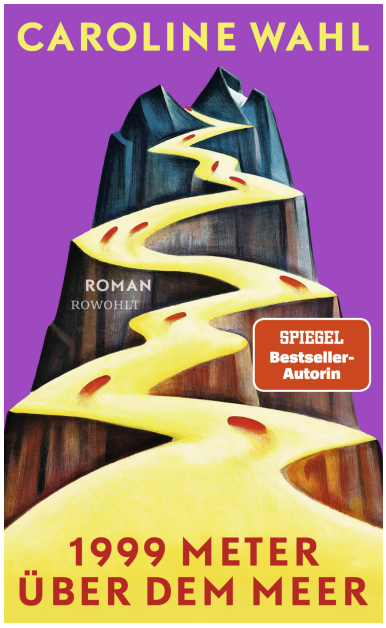



by Caroline Wahl
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Fiction

# 1999 Meters Above Sea

## *1999 Meter Über dem Meer*

## review

A welcome addition to the new wave of female pop literature, Caroline Wahl's '1999 Meters Above the Sea' follows Samara, a young woman moving between identities and locations in search of a life that feels like her own. Beneath the reinvention lies a vulnerable, endearing character, even as she remains genuinely elusive.

The novel opens with a trip to Bali, where Samara invents new identities for herself in conversations with other travellers, despite disliking the heat and the sea. After a moped accident and a mishap on the beach, she returns to Germany. Back home, her father gives her a convertible, and she drives to Berlin, where she works as a PR consultant.

Samara quickly proves herself skilled at her job, despite her persistent feeling of emptiness. At a launch party she meets Fritz, who works in film and invites her to stay at his place in St Moritz. Before taking him up on the offer, Samara obtains a two-week sick note from a doctor, ends her lease, and drives instead to the Allgäu Alps, renting a room from an overbearing but well-meaning older woman. When her plan to hike alone falls through, she travels on to St Moritz. On the way, she impulsively dyes her hair orange and adopts a new persona as a photographer named Teresa.

In St Moritz, Samara moves through the town's wealthy circles, socialising in expensive bars and hotels and gradually building a

reputation among the people she meets. When Fritz visits, he witnesses the extent of the elaborate facade she has built, and the success she has found within it. The two fall in love on the night of an exhibition of her photography, and hike down the mountain together by moonlight. Samara tells Fritz about her fear of settling into a single, honest version of herself, and the book closes with her choosing to stop running, having found in Fritz both a literal and emotional anchor.

The novel is narrated in a pointed, wry first person voice, in short chapters that move quickly between locations. Photography recurs throughout as a theme, tied to Samara's habit of observing life rather than participating in it directly. The dialogue is naturalistic and often sparkling throughout, and the supporting characters, including Fritz and the women Samara meets on her travels, are drawn with detailed individuality.

Wahl's prose is direct and easy to read, addressing themes of loneliness, identity, independence and the difficulty of choosing a life from many possible options. Its portrait of a generation with seemingly limitless freedom and mobility, yet no fixed sense of direction, will resonate with readers well beyond Germany. The novel draws on contemporary pop culture references, including Sex and the City, Gossip Girl, The Holiday and Dua Lipa, and is situated firmly in the present day. It will appeal to fans of Sally Rooney and Dolly Alderton.

Find out more:
https://www.rowohlt.de/verlag/rights/book/caroline-wahl-1999-meter-ueber-dem-meer-9783498007713

Read our interview with Caroline Wahl

## about the author

**Caroline Wahl** was born in 1995 in Mainz and grew up near Heidelberg. She studied German philology in Tübingen and German literature in Berlin before working at several publishing houses. Her debut novel, *22 Bahnen* ('22 Lengths'), was published in 2023, and won a range of awards including the Ulla-Hahn Author's Prize and the Grimmelshausen Promotion Prize. It was also named independent booksellers' Favorite Book of 2023. Wahl's novels *Windstärke 17* ('Gale force 17') and *Die Assistentin* ('The assistant') have attracted

great acclaim, placing high on bestseller lists for months. Caroline Wahl lives in Kiel.

**Previous works:** *22 Bahnen*, DuMont (2023); *Windstärke 17*, DuMont (2024); *Die Assistentin*, Rowohlt Verlag GmbH (2025).

## rights information

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