



# **Pink Boots and a Machete: My Journey from NFL Cheerleader to National Geographic Explorer**

*Mireya Mayor*

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A quick examination of her roots, and one may never have guessed that Mireya Mayor would become the woman she is today. Yet, against all odds, this self-professed former "girly girl" daughter of overprotective Cuban immigrants blossomed from NFL cheerleader to Fulbright Scholar to field scientist and ultimately, quintessential adventurer. Now, with more than a decade's worth of thrilling exploits under her belt, Mayor recounts her life in a riveting, awe-inspiring new book.

In a series of short chapters, she relives each exhilarating event with uncanny charm and self-deprecating humor. Readers have the rare opportunity to follow the renowned primatologist around the globe as she unlocks the mysteries of the natural world and endeavors to save some of the planet's rarest creatures. Says Mayor: "I love the adventure, the exploration, the scientific discovery and the documentation. But really what drives me is the thought that future generations--my own children and their children--can one day learn to appreciate them like I do."

Throughout this unforgettable volume, she describes in stunning detail how she survived a plane crash...slept in jungles teeming with poisonous snakes...dove with hungry great white sharks...rappelled down a 14,000-foot sinkhole in search of frogs...draws blood from critically endangered lemurs...was charged by an angry silver-backed gorilla...was chased by elephants...and the list goes. Suffice it to say, Mireya Mayor has seen more in her 30-odd years than most of us will see in a lifetime. Her plucky spirit, brilliance in the face of calamity, and sheer will to succeed make this a classic mission book, and a thoroughly breathtaking read.

## **Pink Boots and a Machete: My Journey from NFL Cheerleader to National Geographic Explorer Details**

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Author : Mireya Mayor

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# **From Reader Review Pink Boots and a Machete: My Journey from NFL Cheerleader to National Geographic Explorer for online ebook**

## **Carly Knowles says**

Let me start by saying that the last 10% of this book was what gave it 2 of the 4 stars given.

The story in and of itself was what interested me most about this novel, her explorations. I think if Mireya had spent half as much time on developing her stories and making them personal to the reader, (i.e. SOME description, please!) it may have been a great book; however, instead she spends 1/2 the time sounding like a bonafide explorer lacking writing skills, details, and creativity and the other half sounding like an empty-headed, stereotypical blonde.

Getting through this novel was tedious at times simply due to how annoying the author was, but her explorations and adventures somewhat speak for themselves.

Overall, I don't regret reading this. I would even recommend it to those that can put up with the annoying "OH-EM-GEE I had to give up my hairdryer!!!!!!!" references. The general summation at the end is what made this story. Maybe I'm being a sap or in particular need of motivation at the moment, either way the overall adventure and empowerment of this book made it worthwhile to me.

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## **Margie says**

Enjoyable, better than expected.

I had never heard of Mireya Mayor before I entered a Goodreads giveaway for it. Apparently I don't watch enough TV. So I didn't expect very good writing.

The writing was therefore better than expected, though not great. It's conversational, but so much is left out! As other Goodreads reviewers have noted, she starts a story, gets to the climax, and then ends it. The example someone else has given of hanging off a mountainside and noticing that her rope was fraying, and then suddenly she's at the top of the mountain, is typical.

However, her adventures are interesting and worth reading about.

I was surprised to find that the book really isn't about her metaphorical 'journey' from cheerleader to National Geographic explorer. It's much more about her actual journeys into jungles and rain forests and deserts. It touches briefly on being a cheerleader and then applying to go on an expedition. That's about it for the metaphorical journey.

I was also pleasantly surprised to find that Dr. Mayor is a PhD. Good on her. I wish her well. I hope this book will inspire young women to pursue their interests

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## **S says**

I could not put this book down. I read it in an entire day. This is because a) it is a thrilling and fascinating series of stories & b) it is a very smooth read.

Mireya is the kind of role model for me and for women & girls across the world. She is not your stereotypical explorer and she's not ashamed that she loves "girlie" things. She's always loved animals and dreamed of exploring in the jungle one day. She becomes an NFL cheerleader (which will always be brought up in regards to her career) and later goes on to get an anthropology degree, explore across the world, become a National Geographic host, and to earn her Ph.D.

No obstacle is too large for Mireya to overcome and she approaches them with a no-nonsense attitude. Her stories of her adventures in the wild are fascinating and will keep you on the edge of your seat. She also delves into motherhood, her journey there, and how it has changed her as well as how she has retained who she is.

My favorite line would probably have to be:

"And although there has certainly been a lot of luck and good timing throughout my career, I firmly believe that the harder I work, the luckier I get."

She recognizes that a lot of what she has attained is due to luck, but also her hard work and effort puts her in a place where she's ready to take on new challenges and adventures.

This book looked interesting on the shelf at the library and I am so glad I picked it up. Mireya has the qualities and character I want to develop and doesn't let fear take control. She is capable and strong and has accomplished so much in her life. This is a great read for everyone and will give you a newfound respect for women in pink boots.

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## **Tara Chevestt says**

Mireya takes us on a journey from her Cuban roots in Miami to her brief stint as a Miami Dolphins cheerleader to the jungle of a Madagascar and so on. She also touches briefly on how having a "pretty face" has made it difficult for her to be taken seriously, how she had to work harder. It paid off for her. She became Nat Geo's first female wildlife correspondent.

And if you need more proof that she's more than a former cheerleader/pretty face, read this book! She travels to South America and the Congo both and braves worms in her feet, scorpion bites, killer bee stings, cock roaches in her pants, possible gorilla attacks, blood infections, and all for the love of monkeys.

To read full review and see some cool facts and pictures, please click on this link:

<http://wwwbookbabe.blogspot.com/2011/...>

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## **Becky says**

I do not think I would have made it past the first 20 pages if this book wasn't for the zoo book club. It was beyond annoying hearing the constant references as another review stated to being a NFL cheerleader, she

grew up with strong women (aunt, mother and grandmother), she is cuban, she likes fashion, she has pink boots, she likes brand products, she is an explorer and she is Ph.d. Most annoying was the cheerleader thing everywhere. It made the animal stories that less interesting. I wasn't sure after awhile if I was reading a book on an explorer or a person that needed a constant pat on the back for her love of boots and being a past cheerleader. I would not recommend this book to anyone

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### **Leo Polovets says**

Disappointing. The title piqued my curiosity, but the actual explanation of how Mireya Mayor went from cheerleader to scientist is not very interesting. There are some neat stories in the book about Mireya's experiences observing various animals all over Africa, but in the end the biography felt trite and the stories were disjoint. A good biography has some theme, like "accept each opportunity you encounter" or "perseverance pays off," but *Pink Boots and a Machete* was theme-less.

Also, the author kept mentioning how much of a naive girly-girl she was, and how she packed nightgowns and pink boots to go to Africa, and similar anecdotes. The first time this happened, it was funny; the second time, it was mildly amusing; subsequently, it felt like the author was beating a dead horse.

The stories of animal encounters in Africa were not bad, but not good enough to make *Pink Boots* a compelling read.

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### **Jes Alexander says**

*Pink Boots and a Machete* is an empowering autobiography detailing how one humble, tree-climbing, bug-collecting tomboy evolved into one of the most recognizable primatologists and television adventurers on the planet. Mireya Mayor holds nothing back - from growing up in a family displaced by political oppression, to finding fame on the sidelines of professional football fields, to her triumphs and challenges in some of the most remote places on earth. You'll be amazed at Mayor's fertile sense of humor, her brutal honesty, and her empowering message that anyone can achieve. Can we have it all? Apparently yes, with some perseverance, determination, and attitude, it seems that we really can.

If you're female, you'll want to be just like her. If you're a guy ... you'll just want her. Regardless, this is the rare autobiography that carries the true voice of its author, and should not be missed.

Jes Alexander, Publisher  
Herald de Paris et Cie.

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### **Kelly says**

I must confess that I had never heard of Mireya Mayor before seeing this book, and so I started reading knowing nothing more than what the title stated. I can now say that Mayor is indeed a very interesting explorer who has faced everything from a plane crash, parasites, charging animals, and sexist jerks who think she's too pretty to be a scientist. Her adventures in some of the planet's most dangerous places are

unbelievable, and the work she has done for endangered species is very inspiring.

The writing style bothered me, though. It was too conversational for my taste, the narration was disjointed, and everything seemed too rushed. Not long after an animal was introduced, the narration was rushing on to the next animal or next adventure. I wanted more closures rather than just glances. And the constant reminder that she was a cheerleader got to be a bit annoying.

But all in all, I did enjoy reading the book. I can relate when Mayor calls herself a paradox. I, too, love makeup and skirts yet wouldn't hesitate to trek through a rain forest in search of insects, snakes and other animals (though I'm no where near as girly as her. Manicures? Dying hair in middle of a swamp? No thank you. I haven't even painted my nails since high school prom). But I will keep in mind that, if ever stranded in middle of the jungle, tampons are very useful in starting a fire.

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## **Janine says**

First off, many, many thanks to National Geographic for sending me a complimentary copy of this book as part of the First Reads/Goodreads Giveaway program.

I'm very torn about rating and reviewing this book.

Mireya Mayor is an astonishing, inspirational woman who has done some amazing things in her adventures around the globe. She's a Fulbright scholar, she's a National Science Foundation Fellow, she has a Ph.D. from Stony Brook, she discovered a new species of mouse lemur and she even worked with the government in Madagascar to create a National Park to protect the mouse lemur's habitat. Impressive.

As a result of her credentials and her enthusiasm, there's a pretty good (and important) story in this book. This, I suspect, is why Jane Goodall wrote the forward.

But. As a reader, to hear Mayor's story, you've got to be prepared to machete your way through some pretty bad writing and a lot of reminders that yes, Mireya Mayor used to be an NFL cheerleader for the Miami Dolphins. Yes, she really likes manicures, and designer labels, and has really good taste in clothing. Yep. Okay. Got it.

I swear at times while reading this book, I could almost smell a marketing-oriented ghostwriter. Or maybe an editor who went way too far in messing with the voice. Because seriously, did she really, only shortly after surviving a near-death encounter with a frayed rope, look down at her fingers and notice that she needed a manicure? ("I was scared and excited but still noticed how grimy my nails were. No question, I needed a manicure." [187]) This book is peppered with these beauty/fashionista/Cheerleader reminders and more often than not, they seem really out of place.

And then there's the fact that the narrative itself is very choppy. Here's the near-death frayed rope experience as an example:

"But then, hanging hundreds of feet in the air, I looked up and noticed that my single, fixed rope was rubbing against the edge of the rock.

The rope had frayed. So had my chances for survival.

I was still quite far from the top and my arms were giving out. I stopped to rest, feeling I could go on no longer. I was an insect trapped in a bromeliad. But I'd seen the fray in the rope, and a sudden burst of energy propelled me on. Somehow I made it back -- in what had to be record time!" (186-187)

The timing, the rhythm -- it feels all wrong to me, especially for a near-death experience. And then to read on and encounter the manicure reference a few sentences below that... argh! It is certainly frustrating to hit roadblocks like these when all you want is for the story to flow.

Because, as I mentioned, there's actually a very good story hiding behind all of these barriers. And I really admire Mayor for confronting the stereotypes and challenges and paradoxical benefits that come along with being a female scientist, especially a good-looking one. I'm very impressed with the fact that she's continued her fieldwork in the jungle after having two daughters, despite criticism. She's brave, hasn't held herself back, and is very much living out her childhood dreams -- something so few of us do. Her journey is inspirational.

And once I accepted that the writing wasn't magically going to get better and that the marketing and cheerleader references weren't going away, it wasn't a bad book. It just could have been so much better. 2.5 stars.

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## **K. says**

Rounded up 3.75 stars, because she's Worth It.

"One of the guides brought up a *big* worm. It weighed a third of a pound and looked like a weird tube. I could only begin to imagine the size of the fish you could catch with it. Bruce made me lick it. He said it excreted a horrible-tasting substance that kept it protected from predators, and he was so right. But it seemed like a good idea at the time." (p. 187)

Mireya Mayor is a former NFL cheerleader turned NatGeo explorer - don't worry, if you didn't get it the first time, she repeats it many, many times throughout the course of this memoir. Mayor tries hard to justify both parts of her personality - the bug-loving little girl who grew up to be the Ph.D totin' explorer, but who is also *still* the cheerleader who loves being able to blow dry her hair. It makes me sad to think that she feels the need to defend it so constantly. It could certainly be the theme - there's threads of it woven into each chapter. The book itself even ends with a chapter of how she tries to juggle the life of a working mother - even if her work brings her away from her children much more so than most.

We begin with the requisite childhood stories of growing up with her mother, aunt and grandmother; all Cuban immigrants who fled during Castro's rise to power with only the clothes on their backs. Her first trip to Guyana as a naive college student saw her more concerned with carry-on weight than realistic packing, but it was there that she was bitten by the travel bug. Not to mention some other, grosser bug that made her hands swell up like basketballs. This trip led to others and then a position with National Geographic, getting paid to do the things she loved best, all over the world. Mayor's writing tone is very conversational and engaging; it makes me wonder if her scientific papers would be more palatable than other exceptionally dry ones that I have read in the past.



Mayor has a theory about gorilla social hierarchy that is somewhat unorthodox, based on past scientific observation: "... the prevailing thought has been that female gorillas are, without question, the weaker sex, forced to play by the rules. At least, that is what researchers had been reporting for decades. However, most of those researchers were male." Mayor posits that perhaps it is the females who actually have the power. Why would this not have merit? After all, how many researchers have defaulted to a male perspective without noticing, even the women? (I am referring here to the stereotypical male perspective, as I believe gender to be more of a spectrum.)

This reminds me of a story that Sandi Toksvig once told:

Years ago, when I was studying anthropology at university, one of my female professors held up a photograph of an antler bone with 28 markings on it. "This," she said, "is alleged to be man's first attempt at a calendar." We all looked at the bone in admiration. "Tell me," she continued, "What man needs to know when 28 days have passed? I suspect that this is woman's first attempt at a calendar."

Mayor's ruminations on this were my favorite portion of the memoir (even though the descriptions of constant jungle hiking and dirty camping were both impressive and disgusting in turn). After all, this idea came to her because she "[grew] up with three mothers." Why wouldn't other researchers be similarly biased/with a separate perspective? As much as a scientist attempts to be objective, they are only human and susceptible to human foibles.

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## **Wendy says**

Oh, god, I loved this.

It's far from a perfect book, mostly because the editing could have been more judicious. Too many references to cheerleading and pink boots (we get it), and sometimes part of an anecdote or a simile or a joke is repeated; I got the feeling that the book was written in parts, and the parts got shuffled around several times, so that no one noticed quite how often some words/phrases got used or that she'd just said the same thing a chapter before. A few too many cliched turns of phrase. And it didn't quite make sense that on one page Mayor talks about getting rid of all possible extra baggage-weight on an expedition, including cutting down toothbrushes, and then just a few pages later she's bringing out hair dye in the jungle.

But that stuff out of the way? Loved. Loved every scientific moment (those moments much more than the TV-production related bits). Loved every reference to her mother and grandmother and how being Cuban has influenced her life. Loved her acknowledgments of the double-edged sword that is her privilege: she's been held back because people don't take her seriously, yet at the same time, she's gotten big and small opportunities that older and plainer women wouldn't have. (Oh, Dr. Mayor, I, too, have occasionally gotten what I wanted by speaking a mixture of broken-foreign-language and tank top.)

In an age of tell-alls and TMZ, Mayor shows remarkable restraint in what she chooses to reveal about her personal life. I loved that, too. I loved the simple and limited way she describes meeting and falling in love with her husband (as well as what she tells, which isn't much, about the circumstances of their meeting and their romance).

I love all the questions this brings to mind for me about cultural and environmental impact of scientific exploration, and the funding of scientific exploration, and the role of the entertainment industry in funding

and in raising awareness. The minimum-impact camper in me screams at the idea of traveling with all those porters. But the minimum-impact camper in me has never tried to spend weeks living among gorillas or climb cliffs few people have climbed.

I'm not sure who I can recommend this too. Too many bugs for Darsa. Melody, I won't say that you will love this, and I wouldn't recommend it at all if I didn't know that you sometimes read women's adventure memoirs; I know what would annoy you about this book, and what you would want more of, but it's probably as good a way for you to spend a Saturday afternoon as any. Also, I think that although there are parts of this that any of you would enjoy--most of my Goodreads friends are mothers, and I think you would be disturbed by the notion of her going out on these dangerous trips while leaving two tiny daughters at home. But that, too, is an interesting thing to think about.

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### **Michelle says**

This book is for every girl who loves lipstick and lizards. For every woman who has been told she doesn't "look" like a doctor or a lawyer or a physicist or a skydiver. For every person that loves action packed, thrilling narrative nonfiction.

This book is about one woman, but it is for everyone.

Mayor's voice is instantly relatable; she has a Ph.D. but she writes like a person, not a scientist. She speaks of her first adventures growing up raised by her three Cuban "mothers" in Miami (hilarious), her college days, which include, of course, her stint as an NFL cheerleader (very cool), and of the journey that led her to be an adventurer, an explorer, and a conservationist (wild). But if you think you already know the most important, the most fascinating parts about that journey?

You're wrong.

This book is one to buy, folks. Read it now. You'll thank me later.

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### **Ashley says**

When I got the chance to read this book, I knew it was going to be great. I love to read books about wildlife and people rescuing the amazing creatures on Earth. This book is all that and more, it is filled with hearting-warming tales, endless adventures, and one truly amazing story. For me it was very inspiring and one day I hope I receive the honor of meeting Mireya Mayor, the author. I also hope to become an amazing explorer just like her, and write a book just as interesting, and natural as hers. The way she describes all the beauties of the places she travels was great, and the way she describes all the bad, scary things out there was truly unimaginable. I'm glad she wrote about the bad stuff to go along with the good, giving you a real look into the world of an explorer, and even devoted a chapter to some of a survival guide!! I would read this over and over again. I especially love one of the first stories of her and her turtle...but thats for you to find out. I

recommend this book to anyone :] I got done reading in like one week, because I couldn't stop reading it when I had the chance. It will make anyone see that you, and you alone, can truly do anything you set your mind to, and don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't...

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### **Erin Shull says**

I liked the story, but this memoir is not really very well written. I wanted to read more about the writer personally and her relationships with her family, friends, and coworkers, and less about which vanity items she packed on her various trips. She mentions the fact that she was an NFL Cheerleader about 85 times, and none of her wildlife experiences are very detailed. I wanted to know more about each expedition and how she felt in her dangerous surroundings, more about her relationship to her fellow scientists, and even to the animals she was studying.

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### **Mireya Mayor says**

Hope you love reading it as much as I loved pouring through my expedition journals to write it.

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