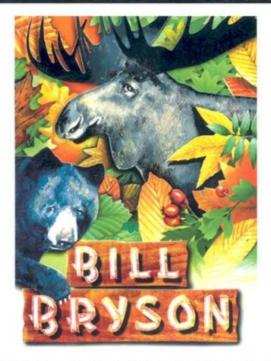


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If nothing else, A Walk in the Woods is proof positive that the journey is the destination. As Bryson and Katz haul their out-of-shape, middle-aged butts over hill and dale, the reader is treated to both a very funny personal memoir and a delightful chronicle of the trail, the people who created it, and the places it passes through. Whether you plan to make a trip like this one yourself one day or only care to read about it, A Walk in the Woods is a great way to spend an afternoon. --Alix Wilber

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Stretching from Georgia to Maine, the Appalachian Trail offers some of America's most breathtaking scenery. After living for many years in England, Bill Bryson moved back to the United States and decided to reacquaint himself with his country by taking to this uninterrupted "hiker's highway." Before long, Bryson and his infamous walking companion, Stephen Katz, are stocking up on insulated long johns, noodles and manuals for avoiding bear attacks as they prepare to set off on a walk that is both amusingly ill-conceived and surprisingly adventurous. John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, and Peter Jenkins never took a hike like this.

A Walk in the Woods showcases Bryson at the height of his comic powers. Meeting up with characters such as Beulah and her fearsome husband, "Bubba T. Flubba," readers risk snakebite and hantavirus to trudge through swollen rivers, traipse up mountainsteps, and develop a new reverence for cream sodas and hot showers. But Bryson also uses his acute powers of observation to conjure a poignant backdrop of silent forests and sparkling lakes, thereby making a gentle but unforgettable plea for the ecological treasures we are in danger of losing. Fresh, illuminating, and uproariously funny, A Walk in the Woods is travel writing at its very best.

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Most helpful customer reviews

23 of 23 people found the following review helpful.

Read It Before You Hike It!

By Gerald Austin Stephens Jr.

I'm a sexagenarian who, on a recent vacation, happened to walk out and back on the first three miles or so of the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail (Springer Mtn, GA) and, in a fit of exhilaration, decided then and there that I would, by golly, hike the AT before I died. I was even so foolish to announce this on social media, which provoked a flood of suggestions that, before making any rash decisions, I read Bill Bryson's "A Walk in the Woods." And so I did. Having years ago read and enjoyed his "Notes from a Small Island," I was not surprised that "A Walk" kept me chuckling--sometimes laughing uproariously. Nor was I surprised by Bryson's skillful wordcraft--the man is a masterful phrase turner. And yet there's more. As I was joyfully entertained by his incisive sense of humor, I was simultaneously and seriously learning history, biology, geology (and several other -ologies) as well as being discomfitted by Bryson's documentation of our culture's dismissive practices regarding ecology. Bill Bryson is very witty, to be sure, but he's also very knowledgeable, does thorough research, and subsequently marshals and seamlessly expresses what he's

learned. In other words, he's a very good teacher. I much recommend this book. And, yes, I'm still planning to hike the AT.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

whew! for that

By JC Davenport

I knew Bill Bryson was funny and I also knew he could be very meaningful. I did figure this would at least be funny. It is of course, but the bigger laugh out louds did seem to be more in the first half for me.

I wonder how Bill plans these things. He had a big bold and also naive plan to maybe hike the whole trail, announced it, spends tons of money on equipment, studies up . . . and then is happy to have a complete non hiker and wild card (Katz) go with him. Maybe he was planning for comedy all along . . .

Well he got it. And adventure. And although yes I did feel like they were wimping out the first shortcut they took – They both became hikers, walkers – going hundreds of miles that I never have.

I was personally insulted that he skipped Maryland – since I grew up about a mile from the trail there. He could have seen our mayonnaise jar shaped stone monument to George Washington (the first one we claim) and that might have put him in a better mood for Pennsylvania!! Being that this book is now 20 years old, I wonder if the PA Trail has improved, or if AT use has increased just because of this book. I hope the trees aren't all dead. Jeesh I need to get out more.

Despite some of the reviewers here labeling Bryson as a "liberal" I didn't get that. Vulgar? Yes, got that. He comments in passing that the national dialog on the outdoors seems to be so polarized that the only two official positions seem to be over deification of nature or outright hostility to nature. That is so true. Has our discussion improved? No but hey our maps are better!! And we have cel phones and Fit Bits!

For me the sad/funny highlight of the book is when Bill is reading the park information sign in Shenandoah National Forest pointing out that the nearby hemlock trees are all dying from aphids that the park service can't do anything about it - but "The good news, according to the board, was that the National Park Service hoped that some of the trees would stage a natural recovery over time. Well, whew! for that."

Whew for that! I'm still laughing at that phrase! Whew for this book!

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Off to the Smoky Mountains

By Okie1010

A friend gave me this book a few years ago because he knew I loved hiking. I loved the book. Made me want to walk the Appalachian Trail, which I hope to start this summer. I've hiked and camped most of my life in Oklahoma, Texas, northern California, Colorado and Oregon, but I've never hiked in the Smoky Mountains. I recently bought this copy to send to a friend. He loved it, too, and he does not hike.

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