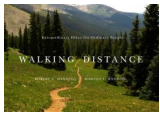


Afoot and Lighthearted



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It's spring, the weather is warming fast, and when you can't go hiking, what could be better than reading about the world's best walks? In *Walking Distance* you'll find trails you may never be lucky enough to traverse yourself, but you can still image and enjoy the photographs. The locations are gorgeous: Peru, New Zealand, Australia, the Alps, Alaska, and Sweden among others. The book also shares many inspiring quotes such as this one from Thoreau, "It is a great art to saunter." Walt Whitman wrote in a poem, "Afoot and lighthearted / I take to the open road," which I used above for the blog title.

Also included is a history of walking where the authors describe how the Romantic writers adopted walking and hiking enthusiastically as Europe turned increasingly polluted and gritty due to the Industrial Revolution. Did you know that it's estimated that Wordsworth walked over 180,000 miles in his lifetime? Dickens, too, spent no less than four hours on most days walking - this is how he filled his novels with such interesting characters and authentic details.

I was happy to note that I had walked sections of several of these trails including my first out-of-state trail, the Long Trail in Vermont. The other two I hiked were the Superior Trail in Minnesota by the lake and (truly superior the last week of September), and parts of the John Muir Trail in California.

The authors, a husband and wife team, explored each trail. They have included lots of practical information: such as available lodging, whether camping is allowed, access points, pubs (in Europe), weather, nearest city for travel, the level of expertise required and whether you can easily hike just part of the trail. Also, there are book lists at the end of each section. Adding to the fun, the Mannings also provided more personal information: their favorite places, whether they did it in season or not, and how prudish they felt enjoying a Swedish sauna in the nude, and oh yeah, where the best blueberries are. Also, I discovered in case you go there without reading this book, moose are called elk in northern Sweden. Got that?

After reading this book, my wish list of "dream trails" has grown longer. Heading it is the Great Ocean Walk in Australia. Also on it is the Cotswold Way in England and Kungsleden in northern Sweden. And topping the US list for me is the Paria River Canyon in Utah and Arizona and the Lost Coast Trail in California.

So if you must stay home this summer, try some trails in our local Deam Wilderness or further south on Indiana's Knobstone Trail, and for night-time reading, dive into this collection.

If you'd like to learn more about wandering on foot, try Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: a history of walking*.

Posted by Dory L. on May 21, 2013

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