



Looking for Alaska

By Peter Jenkins

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More than twenty years ago, a disillusioned college graduate named Peter Jenkins set out with his dog Cooper to look for himself and his nation. His memoir of what he found, *A Walk Across America*, captured the hearts of millions of Americans.

Now, Peter is a bit older, married with a family, and his journeys are different than they were. Perhaps he is looking for adventure, perhaps inspiration, perhaps new communities, perhaps unspoiled land. Certainly, he found all of this and more in Alaska, America's last wilderness.

Looking for Alaska is Peter's account of eighteen months spent traveling over twenty thousand miles in tiny bush planes, on snow machines and snowshoes, in fishing boats and kayaks, on the Alaska Marine Highway and the Haul Road, searching for what defines Alaska. Hearing the amazing stories of many real Alaskans--from Barrow to Craig, Seward to Deering, and everywhere in between--Peter gets to know this place in the way that only he can. His resulting portrait is a rare and unforgettable depiction of a dangerous and beautiful land and all the people that call it home.

He also took his wife and eight-year-old daughter with him, settling into a "home base" in Seward on the Kenai Peninsula, coming and going from there, and hosting the rest of their family for extended visits. The way his family lived, how they made Alaska their home and even participated in Peter's explorations, is as much a part of this story as Peter's own travels.

All in all, Jenkins delivers a warm, funny, awe-inspiring, and memorable diary of discovery--both of this place that captures all of our imaginations, and of himself, all over again.

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Looking for Alaska By Peter Jenkins Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In 1999, Peter Jenkins and his family left their farm in Tennessee to live in Alaska for a few seasons, eventually renting a house in Seward, Alaska (pop. 2,830) on the Kenai Peninsula. The principal aim of the trip was for Jenkins to write a travelogue, but he also saw it as an opportunity to end a period of personal stagnation. It appears to have worked, for *Looking for Alaska* is filled with a vibrancy that can only come from one with a fully charged battery. Recognizing that "This giant place is filled with people determined to live as free as possible of others' intervention," he employed the same low-key approach to research that made his bestselling book *A Walk Across America* (1979) so engaging--he made friends wherever he went and allowed people to share their stories in their own way and in their own time. Part of Jenkins's charm is that he never pretends that he's figured the place out; he readily cops to his outsider status and invites readers to experience his sense of awe and surprise with him. During his 18-month stay in the Last Frontier, Jenkins spent time with wildlife rangers, recreation guides, native whalers, fishermen, and dogsled mushers, all of whom showed Jenkins and his family glimpses of their own private Alaska. (They also shared their bear stories; it seems nearly everyone in the state has had at least one run-in with the giant predator). "No one is ever the same after coming back from Alaska," he writes and after reading his book, it's easy to believe him.

--Shawn Carkonen

From Publishers Weekly

The footloose Jenkins (*A Walk Across America*; *The Walk West*; etc.) hits the road again if not actually the blacktop. Jenkins's 18-month sojourn in Alaska involves more unconventional modes of travel: a nervy float-plane trip through the fog with a passenger who knows the route better than the pilot, for instance, or a wild ride across a frozen river on a sled attached to 13 surging huskies. For all its moments of adventure, though, this book feels more deliberate than Jenkins's earlier journeys. The people he meets seem to have been selected in advance by a booking agent. But that doesn't take away from their stories or from Jenkins's ability to draw them out. He is no poet, but maybe that's why he fits so easily into the company of a people with a natural distrust of outsiders, and why he can bond with a fisherman who "would feel much more at home at the dinner-table with ex-football coaches John Madden and Mike Ditka." Even if Jenkins comes across as more settled and his need for self-discovery a quest that added a spark to his previous works has lessened, the author's ability to inspire confidence in others is a quality that hasn't changed. Nor has his courage to even undertake such a trek. And whether it's the crepuscular sunlight ricocheting off a glacier, a massive brown bear rooting through his garbage or a grizzled mountain man named Wild Gene, Jenkins convinces readers that there is much to look at and to look for in Alaska.

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From Library Journal

Most of us who "look for" Alaska do so as tourists; we see the incredible rugged beauty of the Inside Passage and gaze with wonder at the glaciers, mountains, waterfalls, and other sights located in areas devoid of any sign of human habitation. Many residents, on the other hand, see a very different place; they face a daily challenge to survive in an unforgiving land. Then there are those like Jenkins neither resident nor tourist who are determined to go beyond the visible and look for the spirit. During his 18-month journey throughout Alaska, the author of the best-selling *A Walk Across America* found what he was looking for. He shares that experience in a narrative that sparkles with adventure, quirky characters, unbelievable hardships, and indescribable beauty. Not intended for the casual tourist, this book is for those who seek to understand the

heart and soul of America's most distinctive state. For all public libraries. Joseph L. Carlson, Lompoc P.L., CA
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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