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"Rarely will you find books that explore the human emotions of a long-distance trek so honestly and clearly." --Roger Williamson, Campmor, Inc. "Highly recommended." --trailsbib.blogspot.com

After hiking the AT from Maine to Georgia, Lucy and Susan Letcher decided that the best way to get home would be to turn around and hike it again. So they did--barefoot, of course--but this time, they encountered hardships and joys they didn't expect at all. This second half of the Barefoot Sisters' account has become an AT classic.

Walking Home Details

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Charity says

This is the sequel to *Southbound*, The Barefoot Sisters' account of their southbound Appalachian Trail thru-hike. I didn't like this one quite as much as I liked the first book, but this one was still enjoyable.

A couple of things I really enjoyed about this book:

1) This thru-hike took place in 2001. I know about more 2001 thru-hikes than any other. My friend's mom and her husband thru-hiked the AT in 2001, and *TREK - A Journey on the Appalachian Trail*, a documentary I watched and quite enjoyed this past year, follows a group of friends on a 2001 thru-hike. Making the trip seem in a way even more familiar, I also discovered that Isis graduated high school the same year as I did, so I was able to draw parallels between what her 2001 was like and what mine was. While they were hiking through Virginia, I was starting an editing job at a major corporation one state away. While they were walking through the mountains, I was training for a marathon I never ran. It's possible that I might have been in Asheville, North Carolina, at the same time they were visiting there. And then of course there was the way they learned about the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th, which is a story that each of us alive at that time shares. Hearing their shock, fear, and confusion reawakened the shock, fear, and confusion that I felt that morning. In a lot of ways, this thru-hike felt closer to me than the southbound hike, which was both enjoyable and a bit uncomfortable since there still is a huge amount of doubt about whether I will ever actually thru-hike the AT. But then, I like a bit of discomfort. It keeps me from becoming complacent.

2) A few times they touched upon the privilege that allows people to take six months off to take a long walk. The clearest example I found was on page 125 when jackrabbit talks about what she considers the rather obnoxious attitude of a business owner nearby the trail who seemed to assume that hikers would steal from his business just because they were hikers. Another hiker, Fiddler, recognizes the demographics of the majority of thru-hikers and suggests that maybe this is a good experience for hikers. "Look at us," he says. "How many white, middle-class Americans knows what discrimination feels like? Maybe if we realize what it's like to be followed by stares and whispers, we'll be less likely to do it to somebody else." This is something I've been having some trouble with when thinking about planning a thru-hike: while I'm trying to be aware of privilege and ways that I can let go of my unearned privilege, here I am planning an activity that depends very much on the privilege that allows me to save up the money for a long-distance hike and feel reasonably confident that I will be greeted along the trail with the same goodwill that the Letcher sisters describe. The idea that I might learn something valuable along the way is a comfort, I suppose, but not much of one, but I do appreciate that they at least touched upon the issue of privilege.

It was nice that the sisters got their easy (compared to their southbound hike), fun thru-hike, but it felt like there was a little something---perhaps tension?---missing from this one. This easier hike up the better-traveled northbound route seemed less significant in a way. There was little doubt the sisters would make it to Katahdin, there was less detail about their travels and it was more difficult for me to follow where they were on the trail, and there were more spring-break-like side trips. It just seemed more like a party this time around and less like a pilgrimage. I don't know that there's necessarily anything wrong with this, it just wasn't as satisfying to me as their account of their first trip was.

Jeremy says

The Barefoot Sisters have an awesome story, and the thought of hiking the AT barefoot simultaneously intrigues and terrifies me. Either way, I have a tremendous amount of respect for their accomplishment...not only did they complete a North-South AT through-hike, they turned around and made a complete South-North trip to get home. Hiking the trail one way is something a lot of folks attempt, but very few finish. Unfortunately, I just couldn't emotionally connect with their story. I wanted to, I really wanted to, and there are bits of great stuff that happened on their journey. But the story drags, it's repetitive, and downright boring in some places. The fact that it's sooooo very long doesn't help. Their story did, however, fill me with a desire to try a barefoot hike in north Georgia when the weather worms. Maybe after that, or after me and my wife complete a through hike, I'll feel a little more connected to their story.

I do recommend this book to anyone who is really, really into AT through-hiking stories, to women interested in long-distance backpacking trips, or folks who may just want to skim parts of the book to read about sections of the AT that interest them. Also, I would recommend getting the first book (Southbound) first, so you maybe some of the inside jokes and stories won't be lost on you like they were on me.

Jody says

I'm guessing that this one is probably the second book in a series at it was the return trip these two sisters made of the Appalachian trail. In this book, there were certainly some challenges described with segments written by each sister, but very little story to the story. They must have kept a journal in order to provide the level of detail they did. In fact, it reads more like a series of diary entries from the trail. It was mostly about the people they met along the way. I was surprised by the amount of community found on this trail, including the hostels available throughout the neighboring towns. There is a whole industry around supporting these through-hikers. While generally I do like these challenging trail hike/backpacking kinds of books, this one was sadly lacking in description of the place(s). To the point, there was only one off-trail trail description that made me want to go hike it. I want more description of place and environment in a book like this. Maybe it would be more meaningful to others that have hiked the Appalachian.

Robyn Obermeyer says

I love this kind of story, being out in nature and dealing with the elements and the amount of sheer determination these sisters had for hiking was a pleasure to read! IT HAS INSPIRED ME TO WALK MORE , GRANTED i may never be this extreme, to know that it has and can be done is amazing! The people they meet on the trail the songs they sing the food they ate was all a great escape from the winter blues. The whole barefoot experience of feeling the earth is incredible, What a great book! I doubt I could ever take on a journey like this, but it is very inspiring!

Marcia says

Despite the reviews that I read - this was as good as the Southbound book. A seamless continuation of their journey. Makes me want to load my backpack and go for a hike. And I am a cycle chic... Loved both books -

would have been incomplete leaving them in GA!

Stephanie says

I really enjoy reading about adventures on the AT trail or other such places. This book, as well as the prequel, is filled with lots of great stories of interacting with nature and other hikers. There seems to be a real sense of community among the hikers. I enjoyed getting a good feel for what it takes to make such a journey, as well as the complications and issues that can arise. The book did start to get pretty long after awhile. I think 2 books worth of such stories seemed to become drawn out after awhile.

Pat Bretheim says

I loved this book! The continuing adventures of the Barefoot Sisters, Isis and jackrabbit, have them doing a yo-yo hike from Georgia back to Maine on the Appalachian Trail. The northbound hike is so much better than the southbound hike for them. Southbound, they had to hike through the winter and suffered many hardships. This northbound hike is like a victory lap for them! They meet new friends along the way and enjoy the budding of spring on the trail, followed by summer and then the lovely fall colors.

Linda Castrine says

Sad it's over

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the return installment of the barefoot sisters trek and highly recommend it to anyone who loves a good adventure. I'm sad it's finished.

Shelly♥ says

After hiking Southbound from Maine to Georgia, the Barefoot sisters figure they have the time and money to turnaround and hike back to Maine. As seasoned hikers, the sisters have an easier time, but still face their fair share of challenges. The story is about both their inner struggles and the relationships and friendships forged along the trail. Due to the high volume of northbound hikers and previous established friendships, they end up with more off trail time. They are also hiking on 9/11/2011 and share their reactions.

Their memoirs have been a most enjoyable read, longer and more detailed than many of the previous trail memoirs that I've read. Also, the perspective of their individual voices telling this joint story gives the tale a unique twist not apparent in other books on the hike. If you're into these style memoirs, add them to the list.

Diane says

Barefoot Sisters: Southbound Co-Authors Susan Letcher & Lucy Letcher

and Barefoot Sisters Walking Home

I was surprised to find how much I enjoyed reading of the Appalachian Trail hiking adventures of "Jackrabbit" and "Isis". Once I started reading, I was hooked and did not want to stop!

I am one of four sisters and I enjoy to read books which feature the interaction of sisters. I must admit I downloaded this book when it was offered as a free Kindle book through one of the free books of the day. The chapters in the book are arranged as the sisters share their experiences along the trail, almost as a relay team. There is not a lot of repetition, but a smooth continuation of the hike.

I also appreciate that the accounting of the actions and reactions of the sisters were not sugar-coated. There were times when they did not want to be sisters together along this trail.

The hardships of hiking the trail were so believable, until I got chill bumps as I read about the ice and snow they endured during a blizzard. I could almost feel the exhaustion and thirst of a hard day of hiking. The book is a story which tells their endurance of pain, discomfort, hunger, and also of the kindness offered by strangers and friends met along the trail. I could hardly wait to buy the follow-up book, Barefoot Sisters Walking Home (Adventures on the Appalachian Trail) [Kindle Edition]. I thoroughly enjoyed both books. Great job, Sisters, Thank you for sharing the hike with us all!

Scott Foshee says

Helps Renew Faith in the Basic Goodness of People

"Walking Home" covers the Barefoot Sisters' yo-yo hike of the Appalachian Trail, this time from Georgia in March to Maine in October. Where their first book covers their hike north to south, done largely in the winter months, this one is done mostly during the more conventional spring and summer seasons.

The Barefoot Sisters write well, and relate their experiences with an openness and truthfulness that some other hiking books seem to lack. They convey effectively the spirituality and simplicity of the trail throughout. During their walk home back to Maine they encounter Lyme disease, the 9/11 attacks and how some hikers seemed to use their trip as an escape, as well as Barefoot Sister jackrabbit's depression. They also encounter the amazing generosity and trust in the hiking community, make new friends, and run into some old friends they made on their first journey including Tuba Man.

I read and enjoyed their first book, "Southbound," and "Walking Home" is a very worthy companion. If you are interested in hiking or the outdoors, you will probably want to read both. They will help renew your faith in the basic goodness of people.

Carol says

This was the second offering about two sisters walking the Appalachian Trail barefoot. I don't think it had the same punch as the first book. One was of their travels from Maine to Georgia; then this book was of the trip back to Maine. In my opinion, Lucy should have stopped after the first book. In some ways, by writing the second book, and also by retrekking the trail barefoot, it made the whole first experience of less importance.

However, it is still an amazing story of two very strong and different women making a monumental journey

along America's scenic, and sometimes dangerous, back yard.

Robyn says

Geez, I continue to torture myself by reading these books. Another great read by these sisters who hiked the Appalachian Trail, twice. Back to back. In their first book, *Southbound*, they walked the entire trail from Maine (where they're from) to Georgia, then, within days of finishing, turned around and walked back, completing a yo-yo.

I long for the AT. I miss it constantly. Their descriptions brought so many memories and emotions to the surface. It will always be a place incredibly special, and I do believe I will hike it again. *Southbound*.

Anna says

Although this volume seems to concentrate more on people they meet and time spent off trail than the experience of the trail itself, I actually liked this better than the first volume. Perhaps it is because I know the sisters better now and could see their personalities more clearly.

Sue says

Having read *Barefoot Sisters Southbound* and finding it so entralling that I read the 400+ pages in less than a week, I was so happy that I had ordered the second book so I could immediately start the next chapter in their hike. Having reached Spring Mt GA, they decided to hike the trail back home to Maine. Somewhat thinking that, having hiked the trail for 8 months, the trail couldn't bring too many surprises, they turn around and head north. Different seasons, different hikers to meet, the emotions of having been on the trail for several months already - make the trail a very different experience. They are about 2 weeks from finishing when the 9/11 attacks on New York happen and that adds a new emotion to the hiking experience. This book also held my attention where I found myself reading late at night, picking it up whenever a few minutes allowed and when I finished, I felt bereft, lost, looking for another book that would grab me the way these did.
