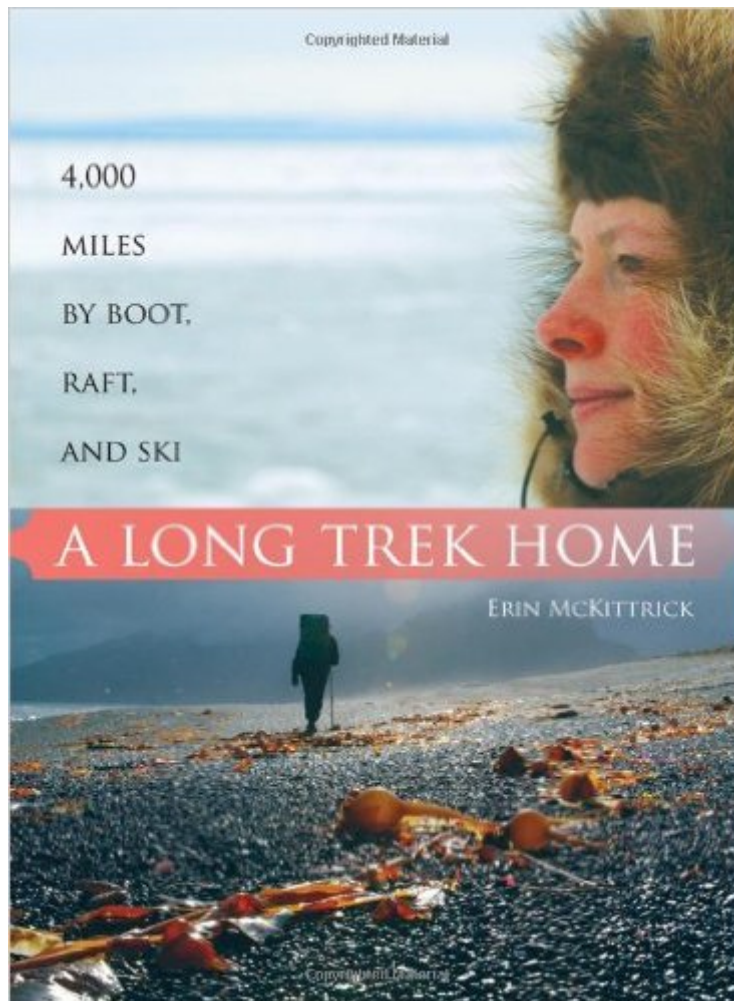


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A Long Trek Home: 4,000 Miles By Boot, Raft And Ski



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This little book tells a big story of two trekkers' incredible journey along the coasts of British Columbia and Alaska. I read a lot non-fiction wilderness adventure and find this book to be among the best I've ever read in this genre. The adventure is compelling enough, and the author's insight into the environmental issues of our time adds a contemporary perspective. But the part I like the

most about the book, is the description of Erin and Hig's relationship with each other and with the people they encounter along the way. I've hiked, skied, and paddled a small fraction of this coast with my wife. Erin captures the wonder, fun, adventure, frustration, anxiety, and love that a couple experiences as they travel together, depending on each other to survive. This is why I think their story will endure.

Although I love the outdoors and I value books that describe the adventures others have had there, I felt I was taking a gamble when I bought this book. It's apparently the author's first book, and I've often been disappointed by new authors' first efforts. Also, the publisher's description emphasized that "environmental concerns" had motivated the book and the trip it described. So I was concerned the book might be preachy and narrow minded. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that none of my concerns were justified. Although the author is indeed concerned about environmental issues (who isn't?), her discussion of these issues was balanced and unobtrusive. In most respects, this was a genuinely interesting description of what must have been a truly great adventure. Frankly, I'm somewhat awe struck that the author and her husband actually completed their amazing trek. And the writing is so good that I look forward to reading more by this author. I believe she has a great future ahead of her, not only as an adventurer but as a writer. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who loves the wilderness and who cherishes the life-changing experiences that they and others have had there.

This book is destined to be an Alaskan wilderness classic in the literary sense of the phrase. Not only was Hig and Erin's packraft and walk journey immense, epic, and original but her story is told so much better in this book than in their on-line blog. It's no wonder that "A Long Trek Home" is already in its second printing. While I am not really a big reader of first person adventure narratives (so can't speak with much authority), I would put the book in the same class as "Arctic Wild" by Lois Crisler, the 1950s story of a couple who spent a year in the Brooks Range filming caribou and raising wolves. Perhaps, and depending on how important Hig and Erin's non-profit activism turns out to be, "Long Trek" might some day land in the same class as "Two in the Far North", the autobiography of Margaret Murie. "A Long Trek Home" is a chronological collection of vignettes of Hig and Erin's 4500 mile trip that stretched over a year -- and into a pregnancy -- from Seattle to the Aleutians. Erin expends most of her text as emotional and detailed landscape and weather description at all scales, from boot-tip and arms length to as far as the eye can see. More interestingly, she does a wonderful portrayal of Hig, who is one of the most fascinating people I

have ever met. She captures him well, but as a reader of the book, and as a fan of Hig, I long for more of him in her narrative. In fact, I'd like more human life and description of the interesting characters they meet and interact with along the way. Finally, she describes -- rather unevenly -- a host of environmental issues that are at the heart of "Ground Truth Trekking." With the exception of the Pebble Mine project, I found the treatments mostly superficial with few new insights, although her personal realization that guided trophy hunting on the Alaska Peninsula is actually a good way to value the land, in contrast to the logging on the other side of the Gulf of Alaska in Southeast AK and BC, was refreshing. But the book really shines in its details of camp and travel life as a husband and wife crossing wild landscapes. Erin's book offers up the best modern descriptions I have read of couples-style wilderness travel, something Peggy and I have done a bit of in Alaska and elsewhere. In 1986 we walked and packrafted for a month across the Gates of the Arctic National Park in one boat. She was two months pregnant with Cody Roman. Reading Erin's accounts of snuggling with Hig, of showdowns with curious grizz, of perpetual hunger, of staying comfortable in worn-out gear and sharing a two-person bag inside a floorless shelter, of reading the landscapes - those vignettes brought back strong memories of our own adventures. Indeed, I got my copy of the unpretentious little paperback on a Wednesday afternoon and by that night I'd read the first two sections, "Summer" and "Fall". The book is a nice size, with evocative B&W photos and Hig's maps are superlative. I finished "Winter" and "Spring" over the following weekend in another push. Her writing is breezy and easy, with some interesting viewpoints and fresh phrases of an activity as old as humankind - one man and one woman together, surviving, living, even reproducing as they cross wild landscapes. I heartily recommend this book to anyone with a packraft, a spouse, and an interest in slow-motion adventure.

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