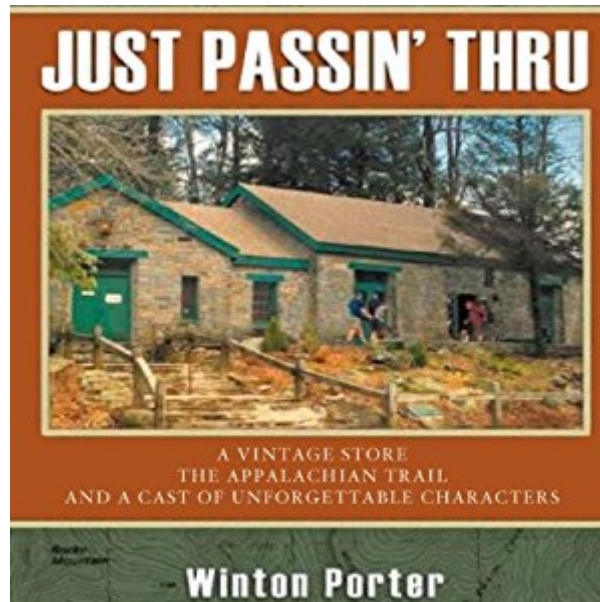


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Just Passin' Thru: A Vintage Store, The Appalachian Trail, And A Cast Of Unforgettable Characters



Synopsis

Like a well-crafted stage play, *Just Passin' Thru* delivers one suspenseful scene after another. But in this historic setting a store on the Appalachian Trail called Mountain Crossings the characters who show up are no fictional creations. They are the real-life stars of the author's new life as a backpack-purging, canteen-selling, hostel-running, bandage-taping, lost-child finding, argument-settling, romance-fixing, chili-making man of many faces. Like any good drama, there are the good guys (and gals) and the weirdos, too. Some show up once (and that's enough), and some appear again and again. Some are friends, and some dangerous. But all are united by two things: the author's story-capturing talent, and whatever it is that lures them to attempt (or conquer) a 2,200-mile path that climbs and plummets from Georgia to Maine.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A few years ago I was planning on emigrating from London to Australia. Having read a number of Bill Bryson books in the past I got a copy of his book 'Down Under', which by pure coincidence, came with a copy of 'A Walk in the Woods'. To be honest, I preferred the latter and, having neither camped nor hiked anywhere in my life I found the idea of the adventure somewhat gripping. It stayed with my right up until I came back to the UK from Australia (the emigration not quite having gone as planned!). I read it again and then started researching as much as I could about the Appalachian Trail. It appears that Bryson's book divides opinion amongst the AT community (based on postings on various web boards). I must confess that this surprised me but I guess I was just

used to his style and decided that I really should read a bit more...especially if I was considering a thru-hike! Having now read a number of books written by various authors I can see why. Bryson has a style that we Brits like...he pokes fun (albeit harmlessly) at the places he finds himself and particularly the people he meets. The people he describes in *A Walk in the Woods* suit that genre and allows him to portray his usual somewhat denigrating style. I'm not sure this is entirely representative of the AT or those that enjoy it and particularly those that earn a living from it supporting those who wish to spend some time enjoying the beauty and experience on offer. That is where this book comes in. Many books I read on the subject were effectively diaries of individuals completing the Trail and can become a little repetitive in nature (how many other ways can you describe 'what am I going to eat?', 'when am I going to eat?', 'where can I find water?', 'where am I going to sleep?')

The covers of this book target it for the outdoor/hiking community. Which makes sense. *JUST PASSIN' THRU* is written by Winton Porter about the first eight years he operated Mountain Crossings at Walasi-Yi, which is the first major outfitter/hostel on the Appalachian Trail as one hikes north from its southern terminus at Springer Mountain in Georgia. By the time thru-hikers of the Trail reach Mountain Crossings, thirty-five miles from its start, they have a good feel for whether or not they need professional advice and/or certain changes of gear. Winton Porter and his staff provide that counseling, which often is more spiritual or psychological in nature than it is practical. Their specialty is "shakedown" - going through everything a thru-hiker is carrying, stripping out what is not essential, and then shipping that excess back home for the hiker. (The record shipment was 136 pounds, very surprising given the background of the hiker in question.) Over the eight years that Porter writes about, he and Mountain Crossings were host to a handful of full-fledged characters and as many troubled souls. *JUST PASSIN' THRU* contains profiles of both groups, as well as a number of interesting anecdotes. It also contains doses of "trail wisdom", some of which expand their applicability to life in general. A phenomenon that Porter saw repeatedly was the personality changes wrought in first-time thru-hikers: "That's what coming face-to-face with the thought of six months in the woods will do to you: as soon as you realize you have the chance to be a different person, you become one. You can forget who you are. * * * So you lose yourself, then find yourself again, farther along.

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