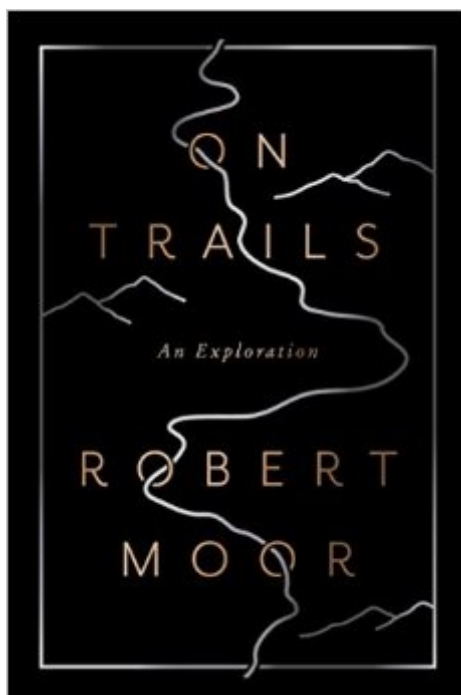


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# On Trails: An Exploration



## Synopsis

• "Sierra Club • "Stunning" | A wondrous nonfiction debut • "Departures • Moor's book is enchanting" • "The Boston Globe • "A wanderer's dream" • "The Economist From a brilliant new literary voice comes a groundbreaking exploration of how trails help us understand the world—from tiny ant trails to hiking paths that span continents, from interstate highways to the Internet. In 2009, while thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail, Robert Moor began to wonder about the paths that lie beneath our feet: How do they form? Why do some improve over time while others fade? What makes us follow or strike off on our own? Over the course of the next seven years, Moor traveled the globe, exploring trails of all kinds, from the miniscule to the massive. He learned the tricks of master trail-builders, hunted down long-lost Cherokee trails, and traced the origins of our road networks and the Internet. In each chapter, Moor interweaves his adventures with findings from science, history, philosophy, and nature writing—combining the nomadic joys of Peter Matthiessen with the eclectic wisdom of Lewis Hyde's *The Gift*. Throughout, Moor reveals how this single topic—the oft-overlooked trail—sheds new light on a wealth of age-old questions: How does order emerge out of chaos? How did animals first crawl forth from the seas and spread across continents? How has humanity's relationship with nature and technology shaped world around us? And, ultimately, how does each of us pick a path through life? Moor has the essayist's gift for making new connections, the adventurer's love for paths untaken, and the philosopher's knack for asking big questions. With a breathtaking arc that spans from the dawn of animal life to the digital era, *On Trails* is a book that makes us see our world, our history, our species, and our ways of life anew.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's hard to believe that ON TRAILS is Robert Moor's debut as an author (although as a journalist he's been published for many years). ON TRAILS is an engaging book which began to take shape when the author through-hiked the Appalachian Trail a few years ago - the five months in solitary hiking gave the Moor time to being to think about what trails mean to a society - how the interplay between the concept of "wilderness" and the organization lent to us by trails is both a modern construct and a primeval calling. (Just wait until you read about the trails forged by simple-celled organisms.). Moor recounts his various adventures exploring trails and their meaning (including a hair-raising story of bush-bashing in the Maritimes during a raging thunderstorm, and an amusing one of losing a flock of sheep he was herding for the Navajos) with humor and clarity. I read the entire book in a day and a half; that's the first time I've powered through a work of non-fiction like this for many years. Highly recommended.

I'm an old guy. I definitely do not hike (and honestly never did). But this book is about much more than walking on a trail. It gave me so many ideas to think about regarding the world I'm living in. So don't be misled by the title. This young man is going to be very famous in short order.

I have been very excited to read this book for a long time because I love reading about the Appalachian Trail and also am a fan of book length journalism of this kind. In addition, Rob was my camp counselor as a kid, so I knew his great way with words and his uncontainable creativity. When the book arrived at my door, I was not disappointed. Rob connects his own personal experiences and travels with complex scientific and anthropological concepts and research to make them understandable to any layman like myself. This skill is something that is reserved for only the best non-fiction writers like John McPhee or Elizabeth Kolbert. In many ways, Rob captures the spirit of adventure that runs through many of McPhee's books, connecting the reader with the wonder of the natural world through the page. I encourage anyone who likes creative nonfiction and books about the outdoors to pick up this book because Rob is poised to become one of our generations greatest non-fiction writers!

ON TRAILS has been praised as a great book about hiking, but it's really a book about how we think and move as humans in the world. Since finishing this book, I can't walk down the street without

seeing strange patterns in my own movements and those of my fellow humans. And Moor is an astonishing writer - there are sentences in this book that shine like diamonds, that are so good you want to throw the book across the room. If you like John McPhee, Ian Frazier, Rebecca Solnit, David Foster Wallace, William Finnegan, John Jeremiah Sullivan, this is a book for you.

I'm only on the second chapter and already I can't get this book out of my head. Moor has a way of describing things that sticks with you. A glassine dawn, being mauled by Tuckamore trees, the high arching steps of a moose as he walks atop said trees, the astral appearance of his hiking gear. I find myself turning those phrases over in my head, looking forward to when I can settle back in to catch a few more pages before bed. The book balances action with learning, moving along before it gets too heavy. It's not a book to rush through, as I fear it will be over too soon.

A good read. The beginning and the end particularly kept me interested. I admit the frequent focus on the Appalachian Trail didn't captivate me as much other than learning about the origins of the trail. There were many many nuggets of wisdom and truths that I kept finding...and that kept me looking for more. This will definitely be a book that I will return to a different times, knowing I missed bits of wisdom and perspective that tickled my fancy. Great epilogue.

Absolutely compelling!----Travel, natural history, culture, people! I learned so much about an extraordinary number of subjects while being thoroughly entertained by a superb writer who speaks directly to my insatiable curiosity about the world.

Moor writes with the eloquence and creativity of someone destined to be one of the great writers of our time, and yet the book remains accessible, a page-turner even! At turns both deeply contemplative and funny, the book is a perfect balance and execution of the genre. If you're looking for a different way to see the world around you, or for a new take and/ or a deeper meditation on the environment, On Trails is the perfect book.

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