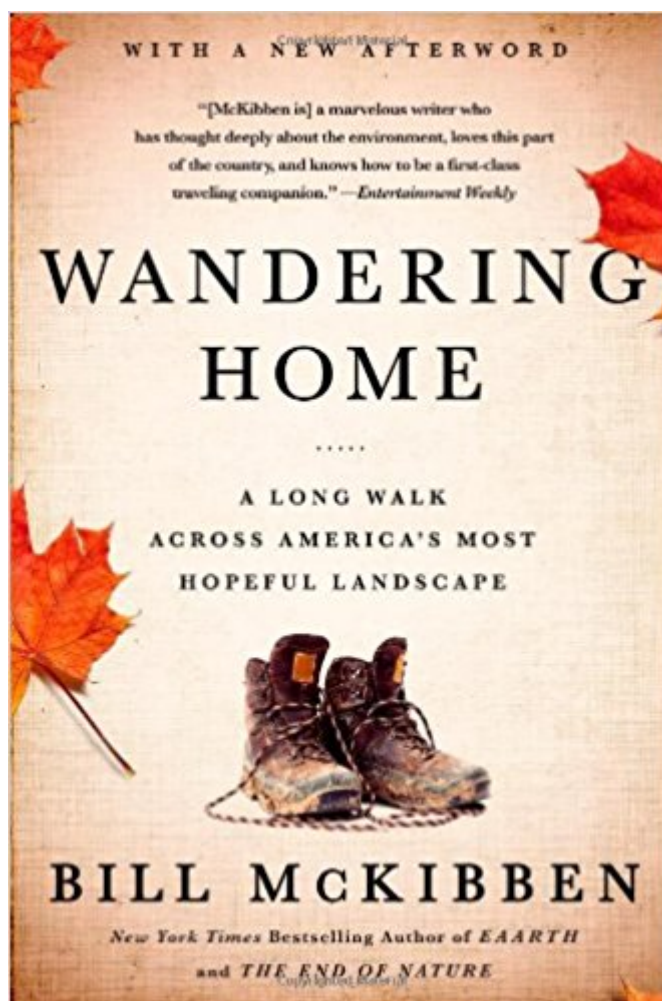


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# Wandering Home: A Long Walk Across America's Most Hopeful Landscape



## Synopsis

"[McKibben is] a marvelous writer who has thought deeply about the environment, loves this part of the country, and knows how to be a first-class traveling companion." •Entertainment Weekly

In *Wandering Home*, one of his most personal books, Bill McKibben invites readers to join him on a hike from his current home in Vermont to his former home in the Adirondacks. Here he reveals that the motivation for his impassioned environmental activism is not high-minded or abstract, but as tangible as the lakes and forests he explored in his twenties, the same woods where he lives with his family today. Over the course of his journey McKibben meets with old friends and kindred spirits, including activists, writers, organic farmers, a vintner, a beekeeper, and environmental studies students, all in touch with nature and committed to its preservation. For McKibben, there is no better place than these woods to work out a balance between the wild and the cultivated, the individual and the global community, and to discover the answers to the challenges facing our planet today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this latest addition to the Crown Journeys series, McKibben, the author of bestseller *The End of Nature*, writes with his usual wry, approachable power about the Adirondacks, his chosen home. While hiking from Vermont's Mt. Abraham to the wilder forests in New York, McKibben stops in at various ecologically-minded business concerns, including an organic winery and a prototype small college garden. He is accompanied by a who's who of environmentalists, including the president of Greenpeace, USA, and a founder of the revolutionary *Earth First! Journal*. Because of his longtime friendships with his fellow hikers, McKibben is able to capture them at their

best, speaking with great knowledge and love for nature. But none is more eloquent than McKibben, who writes, "It's a quiet day, nothing spectacular except the mushrooms sprouting obscenely in this wet summer, but quietly grand, just like this country ... it's the impressions that linger with me, the sense of the woods as a whole-the relief, the density, the changing feel underfoot and overheard." Here is a nature writer who can consider all sides of an argument and happily end up uncertain of the precise solution, but sure of his nearly evangelical passion for the mountains he calls home. This book could single-handedly spur a rush of tourism to the Adirondack area-it's that good. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

As McKibben hikes across the land he loves, setting out from tidy Vermont and heading into the wilds of New York's Adirondack Mountains, he rhapsodizes about gorgeous mountain vistas, pristine lakes, and deep woods. It's a boon to find the author of eight cutting-edge books about grave environmental concerns, including *The End of Nature* (1989) and *Enough* (2003), in a hopeful state of mind, especially since McKibben, charmingly self-deprecating and funny, isn't only communing with nature but also visiting individuals committed to living "green," including organic farmers, a vintner, a beekeeper, environmental studies students, wildlands philanthropy promoter John Davis, and writer Don Mitchell. Thanks to their efforts, this once hard-used land is now restored and rebounding. As McKibben considers nature's "lessons in flux and resiliency," he also reflects on the evolution of environmental thought and his own eco-awakening, ultimately positing the possibility of our forgoing "hyperindividualism" and unbridled materialism to achieve a balance between the wild and the cultivated, and a sense of community that embraces the entire web of life. Donna Seaman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

An excellent follow-up to *End of Nature* which I found to be depressing and flirting with becoming a science text book. *Wandering Home* is personal, realistic, hopeful & enlightening in its depth and balance. Of particular interest is its practicality without being utilitarian, McKibben does an artful job of discussing nuance and balance in the complicated journey of living lightly, even wildly, in our current world. Impractical starry-eyed ideology is replaced with hopeful reality with an eye on a brighter future and a wilder landscape.

Lots of fun to read about Bill McKibben's walk between his two homes across two different states -- I

passed it on to a man who is relearning to walk again after a serious surgery.

Bill McKibben walks for sixteen days through the Adirondack Mountains to share his love of the land with his readers but what makes the book so special are the people Bill introduces, walks with, and talks with (and about...) along his journey. I was a Travel Agent for five years and was lucky enough to be sent to some of the best, first class places in America and this journey that Bill McKibben takes us on with his words is more meaningful than many of those places I went to which include the Grand Canyon & Scottsdale, AZ; the San Francisco Bay Area; Paradise Island & Nassau, Bahamas; Manhattan; the Sierra-Nevada Mountains (by train); and New Orleans & Mississippi River Cruise! Each authentic and real person that McKibben joins on his trek lends a hand in telling the story. The book is as much about the beauty of the people as it is of the land. I grew up twenty miles away from the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania, and presently I am a steward and guardian of 400 acres of land in central PA with my husband, his uncle, and my husband's brother and I share and appreciate Bill McKibben's deep love for the power of nature, the wild, and the people. I found John Davis (owns a bicycle, no car) as one of the most interesting characters in the book. I also like the stories of Chris Shaw, who has the good sense of memorializing the people who have passed on but that once lived in the Adirondacks and give the book historical authenticity. My favorite stories in the book are from Donald Armstrong and especially Armstrong's memory he shares with McKibben (and us) about Don's wife, Velda and a fly-fishing event. I laughed so hard I cried! It is a funny moment, but this husband-wife story is so cute and sweet, and gives one a feeling of nostalgia. (The church steeple is a cool part, too.) This is a gem of a story and *Wandering Home* is a gem of a book. I am a people person and for the first few chapters of *Wandering Home* I'm thinking that it is too bad Bill McKibben spends all this passion on the Adirondacks. I imagine what his passion could do to improve the lives of the infirm or impoverished people. Much to my chagrin, in the last few chapters McKibben admits this deficit with charm and honesty. He admits he should spend more time helping the less fortunate, and then justifies his love and preservation of the Adirondacks as his way of giving something back to people. And, I agree that he has. Furthermore, he explains that he tries not to be a drain on the planet. If only we could all think this way, maybe our global warming and environmental problems would vanish. For the first time in my life, I realize the full extent of the impact that people have had and still have on our surroundings and I am saddened and sickened by it. (I imagine a sunrise or a sunset over a mountain, or an ocean breeze I thank God there are still a few areas left in this world that man / woman hasn't been able to get his / her hands on.) I do have one eco-criticism of *Wandering Home*. Bill writes that he

and John Davis climb to the top of Owl's Head on page 93 of his book. Owl's Head is a considerable distance away from Bristol, and is not included in the path outlined on the inside covers of his book. But, every author has to create mystery in some way, right? Judging by the description of Owl's Head I can see why McKibben would include it in his "walk" since Owl's Head sounds like a stunning place with it's 390 degree view of the Adirondack mountains. On my map, Owl's Head is about sixty miles north of Lake Placid one way, as the crow flies. Dr. Robert Bernard Hass (English Professor, poet, writer, and Robert Frost expert at Edinboro University) and I got into a discussion about hyper-individualism in class one day. Dr. Hass told me about his friend named Bill McKibben and how McKibben writes about hyper-individualism and that a good place to start on the subject would be *Wandering Home*. I am grateful that Hass recommended the book to me. It was a book that I was sad to see end, but a journey I will always remember in more ways than one. I was so inspired that I am planning on a short family vacation to the Adirondacks for this summer. I will do my best to demonstrate a sense of forest preservation and protection while I'm there, visiting the wild of the Adirondacks.

A very inspiring and gently provocative account of a trip, the likes of which we should all take at least once during our lifetime--even though we could not hope to achieve McKibben's mastery in telling a story.

Great Sense of place. Real appreciation of rural life and the beauty and tranquility of the Champlain Valley.

Salve for the soul of those wounded by the spectacle of all the "wrong" ways of living on our planet.

I much enjoyed McKibben's account of a hike from Vermont to the Adirondacks, and am intrigued by the "most hopeful landscape" premise. I was a bit disappointed with his failure to more fully develop the theme, particularly in the Adirondacks where the experiment is still playing out. I agree with the premise that the Adirondacks is a hopeful landscape, and was looking McKibben to provide more explicit confirmation of that belief. That said, I hope that everyone who cares about the region will read the book.

I received a free copy of this from the publisher via Goodreads' First-reads giveaway program, in exchange for an honest review. In this inspirational essay that blends nature appreciation, travel, and

environmental activism, Bill McKibben structures his ruminations around a walking journey he undertook from his present-day home in Vermont as professor at Middlebury College to his former home across the lake in the New York Adirondacks. Wandering is an apt word to describe the essay, for it is not primarily about details of the actual journey, nor is it particularly about the natural features of the two neighboring regions. While both of these topics are given voice, the walking trek and its environment are really just a narrative backdrop to symbolically contain McKibben's wandering thoughts and anecdotes. These anecdotes primarily take the form of recounted encounters with other people along McKibben's route who embody a sort of spirit or cause that he meditates upon, as in the style of a sermon. Personally I would have enjoyed this more if there had been greater structure to it, if there had been fuller details on the journey and the environment, or a deeper probing of the ecological, social, and political themes that the anecdotes touch upon. However, I acknowledge that isn't what this work is meant to be, and the brief read that this essay provides is certainly inspirational. Thus, for those who do appreciate this kind of book and have a striking love of nature or environmental activism, you will enjoy it. While I found Wandering Home to be too cursory overall, I certainly did also find moments of intense beauty and inspiration within it. McKibben's writing is impassioned and poetic. The passages where he is detailing the environmental qualities of each region are evocative and rich. The meditative quality of the text and its wandering nature probably make this the type of book that isn't best read in one sitting as I did, or even in the same span of general time. This is more like a resource that could be dipped into during precious reflective times, or a during a moment's anticipation of going on a similar hike or journey. If nothing else, Wandering Home serves as a fine, gentle reminder that other types of existence "closer to nature" are possible than the one we may be accustomed with, and perhaps we could each find ways to seek and embrace some aspect of these alternatives.

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