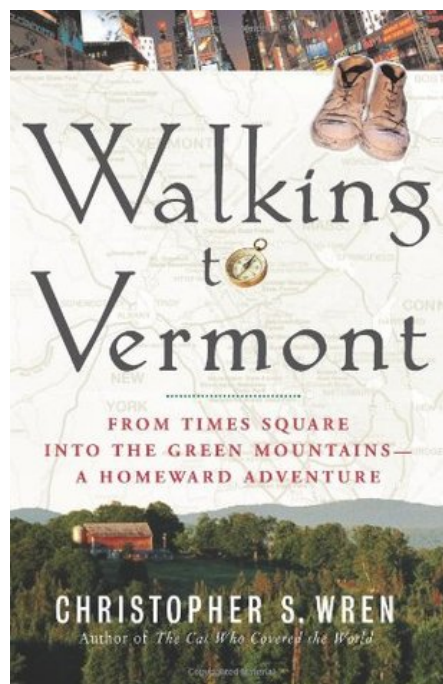




Walking to Vermont

Christopher S. Wren

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A distinguished former foreign correspondent embraces retirement by setting out alone on foot for nearly four hundred miles, and explores a side of America nearly as exotic as the locales from which he once filed. Traveling with an unwieldy pack and a keen curiosity, Christopher Wren bids farewell to the *New York Times* newsroom in midtown Manhattan and saunters up Broadway, through Harlem, the Bronx, and the affluent New York suburbs of Westchester and Putnam Counties. As his trek takes him into the Housatonic River Valley of Connecticut, the Berkshires of Massachusetts, the Green Mountains of Vermont, and along a bucolic riverbank in New Hampshire, the strenuous challenges become as much emotional as physical. Wren loses his way in a suburban thicket of million-dollar mansions, dodges speeding motorists, seeks serenity at a convent, shivers through a rainy night among Shaker ruins, camps in a stranger's backyard, panhandles cookies and water from a good samaritan, absorbs the lore of the Appalachian and Long Trails, sweats up and down mountains, and lands in a hospital emergency room.

Struggling under the weight of a fifty-pound pack, he gripes, "We might grow less addicted to stuff if everything we bought had to be carried on our backs." He hangs out with fellow wanderers named Old Rabbit, Flash, Gatorman, Stray Dog, and Buzzard, and learns gratitude from the anonymous charity of trail angels. His rite of passage into retirement, with its heat and dust and blisters galore, evokes vivid reminiscences of earlier risks taken, sometimes at gunpoint, during his years spent reporting from Russia, China, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South America, and Africa.

He loses track of time, waking with the sun, stopping to eat when hunger gnaws, and camping under starry skies that transform the nights of solitude. For all the self-inflicted hardship, he reports, "In fact, I felt pretty good." Wren has woven an intensely personal story that is candid and often downright hilarious. As Vermont turns from a destination into a state of mind, he concludes, "I had stumbled upon the secret of how utterly irrelevant chronological age is."

This book, from the author of the acclaimed bestseller *The Cat Who Covered the World*, will delight not just hikers, walkers, and other lovers of the outdoors, but also anyone who contemplates retirement, wonders about foreign correspondents, or relishes a lively, off-beat adventure, even when it unfolds close to home.

Walking to Vermont Details

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Author : Christopher S. Wren

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From Reader Review Walking to Vermont for online ebook

Preeti says

Rating: 3.5 stars

I picked this one up as part of my preparations for an upcoming trip to Vermont. Unfortunately, since Wren was walking *to* Vermont, there wasn't really much of the state in the book. However, I did end up enjoying it.

Wren is a retiring journalist - a foreign correspondent - for the New York Times, and decides to literally walk into his retirement. He is walking from his apartment in NYC to his house in Vermont. This involved walking through the city and its suburbs and then walking part of the Appalachian Trail.

Throughout the book, Wren reflects on his experiences as a foreign correspondent, comparing moments in current time with the past. It was really interesting to read his stories.

I also liked his descriptions of all the excesses of Americans, which rang true. Especially enjoyed this tidbit he added: The Chinese describe such excess as "drawing a snake and adding feet." But sometimes, he definitely came off as entirely "you kids get off my lawn!" I.e., that crotchety old man you want to avoid. (Though I can't say I'm not getting there myself!)

Even though this didn't really have much to do with Vermont, I'm glad I picked it up. I need to read more books about the Appalachian Trail (and the Pacific Crest Trail, the West Coast equivalent).

Quotes I liked:

I slept no worse than anyone else might after trudging eleven miles over mountains, downing three beers, grilled salmon, a chicken quesadilla, and a banana pudding pie, then stretching out on a queen-size inner-spring mattress in a darkened room in front of C-SPAN. (p111)

Food writers can be a pretentious, irritating lot, and no more so than when they disparage chocolate desserts as sinful or decadent. Sin and decadence are words that define the human condition, not desserts. Sinful? Dropping poison gas on the Kurds when you're the despot of Iraq is sinful. Decadent? Ordering forty-dollar entrees and sixty-dollar bottles of wine in an exclusive restaurant in Manhattan is decadent, when the less privileged are sleeping on the grates outside. Chocolate is merely delicious, and what's the sin in that? (p121)

Today, American-style adolescence remains a luxury that much of the world still cannot afford. (p198)

Nostalgia's flaw is its selectivity. (p266)

Tito Quiling, Jr. says

Right after finishing a book featuring the sprawling town of Concord in Massachusetts, I went on to read a copy of Christopher Wren's "Walking to Vermont" thinking that I can envision the eastern side of the United

States in a more personal frame, albeit in a specific lens. I picked this book alongside the previous one at the Book Stop Project book exchange. And so far, the titles I took home with me have been in the middle of the road.

In the opening chapter, the tone was reminiscent of Bryson's works, however, as one goes through the next chapters, the author makes it clear that walking from New York City to the suburbs and down to the woods of Vermont becomes an exercise in cognitive mapping. Along the way, he comes to his own realizations regarding specific practices of hikers, particularly handling a different name ("trail name") in order to sort of drop one's scent along the way. But for the most part, the book puts forward the author's musings of his past experiences as a war correspondent, father, among others. At this point, the interspersed memories for me has become a bit of a letdown because it seems to fall short of a deeper view, instead of presenting a mere recollection.

Kristin says

Being from Vermont, I was very excited to read this book! Overall I enjoyed it, but it was a bit random and I was wishing for more insight and depth into how this journey effected him. The few scattered comments about women's features were random and did not bring anything to the book, especially when I would have liked to have heard more about his wife and family.

Jason Phillips says

"Walking to Vermont" is a worthy addition to anyone who collects, reads, and enjoys books on the culture of walking. I especially enjoyed it because it is also a worthy addition to literature related to the Appalachian Trail, and sits on my bookshelf besides Bryson's "A Walk in the Woods", Emblidge's "Appalachian Trail Reader" and Hall's "A Journey North."

This is not a book of discovery -- Mr. Wren knows who he is and is comfortable in his own shoes (but perhaps not his socks). The story reads like both a narrative and a memoir, as Mr. Wren recounts events and stories collected in a life as a foreign correspondent.

Fans of the Appalachian Trail and of the literature associated with it will be very familiar with the themes: trail magic, trail angels, trail names, and the wonderful people that make up the hiking culture.

I have been to the Hanover Ben and Jerry's and have never had a "White Blaze." I will protect my source on who informed me about it, however...

Bob says

A enjoyable book by Christopher Wren as he makes his way from NY City to his retirement home in Vermont and he does the whole trip walking often alone and much of it along the Appalachian Trail and the Long Trail in Vermont. At one point he describes the four geographical zones he pass thorough as, "Go Away, Don't Bother Me, Hello and How Can I Help You" which describes his reception as he travels north away from the city and suburbs into the less settled country. The writing is good and I could easily picture the surroundings as hikes up and down the trails in sun and rain. If you can find it, give it a whirl.

ISBN - 0-7432-5152-0, Non-Fiction, Pages - 273, Print Size - R, Rating - 4.5

All books reviewed are from the library or purchased by the reviewer.

Lee says

This is a pleasant read. I found Wren's tale of his post-retirement walk from Times Square to his Vermont home quite entertaining. He spent much of his journey (once he cleared the hurdles of New York City and its suburbs) on the Appalachian Trail, and he humorously describes the through hikers he meets along the way.

I was less interested in the anecdotes of his time spent as a foreign correspondent for the New York Times, but overall this is an entertaining book. He makes some lovely observations about hiking at 65 years of age and about the New York and New England landscapes.

Ford says

Many of his stories were entertaining but about half way through the book got dull. Learning that you needed a trail name and about "trail magic" and "trail angels" make the book more interesting.

I am glad when I retired we took a family trip to Niagara Falls and stayed at a KOA Campground.

Amy Holiday says

Ironically finished this one in Vermont. Many weeks after I started it. I love a good journey, and one that involves walking (especially on the Long Trail) holds a lot of fascination for me. This one was a bit slow going though.

I liked the concept--a man retires after a long career as a foreign correspondent, and walks from his office to his new home in retirement--but it may have been a little overly detailed--probably could have skipped a couple of days of hiking, pitching tent, cooking dinner, filtering water, etc. The passage of time seemed to be marked better by the notable landmarks and the trail companions.

The anecdotes about life as a foreign correspondent were interesting, but only seemed very, very loosely connected to the author's travels. I suppose it was more a reflection for him, how even hiking with all its dangers is nothing compared to the stories he covered as a journalist. Also it made me appreciate the lengths a journalist goes through to bring us the stories half a world a way.

I'd probably give it 3.5 stars but I'm upping to 4 because Vermont and the foreign correspondent thing.

Leah says

This book was so inspiring! Christopher wren was a foreign correspondent for the NY Times, and upon his retirement at 65, decided to walk from NYC up to his planned retirement home in Fairlee, VT. He meets up with friends along the way, is bitten by a deer tick, suffers from blisters and aches, meets many new acquaintances on the Appalachian Trail, and paints a picture that would make anyone want to abandon their

car and start walking. I loved the story and recognized many of the places in VT he mentions. The book is peppered with stories of harrowing situations he found himself in as a correspondent, along with the history of some of the places he walks. Makes me want to quit my job and become one of the "in between jobs" hikers on the Appalachian Trail.

Maribeth says

Interesting perspectives on the AT and Long trail (VT), both of which the author traipsed on his journey. His tales from his career as a foreign correspondent are pretty neat, too.

Jennifer says

Someday I'll walk the Appalachian Trail, or at least large sections of it. This is similar to Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, but it isn't funny or goofy. Instead it is about walking into a new phase of life, for this author, it's retirement. He walks out of his office in New York City all the way to Vermont, mostly on the AT. I particularly liked his stories about "trail magic," where people would leave things behind for other hikers. The author always seemed to find what he needed, just at the moment of desperation. Donny and I saw a little bit of this in action when we walked a short distance on the Appalachian trail in Shenandoah NP this fall. Somebody left a beautifully carved walking stick/cane on the trail with a note that said to use the stick and then leave it for another hiker along the way. It made me wish that we were heading out for a long journey on the trail, so that we could really make use of it.

Coralie says

Christopher Wren retired as a foreign correspondent for the New York times, departing for his retirement home in Fairlee, Vermont - on foot! This book is the story of his journey. I loved this book. Wren talks about the landscape and the history of the areas he hikes through. He describes the people he meets along the way, those who help him, those that he helps, those are mean and those who are nice. Throughout the story, when events that happen on the trail remind him of something that happened to him during his time covering world events, he shares those anecdotes as well. A great book. Since this author is my neighbor, and I can't look for J D Salinger now, I guess I will look for Christopher Wren.

This book was a lot like *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson, since Wren spent a lot of his hike on the Appalachian Trail, and Bryson was also a local author at the time he wrote *A Walk in the Woods* but they are very different books. Bryson goes into detail about the history of the Appalachian trail, and Wren barely touches on it. Bryson's book was meant to be funny. Wren's is humorous in places, but less obviously so. Both books are excellent.

Mimi Fintel says

What a delightful book! I loved it. Wren is a former foreign correspondent who kicked off his retirement, at age 65, by walking from the New York Times newsroom in midtown Manhattan 400 miles away to his home in Vermont. As he writes about his travels along the trail, he also tells about some of the harrowing events

that occurred when he was a foreign correspondent. Since I won't ever hike 400 miles, I totally enjoyed hiking the trail vicariously through Christopher S. Wren.

Dawn Rupert says

This is the third book I have read about walking the Appalachian Trail. In this book newly retired Christopher Wren walks out of New York to his retirement home in Vermont. Not sure why these books appeal to me. I am a walker, but I surely am too old to think about walking the Appalachian Trail, but it truly sounds fascinating. Mr. Wren doesn't even sound as if he prepared for such a long walking journey, yet, despite having possible Lyme's disease, he make it to his destination. Fun to read!

therwiterkelly says

2.5 stars. not sure if i'll get to the end of this. it isn't what i thought it would be -- so far.

--spoiler alert--

where is the reflection and recollection of his prior days as a journalist? those moments are so few and far between...what also is missing is the history of the places he's traversing. granted, most are riddled with suburbs, but the content of most of what i've read so far seems so surface level. i wasn't expecting a LITERAL play-by-play of everything he was walking past, nor did i care too much that his main stopping points involved passing by old friends of his....but perhaps i am too extreme or hardcore when it comes to journeys.

guess it hasn't compared to The Long Way, so i gave up. sorry. mostly, this is a personal issue.
