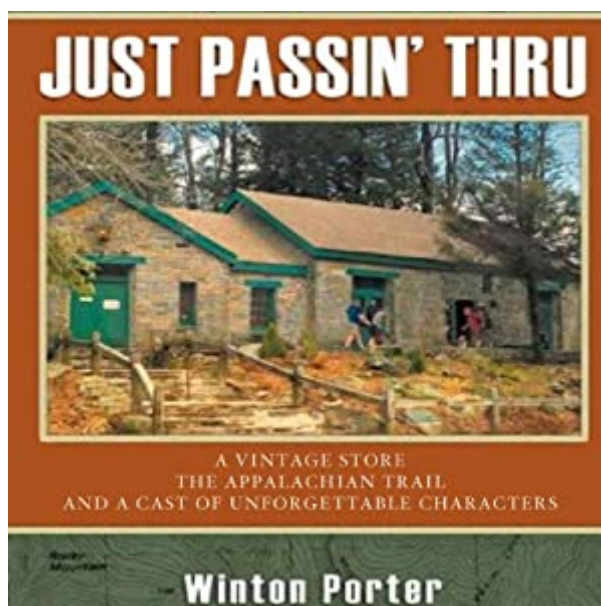


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# Just Passin' Thru: A Vintage Store, The Appalachian Trail, And A Cast Of Unforgettable Characters



## Synopsis

Like a well-crafted stage play, *Just Passin' Thru* delivers one suspenseful scene after another. But in this historic setting a store on the Appalachian Trail called Mountain Crossings the characters who show up are no fictional creations. They are the real-life stars of the author's new life as a backpack-purging, canteen-selling, hostel-running, bandage-taping, lost-child finding, argument-settling, romance-fixing, chili-making man of many faces. Like any good drama, there are the good guys (and gals) and the weirdos, too. Some show up once (and that's enough), and some appear again and again. Some are friends, and some dangerous. But all are united by two things: the author's story-capturing talent, and whatever it is that lures them to attempt (or conquer) a 2,200-mile path that climbs and plummets from Georgia to Maine.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Totally good reading. First we read "A Walk in the Woods" Bryson... then we read "Just Passin Thru" What a great combo... the story of two men walking the AT and then the man who lives and runs the little store they stopped at... Everyone who walks the AT stops at Winton Porters store.. and now Robert Redford is making the movie of Brysons book with Nick Nolte co starring. You can get better reading for relaxation.. And if you are going to try to hike the AT well you better read this book. I totally enjoyed both books. Winton told me things about the hiking that I'd never have believed, but I do live very close to his store... and I have driven past it, gone into the store to buy a gift or two... seen the hikers gather ... yeah it's really interesting to have seen and been but never as

the hiker or owner... just a local from the area... moved here a few years before Winton bought the store... really a good read... and I never met Winton Porter, I think I should have made an effort... too late he sold the store.. thanks for the stories...

If you're reading the AT books, you should definitely include Winton. This is a bit different than you "typical" trail story, obviously, because the action takes place in and around Mountain Crossings, but it's right there with the best. I wish it were longer and the spell didn't end as fast as it did, but I'm for sure on board to buy whatever the author publishes next. What I like the most about this book, outside of Winton's ability to make me laugh out loud while I'm reading, which is huge and mega appreciated, is the warm, kind, and open way he deals with the cast of characters who pass through his life. It's also interesting to get the outfitter's view on hiker's pack situations as opposed to a typical hiker journal complaint of getting rid of two hundred dollars worth of gear and spending three hundred on new stuff.

What I enjoyed most about this short book were the colorful characters that populate the Appalachian trail, some the author knows only briefly, while others are returning friends. What I least liked was the at times peculiarly judgemental attitude he reveals. He seems to be a fairly young and conventional person, so it isn't surprising. A recurring theme seems to be that people are complicated, are frequently not what they seem.....any place where people aren't well known, newcomers have a certain bs factor that requires one to have a caveat emptor attitude.

I have to say that "Just Passin' Thru: A Vintage Store, the Appalachian Trail," and a Cast of Unforgettable Characters by Winton Porter is in my top five books on the Appalachian Trail - speaking from a family member as opposed to a thru-hiker. This non-fiction collection of stories about real people, is a find not only because I scored an autographed copy on the used section, but also because it gives you a cross-section of the types of people who want to hike the trail and the people who help them along the way in the service industries such as hostels and rescuers. Author Winton Porter knows of what he speaks - he's been written up in Backpacker Magazine, been featured in You Tube videos and has been awarded the Georgia Author of the Year. And ... after all he is the owner of Mountain Crossings at Walasi-Yi, the first way station on the trail after Springer in Neel's Gap, Georgia, near Blood Mountain as well as an avid hiker. His story of how he came to own Mountain Crossings is interesting right off the start, due to the sacrifices and the loyalty of his family when he followed his dream to purchase the buildings built by the Civilian Conservation

Corps in 1940. My son, Loner, visited Mountain Crossings the October previous to leaving in April 2012 to do a test hike of his gear and to get a shake down. He was pretty much on the mark but also took advantage of every suggestion they made before setting off on his thru-hike. He also said the people were great. I highly recommend this book to family, friends and support folks so that they will encourage their hiker to stop in here or if they have a chance visit before they purchase their gear. I'd also advise them to take the advice of the experts during their shake down. No hiker should be embarrassed because everyone is new to this at first. All they have to do listen and they'll benefit from the years of shared experience housed in this building. I'm glad Loner went there on his own and told me about it - because due to the fact that he listened and learned, he saved me a lot more worry than I would have had otherwise. The hub of Mountain Crossings is the store where hikers don't just come to restock, but for the first timers, it's the opportunity to get a shake down where the highly knowledgeable Porter (who previously worked for REI) and his staff provide a service which has saved lives. One of the Mountain Crossings staff asks the hiker to lay out the contents of their backpack and then the decisions on equipment and needs are made, eventually getting the pack weight down. The shake down also includes suggestions on whether a piece of gear will take them through the cold, keep them dry or keep them hydrated. The staff is known for getting a hiker's pack weight down to manageable proportions so they don't give up and get off the trail from exhaustion. Aside from the gear talk, the true stories in "Just Passin Thru" are gifts unto themselves. They run the gamut from frightening and sad to hilarious, with one thing in common - these little bits of life on the Appalachian Trail are nothing like what you'd ever expect, even considering where they take place. Which brings me to another reason why the store is the hub - the people, not just counting the friendly, invested staff, but also the previous thru-hikers who always stop in as they pass by on their treks, some of them the 3rd or 4th thru, and some who come to stay a while. The ones who enjoy taking on jobs just out of their passion for the trail and their eagerness to see everyone who makes the attempt actually get to pose at the sign atop Katahdin. And boy, are they characters, from Billy Bumblefoot who sets off on searches for lost hikers at a moment's notice, or watches the hikers trailing in from a lawn chair set atop the Mountain Crossings roof line, to Pirate who lives under the stairs in the basement and volunteers to take care of the hostel. As hikers come up the trail to the stone buildings, they notice how the AT goes under a roof joining the store and the hostel. This is the only location on the trail covered by a roof. And as each hiker walks up the stairs to the welcome sight of the shop's door in need of everything from the rescue of a friend back on the trail, to just hot chocolate and a snicker bar or two, they discover the best thing they find are the smiling faces of folks who have or will be sharing the same experiences.

While many writers promise that you'll meet interesting characters and "feel the adventure" while reading their books, not so many really fulfill that promise. Not so with JUST PASSIN' THROUGH. I found myself in the breezeway waiting for the next colorful character to come through the door and I was never dissapointed. Winton Porter has a talent for inviting you into his world and making you feel at home. A smile here, a chuckle there, and a good old fashioned belly laugh are all to be found in this book. I hope he writes a sequel and keeps us posted on what's goin' on over there in those north Georgia hills. I plan to stop in and see for myself on my next trip from Houston, Texas to Franklin, N.C. Maybe I'll see ya there.

If you are interested in stories and accounts of people who have hiked the Appalachian Trail, this book is worth checking out. Since the focus of the action is, for the most part, at the store, there is not too much about the trail itself. This book is more about the people who choose to live part of their life hiking. Winston Porter proves to be a patient, non-judgemental type who accepts the travellers as they are at that moment in their lives. His tales show how his life and the lives of his family members have been enriched by sharing time with the often eccentric hikers. He and his staff help the hikers lighten their loads, both the physical and the emotional weights on their shoulders. Warning: after reading this you will want your own trail name.

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