



OUTDOOR 
ADVENTURE
GUIDES

BACKPACKING & HIKING

Conquer the wilderness
and hit the trail with confidence

Reprinted and updated from
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Jason Stevenson



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*To my father, who first took me camping.
And to my children, for whom the adventure continues.*

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Introduction

Pick any hiking trail in any part of the country on a summer weekend afternoon, and you'll find people of every size, shape, age, and ability. You might spot a middle-age couple speeding along at three miles per hour, effortlessly carrying on a conversation as they clamber over logs and sprint up switchbacks. Behind them is a troop of kids, moving slowly as they search the forest floor for nature's shiniest pebbles and smoothest sticks as several fleece-wearing parents and zigzagging dogs herd them forward. And finally there might be a former athlete trying to reclaim the vigor of his younger days as he huffs and puffs to reach the top of the next hill. When he gets there, he stops and enjoys the view as he catches his breath and prepares for the next climb.

Despite their different styles, speeds, and motivations, everyone on that trail is breathing fresh air, getting great exercise, and experiencing the simple beauty of the natural world. Each of them is part of a growing community, an outdoor nation that seeks a powerful, individual release far away from the digital racket of the paved world.

If you're picking up this book, you probably want to be with those hikers on the trail. You're planning your own adventurous goals and looking to join the outdoor nation. And you easily can, because this club doesn't have any membership restrictions or requirements. (Although buying this book will help.) When you're on a trail, you can hike at your own pace—by yourself or in a group—and over any distance you choose. You can camp in a tent, in a cabin, or snug inside an RV or trailer. You can drive to your local conservancy or fly across the country to visit one of America's breathtaking national parks. You often hear the phrase, "It's so easy that your grandmother could do it," to describe something simple to accomplish. Well, lots of grandmothers are avid hikers and active members of the outdoor nation. If they can do it, then so can you.

The key to getting off the couch is to discover what motivates you to get outside and then indulge it. Are you looking for a fresh and more exciting way to exercise? Do you want your kids