



Up: A Mother and Daughter's Peakbagging Adventure

Patricia Ellis Herr

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When Trish Herr became pregnant with her first daughter, Alex, she and her husband, Hugh, vowed to instill a bond with nature in their children. By the time Alex was five, her over-the-top energy levels led Trish to believe that her very young daughter might be capable of hiking adult-sized mountains.

In *Up*, Trish recounts their always exhilarating--and sometimes harrowing--adventures climbing all forty-eight of New Hampshire's highest mountains. Readers will delight in the expansive views and fresh air that only peakbaggers are afforded, and will laugh out loud as Trish urges herself to "mother up" when she and Alex meet an ornery--and alarmingly bold--spruce grouse on the trail. This is, at heart, a resonant, emotionally honest account of a mother's determination to foster independence and fearlessness in her daughter, to teach her "that small doesn't necessarily mean weak; that girls can be strong; and that big, bold things are possible."

Up: A Mother and Daughter's Peakbagging Adventure Details

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Author : Patricia Ellis Herr

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Julie says

What an excellent book! I loved this mother and daughter's story. It is truly inspirational to me. I feel inspired to try more things with my children, to persevere through difficulties, and to be a better example for my children of making goals and doing what it takes to reach them - whatever they might be. I'm also encouraged to keep working on our goal of going backpacking someday soon. May we reach that goal and have some fun!

Marci says

I couldn't slog through this whole book. The mom just rubbed me the wrong way. I hike with my daughter all the time, so thought I would relate, but she just felt so self-congratulating to me, I lost interest in her story.

Courtney says

I'm a bit conflicted about this book. There was quite a bit I connected with, as we are a super outdoorsy family that loves a challenge. But...

Things I liked:

- Mother-daughter adventuring
- Kids spending time outdoors
- Showing that kids are perfectly capable of big things
- The various anecdotes of their time in the mountains. The story of the grouse actually made me laugh out loud

Things I disliked:

- The holier-than-thou rationalizations about what she was doing
- The terribly dangerous situations she put her daughter in for no reason. This is a big one for me. I have absolutely no issues with the hiking, or pushing limits, or anything they did when well prepared. However, there was just some plain lack of preparation. (view spoiler)

Katie says

What a bummer! Although the idea of taking your young children on peak-bagging adventures is inspirational, this book is a boring, pedantic, "holier-than-thou" book to read. I know hiking in the Whites can be dangerous & scary (been there, done that), but she makes it sound as if these mountains are in the Himalayas! For goodness sake, I've taken a stroll up some un-remembered peak with boxes for collecting blueberries, a light jacket and a water bottle (before the days of everyday GPS). Not every mountain hike is an expedition. It was also interesting for me to read the words of a woman whose children have not hit

double-digits preach about the "right way" to educate and raise kids. Didn't even finish the book, nor do I plan to.

Rachel Jacobs says

The book is amazing. It is a wonderful story of accomplishment between a mother and her young daughter. The goal of the two is to summit all 48 4K mountains in New Hampshire. Her daughter is 6 years old when they finish and as you are reading you will be completely inspired to get outside and get moving. I would recommend this book for everyone. I read it in a day and was just completely caught up in their stories.

So glad her daughter encouraged her to write this book.

Kathy says

I hate to spend money on a book and not finish the entire thing. But I almost did just that with this book. The author spends the first part of this book convincing the reader what a perfect mother she is and what an exceptional daughter she has...hiking, home schooling, giving up her Harvard PhD, stay at home mom. Although she states otherwise, she seems pretentious and judgmental. Some of the dialogue between her and her daughter seems phoney. Yes the daughter may be extremely bright and precocious, but I've known a few bright/precocious kids and some of the dialogue doesn't ring true. She asks her daughter if she wants to hike "grown up mountains" then when out hiking they run into a man who apparently hates that her daughter is hiking and he asks why are they hiking "grown up mountains"? Does everyone in New Hampshire call them grown up mountains? How strange, maybe they all need to visit the Sierra's. Now there's some grown up mountains.

Half way through the book she talks about her husband's experience. I won't go into detail, just in case you decide to read it yourself. But at that point I enjoyed the story a little more and decided to finish. But in the end I think the message she taught was not that girls can do anything, but that she and her girls are better than others.

She seems to think she's among a small handful of parents that hike with children. Well, let me just say that in Southern California there are a lot of kids that go to public school, watch t.v., have working mothers and get out and hike with their parents. I've met them.

Lain says

Little people can do big things. That, in a sentence, seems to be Patricia Ellis Herr's theme behind "Up: A Mother and Daughter's Peakbagging Adventure." The book is a memoir that traces author and her five-year-old daughter, Alex, as they attempt to join the Four Thousand Footer Club, ascending all 40-some of New Hampshire's 4K-plus peaks.

Herr makes it clear that it's all driven by Alex, and if the way the little girl is portrayed is accurate, then I buy that. Alex seems to have been born with an old soul, an abundance of energy, and no concept of the idea of

limits. Very cool!

But I'm less sure that the idea behind the book is as altruistic. It wavers between parental advice ("...I think that children are far more capable than most adults realize. Sometimes they just need to be reminded of their own strength."), feminist treatise ("...Nothing much happens to boys who say sexist things to girls.") and love letter ("...Love for my child overwhelms me; it threatens to flatten me. I am so lucky to have this incredible, strong, intelligent little girl in my life!"). And all of that isn't bad, per se, but it does muddy the water a bit, as do the not-infrequent sidebar into "Why I Never Finished my Harvard PhD" and "Why I'm a Stay-At-Home Mom." I honestly didn't care that much if she were a rocket scientist with a string of initials after her name or if she were a high school dropout. It's Alex who's the interesting one (sorry, Mom!).

The book succeeds when the focus is kept on the idea of mother and child accomplishing something together, and equipping your kids to reach their dreams. It falters when it takes on a preachy tone ("...Couldn't I be a proper modern-day woman, stick my babies in day care, and stay the course?"). The judgmental tone, intended or not, will alienate some readers unnecessarily. I had to bite my tongue more than a few times.

All the same, the book was well-written and an enjoyable, quick read. It definitely made me question the limits I place on my kids. And while I won't be joining the 4K club, I may tackle a hike or two this summer.

Kim says

Awesome book! This story of this mom and 5-year old daughter hiking team is amazing! 15 life lessons are highlighted. I must say I learned a few more life lessons as I read this book!

Megan Palasik says

I just finished an "uncorrected proof" copy of "UP" that I received from the Amazon Vine program and I want to start reading it all over again!

I. LOVED. THIS. BOOK!

It made me laugh, it made me tear up a little and it showed me the kind of mother I hope to one day be.

Ellis Herr tells the stories of her daytime, and sometimes nighttime, peakbagging adventures with her 5-year-old daughter, Alex. They climbed the 48, 4,000ft and higher, peaks in the White Mountains of New Hampshire in 15 months.

UP is not only about their hikes over roots, rocks, and streams, but it's about a mother-daughter bond. The chapters tell of lessons they learned along the way, and have titles such as "Ignore the Naysayers" and "Little Things Matter (a Lot)". Throughout the hikes, Ellis Herr explains to Alex all of the dangers they may encounter along the way and why they bring along the equipment that they have. She makes sure Alex understands all of the potential hazards and instills in her that safety comes first, even if you're only a few hundred feet from the summit. She also has some wonderfully narrated discussions with Alex on the trail

covering topics such as feminism and why some people say hurtful things.

Each member of the Herr family has a story to tell in UP. Alex has a younger sister, Sage, who accompanies them on a couple of hikes. Also, Alex's dad, Hugh, who also used to be an avid ice climber before his tragic accident, shares his story with the girls. Even the way that Patricia talks to Alex, in an honest, adult, matter of fact way, is her story as a mother and vowing to not lie to her daughters.

I hope this book inspires parents and caregivers of young children to unplug from the TVs/computers/video games and get out and explore the world around them. While I don't have children yet, I work with toddler/preschoolers and their families on a daily basis and see so many watching hours upon hours of TV every day. You don't have to be near mountains to explore your surroundings and have adventures.

This book was a very quick read. Once you start reading, you won't want to put it down. I will be telling everyone I know about this beautiful book. It's a wonderful story/adventure and I look forward to following the mother's blog from now on.

Jaylia3 says

What do you do with a five year old daughter who is bouncing off the walls with energy? A daughter who you, of course, want to grow up happy, strong and confident? Careful, but willing to attempt large goals undeterred by the expectations of others? Author Patricia Ellis Herr's daughter Alex was thrilled with the idea of trying to climb all 48 of the New Hampshire mountains that are over 4,000 feet. Mother and daughter achieved that goal in half the time they expected to and it became an ideal learning experience involving planning, preparing, pacing, learning from their own mistakes, discovering the joy hard work can bring, being willing to turn back when they ran into trouble, and dealing with people who thought a young girl shouldn't be attempting anything challenging. In this chronicle of their achievement, Herr's descriptions of trying to balance her natural but sometimes conflicting desires to protect but also encourage her child will resonate with any parent. The hikes gave mother and daughter the opportunity to enjoy beautiful vistas, bond over silly songs, and have serious talks about the ways of the world.

Pam ?Because Someone Must Be a Thorn? Tee says

I liked this book. It was interesting to read about the trails -- particularly in the second half of the book-- but honestly I'm not sure why **UP** was written and that's plagued me a bit as I've contemplated writing this review and tryed to sum up what the book means to me.

Now most of the mountaineering and spelunking books I have read thus far have been about the ascent, or descent where appropriate. They've been books written to clarify what happened during a particular climb of K2 or Everest or some other treacherous bit of earth, or else they have been written to expand the horizons of those of us who are more sedate. I didn't get the impression that **UP** was about that.

The first part of the book was about Alex. Or actually Patricia's great love and appreciation of Alex the young dynamo. We learn all about her precociousness and her high energy levels and perhaps this is what **UP** is about; parents love for their child and all the gifts granted her.

But then there's the bit at the end about how Ms. Herr's 'friends' and colleagues couldn't understand why she quit work to stay with her daughters. And that made me think that perhaps the climbing and book were merely an attempt try to justify a life choice to some exceedingly lame neanderthals who couldn't conceive of anyone making a choice different from the one they did.

If that was the case, then Ms. Herr is probably wasting her time. People either get it, or not. You can't forcefully open their hearts and eyes to the fact that their phony-baloney jobs are as important as other people.

Which leaves us where? **UP** isn't a classic mountain book. It is sort of egotistical and gushy. Which is alright. It was an entertaining enough book, but I can't seem to justify more than 3-Stars because it doesn't break out into something more than a love-fest.

Alisha Bennett says

2.5 - there are many ways to review this book; most of them sound a trifle mean. Let's just say that it reads like a parent's defense for why they do what they do. The adventure is hidden behind the parental angst (which is a bit snobbish and feels faked); therefore it will be leaving my bookshelf for a trip to Goodwill.

Madriver (p/b) says

When Trish first told me she was writing a memoir about her hikes with Alex I just assumed it would be an extension of her trip reports that we all write from time to time where we record our hikes and then post them on various hiking boards for other hikers to read and critique. Little did I realize as I began reading that it would turn out to be so much more than just a chronicle of their hikes together, but her dreams and desires for Alex as she explores the world around her laced with its joys and sorrows that we all must experience in everyday life. Some parents try to protect their children against the perils that the world has to offer even to the detriment of the child who will learn late in life that the world is not fair. Alex will have no such handicap, for she was told and shown very early in life how the world can be a joyous place, yet has the capacity for cruelty as well. Each chapter becomes a classroom as Trish and Alex leave a trailhead and hike to a far off peak encountering some of nature's wonders as well as her dangers.

Not every peak is mentioned in the book and I thought it odd why some were omitted; particularly the North Slide of the Tripyramids, which has turned grown men and women into sniveling puddles of humanity, yet Alex scampered up the slabs with the aplomb of a seasoned hiker. Once I finished the book I realized that **UP** is not a trip report, but a mother and daughters' journey of discovery.

On a personal note, I have hiked with Trish, Alex and Sage on a number of occasions and have witnessed firsthand Trish's gentle teaching style and I have no doubt both Alex and Sage will achieve whatever goals or aspirations they set out to conquer in life and this will be accomplished by no small measure due to their childhood filled with wonder and adventures guided by the loving hand of their mother. I love all three, yet Alex holds a special place in my heart for she is an old soul, one who has wisdom, poise, and grace well beyond her years and I suspect that she will be the one to scatter my ashes over West Bond when the time comes. Though don't rush me on that last point.

Liralen says

It started by accident, almost: Herr's daughter was small, but she had boundless energy, and Herr thought hiking might be a good way to use some of that energy. So they climbed a mountain. They had some false starts (e.g., their very first hike, before Herr understood how conditions differ on and off mountains and before she knew what kind of clothing & gear they would need to be comfortable and safe), but one hike turned into two turned into three turned into...forty-eight, and then some.

Up is a pretty quiet book, but it's paced well. There aren't a lot of high-stakes situations to provide tension, but considering that two of the main characters were five and three for much of the book's events...that's just fine by me. (Wait, that sounds potentially terrible. I don't need adults in high-stakes situations either! But if anyone's going to be in high-stakes situations—which can, after all, make for nail-biting reads—better it be adults than kids.) Herr repeatedly emphasises that her kids were out hiking by choice, and that they could stop either a given hike or the overall quest at any point. It's a little repetitive in places, but I suspect she's so emphatic about this because of the criticism she received for taking young kids up big mountains.

Not going to set anything on fire, this book, but that seems about right. Solid, sweet, easy hiking read.

Gillian says

Of all the outdoors books I've been reading and posting about lately, this is my favorite.

I feel like I should dedicate this post to the jerk who recently told me that women are weak and shouldn't go into the woods without a man. (Insert eye roll here). If I didn't have enough evidence already that's he's so wrong, Patricia Ellis Herr offers up a wheelbarrow of backup with her tale of hiking New Hampshire's White Mountains with her five-year-old daughter in "*Up: A Mother and Daughter's Peakbagging Adventure.*"

Herr and her daughter Alex start hiking on a whim, but they're soon addicted to the experience. After a few initial mis-steps (attempting their first peak with improper gear while there's still snow at higher elevations), the pair are soon heading out several times a month to bag peaks. Soon after she turns six, Alex has climbed all 48 of the New Hampshire peaks over 4,000 feet. Her sister, Sage, is soon close behind.

The book is a quick and easy read, hitting highlights of their adventures instead of offering detailed descriptions of every single hike. Chapters are set up as "lessons." Lesson 1: "Some Things Will Always Be Beyond Your Control." Lesson 4: "Ignore the Naysayers."

Herr found plenty of naysayers, both on the trail and in online hiking forums, many of whom worried she was exposing her young daughter to unnecessary risk or pushing her into an activity. But she and Alex also found plenty of supporters, particularly among those who actually met and hiked with them and realized that the drive for the hiking came from Alex herself.

Some of the conversations in the book between mother and daughter feel a little manufactured, but I don't know many five-year-olds, so I will take Herr at her word that hers was smart enough and thoughtful enough

to discuss sexism and being a stay-at-home mom. The discussions are part of Herr's overall message to readers and to her daughters: that girls are capable of great things and that challenges can be met, one step at a time. She writes:

“What matters is that they know, from experience, that they can accomplish something big, something huge. What matters is that, for the rest of their lives, both my daughters understand that to reach a goal, they must put one foot in front of the other and persevere. They know that they must expect and prepare for challenges. They know to ignore the naysayers and, instead, to have faith in themselves and their abilities to learn what they need to know. Above all else, they know that little does not mean weak, that girls are indeed strong, and that practically anything is possible.”

Go girls!
