



**[(Skywalker--Close Encounters on the
Appalachian Trail : Close Encounters on the
Appalachian Trail)] [By (author) Bill Walker]
published on (March, 2011)**

Bill Walker

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Why would a middle-aged businessman, who had never even spent a single night outdoors, attempt to hike the entire 2,180 mile Appalachian Trail? Bill Walker, a former commodities trader in Chicago and London, and an avid 'streetwalker', had developed a virtual obsession to thru-hike the AT, which runs for fourteen states from Georgia to Maine. In the early spring of 2005 he set off, determined to hike this Georgia-to-northern Maine wilderness trail before the arrival of winter. Immediately, he realized he had plunged into a whole new world. The AT has some ferociously difficult terrain, winding through dramatically diverse geography, and covers the very highest peaks in the East. Walker's near 7-foot height earned him the trail name, Skywalker, and drew raves from fellow hikers. But that same height made him more vulnerable to weight loss, cold weather, and crushing fatigue. An elemental fear of bears, snakes, and getting lost also loomed large. The journey often seemed like a see-saw battle between his determination vs. his blunders. No other country has a footpath even remotely as popular as the Appalachian Trail. Up to 4,000,000 people hike on the AT during any given year. Mortals are compelled--or perhaps cursed--to relive their lifetime adventure. This is Bill Walker's (Skywalker's) unforgettable version, leavened with ruthlessly self-deprecating humor. His fondest hope is to inspire other rookies and novices, to give the Appalachian Trail a try as well.

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