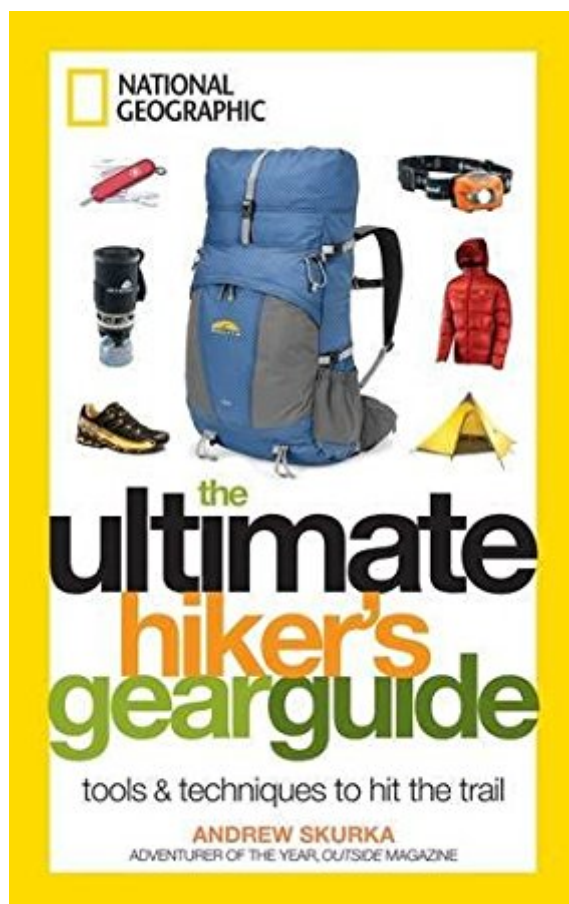


The book was found

The Ultimate Hiker's Gear Guide By Andrew Skurka



Customer Reviews

My first backpacking trip was a hike to a trail shelter in Shenandoah National Park in the early seventies. My brother and I carried frame-less canvas backpacks with webbing shoulder straps that my dad padded with upholstery foam. I don't recall the sleeping bags or much else about the gear we used because my brother and I were much more interested in the creek near the shelter. Dad poured over Colin Fletcher's new book *The Complete Walker* and so did I. We studied his techniques and emulated them. We wrote away for catalogs and made a few pilgrimages to Vienna Virginia from our home in Fall's Church to a backpacking and camping gear shop (what was the name of that place?) to buy what we could afford and that wasn't much. Forty years later we are inundated with a torrential stream of gear and advice making the 'right' choice of either nearly impossible. Colin Fletcher's simple gospel has fractured into dogmatic schisms, each with their holy book, magazine or website. Now there are backpackers, lightweight backpackers, ultralight backpackers and many flavors in between. I've read many backpacking books, tons of articles and blog posts and have grown tired of their often circular logic, rehashed advice and wondered if advertising dollars skewed their opinions. Andrew Skurka's new book *The Ultimate Hiker's Gear Guide* will change the way how we sling a pack on our backs and hoof it into the wild just as Fletcher's *Complete Walker* once did. Fletcher's first books recorded his monumental treks (*The Thousand Mile Summer* and *The Man Who Walked Through Time*) and these expeditions resulted in *The Complete Walker*. Skurka's stunning 30,000 miles of trekking over the past decade have resulted in *The Ultimate Hiker's Gear Guide*.

I had my doubts when I first bought this book. My background is that I am an experienced hiker / hike leader (but not backpacker), long time avid reader of *Backpacker* magazine (and other relevant material), WFA graduate etc etc. I figured that the parts of this book that covered topics relevant to hiking would simply be review for me. I was wrong. While I was familiar with a fair amount of what is covered in the book, there was more than enough that I learned to make reading it worthwhile (and it is a fast reading book). This book should not be thought of as a complete guide to hiking, the only book you'll ever need. It concentrates on gear and clothing (hence its name). It will not teach you how to read/use a trail or topographical map or a compass, GPS, Wilderness First Aid, physical conditioning, and plenty of other types of knowledge that could be worthwhile to know when one is hiking or backpacking. One other reviewer thought that a lot of the text was like reading "techno babble" and yes, a fair amount of the text discusses the technical and practical attributes of various gear and clothing options. This is, after all, as the title says, a book about gear. Likewise, Consumer

Reports doesn't simply say that item X is better than item Y, it also explains the issues that led to their ratings. I think that most people interested in learning about the various gear and clothing options for hiking/backpacking will find the level of "techno babble" to be both reasonable and worthwhile (but your mileage may vary). Overall I think the author is very very good at explaining in plain english the relevant technical aspects of the gear/clothing discussed. If you're making the gear/clothing decisions then the material in this book is quite relevant.

I'm an experienced ultralight hiker, which is important since I'm reviewing this book as a source for ULTRALIGHT hiking. And I have to say that it sets a new standard- it will probably come to be considered the UL version of Colin Fletcher's "The Complete Walker." If I were reviewing it as a hiking source in general it would probably only get four stars because it leaves out a lot of information on heavyweight gear. Nonetheless it deserves a place on any hiker's bookshelf. In my opinion the previous standard-setting book for UL hiking was Ryan Jordan's "Lightweight Backpacking and Camping", which I have also reviewed on , and which oddly enough Andrew also reviewed here on ! It is important to note that this is a very small field- I know of at most a dozen works on this fringe subset of hiking, and a large portion of those are small cartoon-style works by Mike Clelland and similar authors. (Mike's books are exceptional, actually, but limited in scope.) So this book certainly benefits from a lack of competition. That said, it is excellent. Obviously, it is published by National Geographic. This is important because it means that it benefits from excellent editing, unlike most other works on the subject. The layout is quite superb and intuitive. Andrew became involved with National Geographic through some of his epic hikes, and it is important to understand just what kind of guy he is. He has hiked coast-to-coast. He thru-hiked across the Mojave then north up the PCT to catch the PNW trail east to Glacier NP, then south down the CDT back to his start point- this is the hike, known as "The Great Western Loop", that earned him a spot as a National Geographic Explorer of the Year. (Because just hiking the triple crown wasn't enough for him.

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