



A Long Trek Home: 4,000 Miles by Boot, Raft and Ski

Erin McKittrick

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The adventures of a young, idealistic couple who choose to reduce their world down to just two small packs and the next 100 yards in front of them.

In June 2007, Erin McKittrick and her husband, Hig, embarked on a 4,000-mile expedition from Seattle to the Aleutian Islands, traveling solely by human power. This is the story of their unprecedented trek along the northwestern edge of the Pacific Ocean--a year-long journey through some of the most rugged terrain in the world-- and their encounters with rain, wind, blizzards, bears, and their own emotional and spiritual demons. Erin and Hig set out from Seattle with a desire to raise awareness of natural resource and conservation issues along their route: clear-cut logging of rainforests; declining wild salmon populations; extraction of mineral resources; and effects of global climate change. By taking each mile step by step, they were able to intimately explore the coastal regions of Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska, see the wilderness in its larger context, and provide a unique on-the-ground perspective. An entertaining and, at times, thrilling adventure, theirs is a journey of discovery and of insights about the tiny communities that dot this wild coast, as well as the individuals there whom they meet and inspire.

A Long Trek Home: 4,000 Miles by Boot, Raft and Ski Details

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Amity says

First off, you need to realize that I am friends with Erin and Hig. So I am both biased and more familiar with this story than most readers. I kept up with their blog, Groundtruthtrekking.org regularly during this trip. So, yes, I am definitely biased. But I really appreciate Erin's straight forward writing approach. Her honesty. And how she portrays their thoughts and wonders along this road less travelled. It is a quick read. Fascinating. And I hope inspires others to look at the world around them a little differently. We live on an amazing planet that responds to our actions and absolutely deserves respect. Even if you aren't going to go adventure hiking after reading this (Rapids! Snow and ice! Bears!), hopefully you will be more inclined to question our motives for expanding drilling enterprises or initiating more mining operations or even developing more fish farms.

Deb says

Yikes! I seriously disliked this book. I disliked everything about it beginning with the tiny difficult to read font that was chosen to the way the author rambled on in such extreme detail of things that I thought I would die of boredom. After such details I longed desperately for a picture of the place or plant or whatever she was trying to describe but the book has no pictures of anything except the blurry undecipherable picture at the beginning of each chapter. Apparently neither she nor her husband was any good with a camera. I could not finish the book and stopped about mid-way. Guess I must have missed something as others have thoroughly enjoyed it. Oh well... :-(

Lori says

I found this book as I was browsing the Kindle store, and I thought it sounded interesting. After I downloaded it, I realized that I know people who know Erin (author) and her husband (Hig). They've traveled to and through Juneau several times, and it's actually surprising that I haven't met them yet. As I read through their journey, I was able to talk to my boss about his perspective on their year-long trip. He is one of the "hosts" Erin and Hig mention by name in the book. Having that personal connection was a neat little plus.

I think Erin's writing gets better as the book goes on. I had a hard time sticking with the story at the beginning, and maybe that had more to do with the fact that I'm less connected to the BC coast and more interested in the Alaska parts of the journey. Overall, a quick and memorable read. Now I hope to meet Erin and Hig someday!

Kathy says

I've read a lot of books about people hiking, exploring and traveling in Alaska but never a book where a

couple walked, skied and boated 4000 miles from Seattle to Unimak Island, the first island in the Aleutian chain. I completely admire their endurance and spirit - I don't think too many couples could do this. This book is very well written, not only covering their adventures and the stupendous scenery but explores what is happening in various ecosystems and communities along the way. Lastly, Erin & Hig's experiences affect them so greatly that the book ends with them deciding not to return to life in Seattle but settling down permanently in the 300-person community of Seldovia.

Jen says

Right up there with some of the best adventure books I've read. This trek makes some of the more well-known thru-hikes seem tame in comparison. I was sucked in and enthralled immediately. I have an even greater urge to visit Alaska now that I've read this book (and it was already pretty big!).

Happyreader says

The packraft is the star of this journey. A little 5 lb inflatable vessel that seems to be indestructible, ferrying them across treacherous, ice-filled bays and wild river rapids, yet conveniently fitting into their packs or serving as a snow sled/box spring when they were on dry land. And the bears!! Apparently, all you have to do is talk a bear down and they'll lumber off (but don't set up camp on their walking paths).

This couple makes a great team. The year-long 4,172 mile trek by foot, packraft, and skis is all about how a strong couple can overcome, heck relish, whatever obstacles are thrown in their way. The arctic landscape and weather are awesome – and tragic when they trek through clear-cuts and mining territories. For more about them, check out the NY Times article entitled "Broadband, Yes. Toilet, No." about their trek afterlife in their yurt. Love their priorities and spirit of adventure.

Chiara Pignanelli says

A great book for a challenging experience. I'm curious to read more about the environmental changes already taking place at that time.

I really can't wait to go to Alaska even more than I did before.

Caitlin says

I just finished reading this book for the second time. It's a great book.

Amy says

This was a very interesting story about a woman who walked, paddled or skied with her husband from Seattle to the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. The problem is that the journey is the most interesting part about the book. It is lacking in theme, development, reflection; it reads much like a scattered, condensed diary entry. Every once and a while we get a glimpse of Erin's feelings about what she sees and experiences. However she tends to shy away from the most reflective moments. It seems like she has very strong opinions about the natural world and yet doesn't share them for fear of offending someone.

This story had so much potential to be inspirational, educational and thought-provoking however it did not deliver. I read it as a scattered diary that was edited down to the interesting parts. Still these parts were much too shallow, brief paragraphs on life changing experiences. Fewer anecdotes and more meat would have made this book to a new level.

This is a very interesting story about a very interesting couple and their interesting idea to walk to and through Alaska. However don't go in thinking it's any more than a regurgitation of a trip. Think of it as a slide show of a really great adventure. You were entertained but don't want to sit through it again. You get the drift. (hahaha, tides AND snowbanks!)

Mosco says

7/10

Il racconto parte un po' lento poi scorre via veloce. L'autrice, una tipa tostissima, non la fa troppo lunga, anzi a volte piacerebbe saperne un po' di più. E' bello seguire la loro marcia con google earth e cercando foto dei posti da loro descritti in rete. Quello che mi ha più colpita però non sono le descrizioni della meravigliosa natura che attraversano o delle tempeste di neve, vento, marosi, orsi che devono affrontare. Sono le considerazioni sulle evidenti tracce del cambiamento climatico su piante ed animali, sugli assalti all'ambiente da parte di miniere che avvelenano aria, territorio e torrenti dove i salmoni diventano sempre più rari, deforestazione selvaggia, interessi economici (grossi) che se ne fanno un baffo pure dei residenti, sfregi che il passaggio dell'uomo lascia in territori così importanti e fragili. In compenso mi sono commossa quando Maddalena Togliani, la brava traduttrice, ha scritto "battiglia" invece che bagnasciuga! :D
Alla casa editrice contesto il titolo: alla fine della strada trovano famiglia (lei cammina gli ultimi 800 km incinta), casa, stabilità. Non era meglio il titolo originale "A Long Trek Home"? Perché "fine del mondo"? Per scimmiettare Sepulveda? boh. Qui il loro blog: <http://www.groundtruthtrekking.org/blog/>

Judy Detzel says

This was an amazing journey, great read.

Natasha says

I was first introduced to McKittrick while reading an article in NYT's Home and Garden section. It featured their yurt in Soldovia, Alaska. The Article was titled "Broadband, Yes. Toilet, No." It featured Erin McKittrick, her husband and their infant son. It was a fun article and mentioned the book Erin just wrote about their 4,000 mile trek from Seattle to Alaska. Their walk/paddle/ski trip took just over a year. It is an

incredible adventure. I can't imagine walking for a year through the winter! They did it though and plan on taking more journeys like it. The hard part to read was the destruction of the environment everywhere they went. Logging and mining have destroyed the most pristine and remote places.

Krista says

I enjoyed the book, but it felt really rushed. I was hoping for a more detailed look at the trip- what a typical day looks like, what they packed, pictures of their custom gear, why they were using custom gear, etc. I liked reading about areas that are near where I live, but I have never been to.

Owen Curtsinger says

This book is among many to represent a new kind of "outdoor adventure" writing. For McKittrick, it's not about man versus the extreme conditions that nature heaps upon us. It's about a personal exploration and appreciation for lesser-known (and subsequently greater-risk) places that many important and extraordinary people call home. Her writing is observant and informative, and breathes new life into the gender-biased and overplayed "man vs wild" stories that saturate this genre. At some points I found that the narrative was choppy and left me wanting more, but if McKittrick included more journal writings to flesh out the choppiness, my complaint might be just the opposite.

Maria Benner says

This book has great potential, it documents an epic journey, but leaves out a lot of details.
