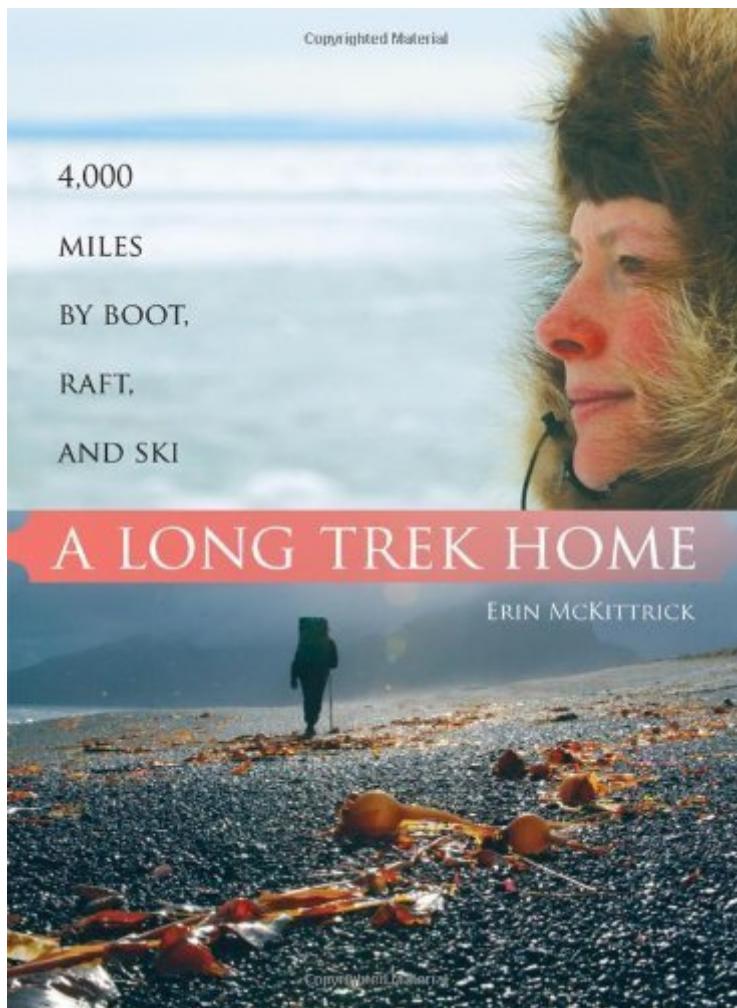


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# A Long Trek Home: 4,000 Miles By Boot, Raft And Ski



## **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**

File Size: 1842 KB

Print Length: 225 pages

Publisher: Mountaineers Books; 1 edition (October 19, 2009)

Publication Date: October 19, 2009

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B003GGSTLM

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #507,500 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #25 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation > Rafting #58 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Nature Travel > Adventure > Skiing #138 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor

## Customer Reviews

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.

You might expect this book about a 4,000-mile two-person trip to pivot around the personal dynamics between author Erin McKittrick and her husband Hig, but it really doesn't. Hig has maybe one full page of dialogue in the whole book; the fact that he's there is often signified just by a change in pronoun: "we" rather than "I". You might also expect the book would try to entertain readers with poetic descriptions of exotic places and perilous events, but again, it really doesn't. A few well-placed adjectives add just a little color to a writing style that is overwhelmingly unadorned and unpretentious. There is no Muir-ish gushing over the scenery, and the dangers of the trip, from spooky bear encounters to the ocean waves rolling over the bows of their tiny boats, are retold with Scandinavian understatement. So why is this a five-star book? Because what it does well it does almost perfectly. A single paragraph will fling you from a forested valley over a soaring ridge, down the other side, and across an ice-clogged bay to a desolate beach covered in bear tracks and driftwood. The pace of the book is a lot like how I imagine the journey itself must have felt: plodding restlessly, hypnotically forward with every step and every page. At 200 pages, the book flies through 4,000 miles at 20 miles per page, and this dizzying pace gives the book a surreal, captivating, dreamlike quality. You soon come to see that the sparseness of the writing and the restrained presentation of the characters are two of this book's greatest strengths. It would have been easy to

write a monster volume about every little event, detailing every tussle with her husband, every animal encounter, every desolate stretch of coastline. Instead, Erin McKittrick manages to tell a quietly beautiful, understated, and immensely enjoyable story of an epic odyssey through one of the least-traveled corners of the Earth.

Erin and Hig completed a most amazing, epic journey with only the most spartan of creature comforts. They kept pretty good spirits and good health throughout, and rarely (maybe never) actually required help from anyone else. They had everything planned and mapped out well in advance. I am most intrigued by the packraft they had with them always. It was almost a character in its own right. They could not have done this trip without it. Where can I get one? Somehow Erin was able to keep a lovely journal throughout and I am glad for that. This journey was much more than putting one foot in front of the other. I look forward to reading more of Erin and Hig's adventures, now exploring with their kids!

Erin and Hig hiked from Seattle to Alaska. My wife and I took a cruise ship. They slept in the snow. We sat in the hot tub. They ate berries and Grape Nuts cereal. We ate filet mignon...and yet I'm so jealous of them. That entire area is storybook incredible. The scenery and topography beats anything I've seen. As we cruised past the shoreline, I wished more than anything that I could have been exploring it on foot or by boat. It was interesting to hear the account from her perspective. She aptly describes the experience as a whole instead of simply recounting events. Reading about the mines and logging is somewhat melancholy but the sad truth is that we all use resources. However, Erin acknowledges this fact, the economic benefits to the area, and the kindness of the workers who they encountered. I wish there had been more pictures, I wish there was a movie, and I really wish they had invited me!

An amazing adventure in this modern age, from a thoughtful, strong female perspective, in the vein of "Two Women", by Velma Wallis. It's completely different than most adventure stories -- more a matter-of-fact what-they-did with no braggadocio. Erin McKittrick's writing is skilled, interesting, easily understood, kept me enthralled to the end, and has me eagerly looking forward to her next book. Erin and her husband, Hig, have another adventure under their belts already in which they include Katmai, their two-year-old son -- who was conceived during the trek recorded in this book -- on a 200-mile trek on the North Slope of Alaska in Summer 2010. That adventure should be very instructional for young women today, showing them that today's woman can be as strong,

resourceful, competent in the wild, and adventurous as those women who helped settle this country, if they choose to make that effort to educate themselves in the needed skills. I got a second copy of this book for my sisters to read. *A Long Trek Home: 4000 Miles by Boot, Raft and Ski*

If you like real life adventure books, you will probably love this one. It is well written and gripping.

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