/book-reviews/challenging-mountains-by-tricia-mcgill/>

This book was an easy read and was also an interesting look at the history of New South Wales. I loved the characters – it reminded me a bit of watching an old TV show. I could see the action taking place in my mind's eye.

I absolutely loved Jo (well, there were times near the end of the book I wanted to shake her...but I don't want to give away any plot points, but I was disappointed in her then). She knew what she wanted, and she wasn't shy about going after it. She had spunk.

I did get aggravated the way Tim kept calling her a wench. It seemed rude, but for the time and area it might not have been. I knew he didn't mean anything by it. After all, they had been friends for years, but I grated on my nerves just a bit. But, that's just me and probably wouldn't bother anyone else.

I enjoyed this book so much, I want to now go back and read the two earlier books in the series. Good job, Ms. McGill!

4 stars Australian Historical Romance Andrea J. Guy

I love historical novels set in different settings, and Challenging Mountains was set in New South Wales. This isn't a place I've read about before so it was a learning experience while I read.

I loved the strength of Jo, though at times she could be frustrating. But isn't that how most people are in life? You can't be perfect. I had to remember the setting was the 1840s and that at 17 or 18 a young girl was really a woman, though Jo often acted more childish and impulsive when it came to important matters.

I liked learning about the frontier of Australia, but I really wish I could have read the first two books in this series. I would have liked to have known the family that shaped who Jo were. Tim was a much more likable character. He is not much older but a little wiser and not as prone to do things that might, oh I don't know, get people killed. Jo is really good for that, let me tell you.

By the end of the book I wanted to choke her for carelessness, especially when she was given warnings about danger and also because her husband was really a great person who cared about her.

I was glad that through a lot of ups and downs Jo and Tim found their happily ever after, though for awhile, I was unsure of it happening. **This was a wonderful short read that had me wishing for more.**

4 stars **Loved the journey for these two and the history of Australia weaved in**
Christine Woinich as Iron Canuck Reviews & More

This story took me up and down. I enjoyed the feisty Jo and her zest for adventure even when she got more than she bargained for. Tim was mostly sweet as well as overly protective. Their attraction through all of the danger and journey kept me reading. There were moments of tears and some laughs. I loved the history of Australia which was woven into the story as well. **I recommend this story.**

Renee Wildes on Goodreads and Bookbub

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show?id=2987472301>

There are parallels between settling the American West and expanding the Australian colonies after the penal colony was ended. People pushing back the edge of the frontier, traveling out into the dangerous unknown. Some for adventure, some for riches, some to find a place of their own. But it takes a special kind of brave, and a special level of independence and resourcefulness.

These characters had it in spades. Tim is bored with his government job. Jo wants out from under her uncle's thumb. And so they stock up on supplies and head out. Only problem is, Tim wasn't planning on taking Jo - he believes a rough trail is no place for a lady. But Jo is no wilting lady. She's spirited and smart and headstrong. What starts as friendship turns into a romance that is tested every step of the way, by both internal and external conflicts. Bad weather, dangerous wildlife, treacherous roads. Not everyone they meet is honorable. The Aboriginal populace is not happy about settler encroachment and defiling sacred lands.

There's something here for everyone. I really enjoyed this story, and had no difficulty following given I haven't read the first two books. I really liked the heroine Jo, even though her stubbornness gets her in trouble when she doesn't listen to the voice of reason. I really liked Tim's patience and even-handedness. **The pace flowed along through a great setting and interesting plot. The reader never gets bored!**