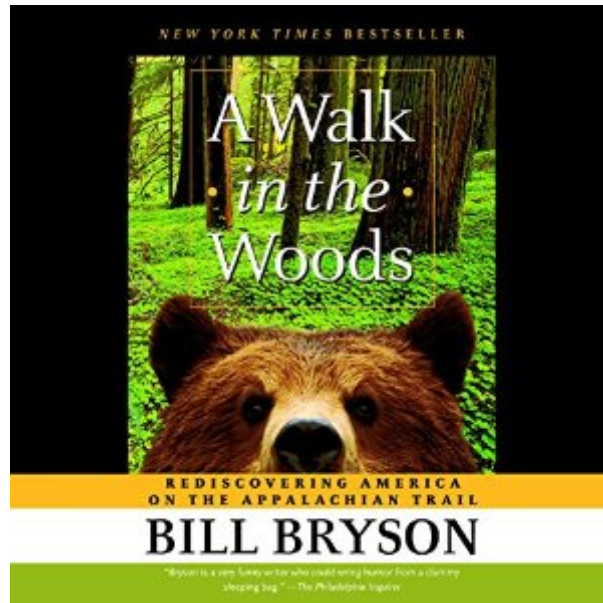


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# A Walk In The Woods: Rediscovering America On The Appalachian Trail



## Synopsis

The Appalachian Trail stretches from Georgia to Maine and covers some of the most breathtaking terrain in America - majestic mountains, silent forests, sparkling lakes. If you're going to take a hike, it's probably the place to go. And Bill Bryson is surely the most entertaining guide you'll find. He introduces us to the history and ecology of the trail and to some of the other hardy (or just foolhardy) folks he meets along the way - and a couple of bears. Already a classic, *A Walk in the Woods* will make you long for the great outdoors (or at least a comfortable chair to sit and read in).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is much more than a travelogue of two neophyte hikers on the Appalachian Trail, and readers looking for a blow by blow account of the travails of Bill Bryson and his companion, Stephen Katz, will be disappointed. Hiking provides only a backdrop to a heartfelt discourse on the social condition of America, local history, the environment, and the complexities of friendship. The pretext for the book was Bryson's return to the United States after twenty years in Britain, and his interest in "rediscovering America" after such a lengthy absence. The vast majority of the reviews of the book cite its hilarity (one reviewer called it "choke-on-your-coffee funny"), and indeed there are very many funny parts. However, the deeper I got into the book, I detected a strong shift in the author's sentiment from satire to deep introspection. His observations became more acute, more angry, and more individualized as his long hike constantly brings to his mind the fragile environment of the Trail, the insanity of bureaucrats entrusted with the AT, and his own personal limitations. This was my

first encounter with Bill Bryson, and while I found him entertaining, a beautiful writer, and an astute observer, some readers will be put off by his sharp satiric wit. It is certain that he will offend somebody. A friend of mine, who also read the book, was very much upset by the fact that Bryson and Katz didn't hike all 2,200 miles of the Trail, and that somehow their "failure" should prevent the telling of the story. This is utter nonsense and just throws more manure onto the present dung heap that has accumulated from the participants involved in peak bagging, wilderness races, and experiential therapy groups.

*A Walk in the Woods* is a travel memoir on the Appalachian Trail, one of America's greatest hiking routes. The author, Bill Bryson lived in England for 20 years and came back to the United States with the urge to go on a long hike. Stephen Katz, an old college friend, and a former alcoholic accompanies him. Both men are out of shape, and beginners at hiking, so it is a wonder how they can endure such hardships along the trail. They had to carry a pack that contained their tents, food, water, clothes and other items. Katz and other interesting characters provide the book with much comic relief to keep the reader involved. At some points in the book I was laughing out loud. Along the journey they meet many people including Mary Ellen a slow-minded woman who follows them around, and Beulah, a fat woman with a very angry husband. The commentary about the long, rich history of the Appalachian Trail brings insight on the wilderness that we hardly know about. It also speaks for the preservation of the forestry and animals that we take for granted in the city. After reading this book I have more appreciation of the wilderness, and an interest in going hiking myself. One downside of the book was that some points in the book the author expanded the book with knowledge that made it a little less interesting, than the actual story. But I liked how Bryson went back and forth to discuss his journey and the history, creating a balance of interests. This book will offer something to any type of reader because it is funny, and contains a lot of historical information, and is interesting enough to keep the reader to keep going. But for someone who wishes to go on a hike, this is not a how to guide. It is also not an amazing adventure of two men and the great outdoors.

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