



North: Finding My Way While Running the Appalachian Trail

Scott Jurek , Jenny Jurek

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From the author of the bestseller *Eat and Run*, a thrilling new memoir about his grueling, exhilarating, and immensely inspiring 46-day run to break the speed record for the Appalachian Trail.

Scott Jurek is one of the world's best known and most beloved ultrarunners. Renowned for his remarkable endurance and speed, accomplished on a vegan diet, he's finished first in nearly all of ultrarunning's elite events over the course of his career. But after two decades of racing, training, speaking, and touring, Jurek felt an urgent need to discover something new about himself. He embarked on a wholly unique challenge, one that would force him to grow as a person and as an athlete: breaking the speed record for the Appalachian Trail. *North* is the story of the 2,189-mile journey that nearly shattered him.

When he set out in the spring of 2015, Jurek anticipated punishing terrain, forbidding weather, and inevitable injuries. He would have to run nearly 50 miles a day, *every day*, for almost seven weeks. He knew he would be pushing himself to the limit, that comfort and rest would be in short supply -- but he couldn't have imagined the physical and emotional toll the trip would exact, nor the rewards it would offer.

With his wife, Jenny, friends, and the kindness of strangers supporting him, Jurek ran, hiked, and stumbled his way north, one white blaze at a time. A stunning narrative of perseverance and personal transformation, *North* is a portrait of a man stripped bare on the most demanding and transcendent effort of his life. It will inspire runners and non-runners alike to keep striving for their personal best.

North: Finding My Way While Running the Appalachian Trail Details

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From Reader Review North: Finding My Way While Running the Appalachian Trail for online ebook

Chris says

Scott Jurek is a talented writer and he also runs. Sure, he's been on top of the ultra-runner world for years, mastering any challenge thrown at him. What is surprising is that he can do all of that and tell a good story. I really enjoyed his last book, *Eat and Run*, about his life up through his "retirement" from ultra-running. By contrast, *North* is focused on his attempt to achieve the Fastest Known Time (FKT) on completing the whole 2000+ miles of the Appalachian Trail. His journey would be incomplete without his wife, Jenny, who works just as hard trying to keep Scott alive and moving. I really liked hearing Jenny's point of view because crewing such a major undertaking is an ultra event unto itself. Even if you're not interested in running, this is a great adventure book. If you are interested in running, after reading this book, the pull to head out on a trail run is irresistible.

Stephanie says

Thanks to Little, Brown for sending me a copy to review!

The Appalachian Trail is some 2200 miles (favorite fun fact from this book: that's half the circumference of Pluto), and this is the story of how Scott Jurek ran the whole darn thing in 46 days - breaking the fastest known record. That means an average of 50 miles of trail every day, a mentally and physically punishing challenge for even the strongest ultra-athlete.

I've hiked sections of the AT, so I really enjoyed being able to follow his journey through parts of the trail I've loved! At its best, this story gives fascinating insight to what goes into a long distance challenge like this: the large team that rotated through to support and keep Scott going, the planning of mileage and logistics, the large amounts of Clif bars consumed. Interspersed with Scott's perspective are his wife Jenny's thoughts, which rounded the narrative out nicely.

Overall, I wanted more. Jurek dips into his reasons for taking this on, and I wish he'd gone deeper into what it meant to be an aging athlete and where this journey took him emotionally. Scott and Jenny include plenty from their personal lives, but it felt like they were toeing the line when it came to really telling the whole story - and I completely understand that it's their right to choose what they want to divulge. At the same time, I think the book would have been stronger if they had either gone all the way into the personal or just stuck with the athleticism.

Anna says

This is a painful journey (literally for the authors and vicariously for the reader). For myself although I do wish to take a long trail at some point in my life I definitely do not want to go anywhere close to this fast, but it was a valiant goal and a rather astonishing achievement considering the problems he encountered near the beginning and the toll the trip was taking on his body by the end. I understand better now why a woman held the record previous to this attempt.

Kim Maltempo says

This was one of the most enjoyable books I've read in a long time. It was well written, raw, humorous at times, and sad, but always real. I loved that both Scott and Jenny took turns writing so you got to see both sides of the story - from the runner's perspective to the crew perspective. Plus, the Jurek's let you into their lives, the good, bad, and ugly, opening up about fights, miscarriages and health issues, financial woes, and their relentless pushing of one another toward greatness. I am inspired to say the least. While already on the bucket list, hiking the AT just rose a few notches on the list. Do yourself a favor and read this book.

Donna says

I read Scott Jurek's first book and gave it an enthusiastic 5 stars. I loved his story. He had such a strong determination. He was led to something he truly loved and shared that in a great first book. So when he came out with this second book, I was so excited to read it.

I'm disappointed that I'm disappointed. This one didn't work for me. I listened to the audio and I think therein lies the problem. I usually like when authors narrate their own memoirs, but it did NOT work for me here. His wife's voice was grating and he sounded so clinical. I really wanted to like this one, but it wasn't meant to be. I admittedly skimmed parts of this.

I liked his journey, but the audio execution wasn't for me. So 2 stars.

Nate Hawthorne says

A great read. I remember tracking Scott when he made this attempt. It is a great view behind the curtain to see what inspired the trip. You know you are not in the same league when he talks about running through injury and still clocking 30 plus miles a day. Fun to get a glimpse inside the mind of an elite athlete.

Perttu says

A fascinating story of Scott Jurek running almost consecutive 2200 miles. The journey is filled with ups and downs; introspection and retrospection; injuries and desperation.

I highly recommend this book to anybody who takes any interest in running - even of the regular kind, not of the superhuman, ultrarunning variety which Scott does. An additional recommendation goes to the audiobook edition which is read by Scott and Jenny themselves. The story really comes alive. I listened to most of the book while running myself, and several times I laughed out loud when Scott did his Karl "Speedgoat" Meltzer impression.

Ingalill says

Prepping for Biosirkel 32.

Francis Tapon says

“Imagine running 84 marathons. Consecutively.”

That’s what running legend Scott Jurek asks you to do in his newest book, *North: Finding My Way While Running the Appalachian Trail*.

It comes out April 10, 2018.

Warning: if you know nothing about Jurek and Appalachian Trail records, then there are spoilers in this review.

In 2011, Jennifer Pharr Davis thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 46 days, 11 hours, and 20 minutes. That’s an average of 76 km (47 miles) per day.

North is about how (and why) Scott Jurek beat that record on July 12, 2015.

Scott Jurek finished 3 hours and 12 minutes faster than Davis.

Jurek’s wife, Jenny Jurek, likes to call her husband Jurker. Meanwhile, he likes to call her Jlu (pronounced “jay-loo”). Jenny supported Scott throughout his race.

Other running legends, such as David Horton and Karl Meltzer (aka Speedgoat), also encourage Scott in key parts of his attempt.

Jurek’s literary agent, Richard Pine, pushed Jurek to write another book. Jurek doesn’t drag his feet when he’s running but he sure did when it came to writing this book. It’s now three years since he set the record—it’s already ancient history.

A year after Jurek’s record, Karl Meltzer (aka Speedgoat) ran the Appalachian Trail southbound in 45 days, 22 hours, and 38 minutes—that’s 10 hours faster than Jurek. He was 48 years old when he pulled that off.

Just like Speedgoat helped Jurek set the record, Jurek returned the favor, thereby showing great sportsmanship.

In 2017, a year after Speedgoat’s record, a 26-year-old named Joe McConaughy (aka Stringbean) raised the bar even further by finishing in 45 days, 12 hours and 15 minutes—that’s 10 hours faster than Meltzer and 20 hours faster than Jurek.

What’s remarkable is that McConaughy wasn’t just his 48-mile-per-day average but that he did it

unsupported, unlike Jurek and Meltzer. He beat the previous unsupported recorded by nine days.

In short, McConaughy has the story most thru-hikers want to hear. Nearly all thru-hikers are unsupported and proud of it. Ultra-runners are a different species.

Although Jurek's Appalachian Trail run is old news, it's still a fascinating tale for those who are either into ultra-running or thru-hiking.

Indeed, if you're not into ultra-running or thru-hiking, you will probably find North boring. It's a blow-by-blow account of his many challenges. For those who are familiar with the Appalachian Trail, thru-hiking, or ultra-running, you'll identify with what he's saying. Others will not.

Therefore, for the Appalachian Trail fan, thru-hiker, or ultra-runner, it's 9/10 stars.

For others, wait for McConaughy's book (if it ever comes). Or wait until the next speed freak sets a new record.

Disclosure: The publisher gave me an advanced copy with the hope that I would write an honest review.

Deena says

As a long-time fan of Scott Jurek and a longer-time fan of the Appalachian Trail, an ultrarunner, lover of nature, and a vegan, this book was right up my alley and so good for my soul. Completing a thru-hike of the AT has been a life goal of mine for many years. Having hiked and run many miles on it, it is a special place to me and I enjoyed reading about Jurek's quest for the Fastest Known Time (FKT) on the trail immensely. I can't begin to imagine averaging 47 miles a day for 46 days (or crewing for someone running that kind of mileage), and the grit and toughness that comes through in both Scott and Jenny Jureks' writing is intensely inspiring, even if it does seem superhuman. I did have to wonder, though, how it was remotely possible for the Jureks to keep track of such detail from one day to the next between all of the miles and the few hours that remained each night for sleeping.

Kendall says

Perhaps I'm not ultra runner material. A new version of an old joke . . .

Question: So you go to a party, how do you find the vegan ultra runner dude at the party?

Answer: Oh, don't worry. He'll find you.

Scott Jurek's book copy bills him as "one of the greatest runners of all time" and "a PASSIONATE vegan" (as if there were some other kind). While I enjoyed his tale of breaking the Fastest Known Time (FKT) on the Appalachian Trail, I could not for a minute imagine enjoying his company on the trail.

Although the book has a nice voice and is well-written, Jurek approached this feat as if he was "one of the greatest runners of all time," which is to say with insufficient humility, insufficient trail knowledge, and insufficient planning. This hubris combined with an illiberal liberal chauvinism against anything southern or

rural made Scott an uninviting trail companion from my point of view.

Anyone who can't get out of their own driveway until 0200 because they can't get their sh*t together is off to a bad start. The bad start culminated in much unnecessary suffering and physical risk. The original plan was to break the FKT by 4 days. Jurek risked his life (and the lives of his friends) while wasting away to nothing and barely beating the mark by 3 hours.

Jurek gamely treats this struggle as some kind of heroism, but he's lucky he didn't die or seriously injure one of his crew through this folly. First responders must regularly place their lives at risk or forever live with the images of unprepared fools whose bodies were plucked from the wilderness. Lack of preparation or insufficient respect for the risks of wilderness travel is not entertaining.

Some of the better portions of the book were written by Scott Jurek's wife, Jenny. Late in the book, she observes, "Looking back, I could see we were underprepared and naive." Uhm, YEAH. And given the number of ultra-runners and AT through hikers who were their personal friends there was no excuse for it.

My problem with this book was roughly similar to my dislike for "A Walk in the Woods" by Bill Bryson, an author I usually adore. If one is going to enter a world like the AT (or any sport or profession), become a student of that world FIRST. Using a lifeline to call a friend after you're already en route and injured is not how this is supposed to work.

Be hungry. But be humble first.

Kayla says

I enjoyed reading this book. It was great to read not only from Scott's point of view but also Jenny's. She certainly had her hands full crewing for Scott during his entire fastest known time (FKT) attempt.

It was interesting to read about the creepy people they ran into in the southern states that the AT goes through. Some of their descriptions kind of burst my idolization bubble about the AT. When I read *Awol on the Appalachian Trail*, I did not pick up on that aspect as much. I guess there are just creepy people and bums everywhere.

It was also really cool to read about all of Scott and Jenny's friends that came out and ran with Scott and helped Jenny crew. Scott's FKT was definitely a team effort that would not have happened if they had not had help.

There were some inspirational messages throughout this book that I really liked. If you liked reading *Born to Run* and/or *Eat and Run* then you will probably like this book, too.

Sabine says

A very raw look behind the curtain of how much a body can and has to endure on these attempts of a Fastest Known Time on the long distance trails.

This book made me drop my rose tinted glasses that made me think what a wonderful but challenging effort this was. Judging by what a trained and experienced athlete he is and how many ultras he has done already I would have never assumed how hard this actually was on Scott Jurek and his wife.

A very inspiring journey.

Heather Fineisen says

Scott Jurek, famous ultra runner, tackles the Appalachian Trail in an attempt to break the record for fastest completion. Told in chapters by day, alternating within each chapter with Scott and then his wife's voice. The format of the narrative makes you feel you are right there with them. A fascinating look at an extreme sport and the toll it takes mentally and physically. With a cast of colorful characters helping him along the way including his crew, friends, and strangers, the Jureks dig deep in their quest.

Kaspars Purmalietis says

Scott, thank you for bringing us with you to this adventure and those places. Sometimes happy places, but mostly dark places.

I loved that the book was written from 2 perspectives - Scott's and his wife's who was crewing for him. It was interesting not only because it gave 2 perspectives of the event, but also because crewing for such an event comes with its own set of challenges. And they both saw the Appalachian Trail from their own perspective.

I also loved how true was the book. I had an opportunity to see the book's opening presentation by Scott and Jenny and it was clear to me that they don't know how to be fake and that is true also for their writing. However, I would have liked Scott to dive deeper and reveal more of his mental struggles and thoughts during the run. He started this adventure to deal with his problems - mainly, being an aging athlete who also struggles with motivation. The book does not fully reveal how he managed that. Then again it seemed like his mind was not functioning properly for a big part of the journey. Maybe he did not get all of the answers. Or maybe there were things he did not want to share - that is his right and that is understandable. For any other book might have given 4 stars because of this, but this one is just too unique and I am too grateful the author for sharing his experience to do that.

Overall, a great book which I highly recommend all runners and outdoorsy persons. The cast that appears in the book is also badass.

Last side note - during the book presentation I asked Scott "What was that helped him get through the lowest points?". Before he answered there was a little hesitation and a look. I think I saw his soul in his eyes. It felt like just for a second he went back to those lowest points and emotions he had. I instantly felt sorry for asking the question and after reading the book I understand what I saw there.

By the way, the answer, of course, was "other people". It will be clear why when you read it.
