



Walking to Vermont: From Times Square into the Green Mountains -- a Homeward Adventure

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.

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Victor Elias:

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Mario Curtin:

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