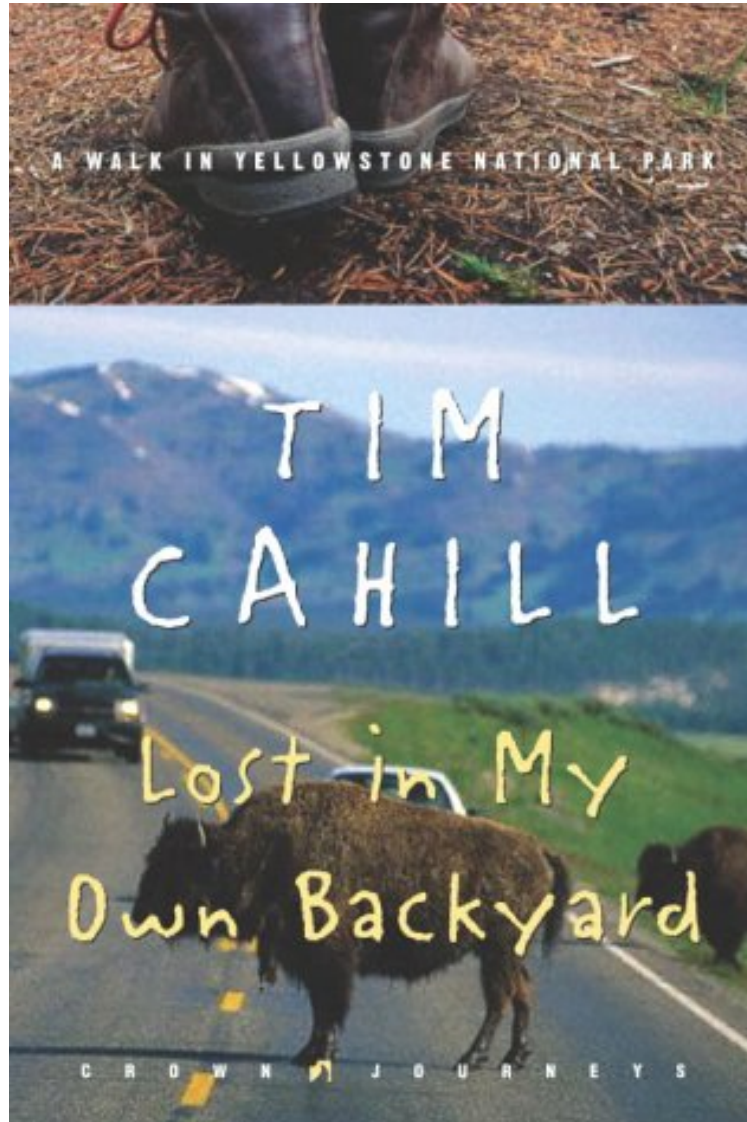


[Mobile book] Lost in My Own Backyard: A Walk in Yellowstone National Park (Crown Journeys)

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Tim Cahill

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Tim Cahill : Lost in My Own Backyard: A Walk in Yellowstone National Park (Crown Journeys) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lost in My Own Backyard: A Walk in Yellowstone National Park (Crown Journeys):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. This book brought back awesome memories! By Alabama Shopper As a huge Cahill fan and as a former Yellowstone park employee, finding a book by Cahill on Yellowstone

was a thrill in itself. Although it's been 30+ years since I roamed the backcountry of the most beautiful spot in America, his book brought back the smell of the paintpots, the hissing of the geysers at midnight, and the sounds a bear makes outside your tent at night. To think he lives just outside the park makes me extremely jealous but having his book take me back, makes me extremely grateful. I never thought of the Park as the top of the world's largest volcano, but his book points out the obvious. I am now reading some of the books mentioned in his bibliography on the history of the park. Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park My only complaint would be that it's way too short and I finished it too quickly. But at least I have one more Cahill to read Hold the Enlightenment for my next Adventure Travel fix. So Thank You Tim! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not what I expected, but charming nonetheless By S. R. Gyll Yellowstone is one of my favorite places on the planet, and I bought this book in the hopes that it would give me some inside info on lesser traveled paths that I wasn't familiar with. This book wasn't what I expected, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. It's not a trail guide so much as it is the charming musings of the author as he walked some iconic trails in the park. It was delightful to read, and he does recommend some good trail guides at the end of his book. Win/win! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By Thomas B Henderson As advertised

Lets get lost together . . . Lost in My Own Backyard brings acclaimed author Tim Cahill together with one of his and America's favorite destinations: Yellowstone, the world's first national park. Cahill has been puttering around in the park for a quarter of a century, slowly covering its vast scope and exploring its remote backwoods. So does this mean that he knows what he's doing? Hardly. I live fifty miles from the park, says Cahill, but proximity does not guarantee competence. I've spent entire afternoons not knowing exactly where I was, which is to say, I was lost in my own backyard. Cahill stumbles from glacier to geyser, encounters wildlife (some of it, like bisons, weighing in the neighborhood of a ton), muses on the microbiology of thermal pools, gets spooked in the mysterious Hoodoos, sees moonbows arcing across waterfalls at midnight, and generally has a fine old time walking several hundred miles while contemplating the concept and value of wilderness. Mostly, Cahill says, I have resisted the urge to commit philosophy. This is difficult to do when you're alone, twenty miles from the nearest road, and you've just found a grizzly bear track the size of a pizza. Divided into three parts The Trails, which offers a variety of favorite day hikes; In the Backcountry, which explores three great backcountry trails very much off the beaten track; and A Selected Yellowstone Bookshelf, an annotated bibliography of his favorite books on the park this is a hilarious, informative, and perfect guide for Yellowstone veterans and first-timers alike. Lost in My Own Backyard is adventure writing at its very best.

About the Author TIM CAHILL is the author of eight books, including Road Fever, Jaguars Ripped My Flesh, and A Wolverine Is Eating My Leg. He is a founding editor of Outside magazine and writes frequently for National Geographic Adventure and other national publications. He lives in Montana. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Mount Washburn A quarter century ago I moved to a small town just north of Yellowstone Park. I didn't know much about wildlife back then and honestly couldn't tell a mule deer from an antelope. I wasn't certain why Yellowstone contained more geysers than anyplace else on earth. I was unaware that there was a huge lake, one of the largest alpine lakes on earth, up there in the pines. I didn't know much. But I wasn't a tourist. Oh, no. I was much too cool for that. I never went to Yellowstone specifically to look at, what?--mud pots, or Old Faithful, or various thermal springs. It always seemed to me like that had somehow "been done," and that serious persons, like myself, went into the backcountry, and we did that specifically to avoid all those other persons who didn't know that gaping at geysers or giggling at the flatulent-sounding mud pots was for--well, for tourists, who were somehow inferior. In fact, the places where tourists customarily go are supremely worth seeing even if you have to share the wonder. That is the conclusion I've come to after a quarter century of puttering around in the park. Oh, I've been out in the backcountry quite a bit, and I've seen the tourist attractions, all of them, several times. I just didn't know how to look at them. I was lost in my own backyard. I wish someone had just slapped me early on. Well, perhaps I could have done without the slap, but it would have been okay if someone wiser in the ways of the park had just shown me certain things and told me to shut up and listen. Stop being so damn superior. You're acting like a jerk. I have, in fact, a long-standing fantasy in which I take the younger version of myself up to the park and show him the one thing he truly has to understand. It would probably be a hassle getting him through the entrance and up to the summit of Mount Washburn. He'd be asking questions and trying to stop for a walk every time he saw a backcountry trailhead. This young guy would be distracted. I'd have to talk with him in a severe manner. I imagine it would go like this: Okay, shut up, we're going to the park, and it's going to be a couple of hours of driving, and I'm not going to let you talk about anything at all because you are just going to get all enthralled with this or that and lose the central theme. So here we go, and you might just as well be blindfolded, because we are not going to talk about the mountains that run on either side of Paradise Valley as we rise up Yellowstone River toward the entrance to Yellowstone Park. Oh, those are antelope over there. Look, stop complaining. I'm taking you twenty-five years closer to figuring out the geological essence of the park. You don't care about geology? How about the end of civilization as we know it? No, I'm not kidding you. The end of civilization as we know it! Sure, right, make fun. Just another damn thing to worry about. Dumb butt. Here's the north entrance the

park. We'll stop, I'll show my National Park Pass to the ranger in the little guardhouse. Yeah, she's attractive, I agree. Some of these lady rangers, I have to admit: I mean, if you've got a thing for women in uniform...Wait. See how easy it is to let things distract you from the central point? Now we're passing the forty-fifth parallel, right at the sign there--halfway between the equator and the north pole--and those are elk emerging out of the steam, which comes from thermal springs dropping into the river, and yes, you can bathe in the hot pots there, where the thermal water drops into the river, but that's not why we've come to the park today. Don't those elk moving through the steam look like they're in some kind of movie about supernatural beings?But we're getting distracted.And now here we go: we're driving through the little administrative village of Mammoth. Yes, it's named for those steaming terraces of multicolored rock looming up over there to our right. Mammoth Hot Springs. Sure, we could stop and take a walk, but there are wooden stairs and wooden walkways and you have to stay on the trail and there'll probably be a lot of people all bunched together looking at the delicate colors of the various thermal pools up on top of the terraces and you'll have to hear people say, "Kinda pretty, huh," and so you don't want to go up there, do you? You're too cool for that Disneyland sort of stuff, right?See, that's what I mean. I was the same way when I was you twenty-five years ago. Exactly the same way. No Old Faithful for me. Been there, done that, now I'm too cool. This, I've come to realize, is a moronic attitude. That's why we're going where we're going today.What? No, that's a coyote. Wolves are bigger. There're some bison over there. Ignore them, please, as much as you can ignore fifty or sixty animals weighing up to two thousand pounds apiece. Biggest land animal in North America. We'll deal with them later. We're on our way to Tower Junction, then we'll turn south and stop near the top of Dunraven Pass, and then we'll climb to the summit of Mount Washburn. Why? Because our sole ambition this trip is to begin the process of coming to grips with some of the most significant and convulsive cataclysms that ever occurred on the face of the earth.But see, here's the problem with Yellowstone. You can start off on a trip with every intention of trying to understand the ultimate and end up studying wildflowers. The whole park is an embarrassment of wonders.Okay, so here we are at Dunraven Pass, 8,895 feet in elevation, and here's where we'll park. Then we'll walk up to the top of Mount Washburn. The guidebooks say the walk to the fire lookout on the summit rises about 1,400 feet and should take about two hours (much less if you're acclimated), and the view from the summit, at 10,243 feet, is said to be soul-stirring.Yeah, I know, it isn't exactly your idea of climbing a mountain. This is just a big wide trail, and it used to be a stagecoach road, when it was built back in 1905. See those old clumps of asphalt? In the 1920s, when they let cars into the park, people drove up to the top. They drove up in reverse, because Model T Fords didn't have fuel pumps and you couldn't get gas to the engine on these steep slopes.There's a sign at the trailhead that says, in effect, that Mount Washburn is a "bear frequenting" area and that it is not impossible to be eaten by a grizzly while walking up this trail. I think such signs make one alert. If you tend to worry about bears, and you should, the first part of the trail may seem a little claustrophobic. It is in deep woods, but it eventually emerges onto grasslands set in long sloping aprons, and for most of the summer and early fall these areas are alive with wildflowers. Some say this is the best place in the park to see these flowers, the colors swirling and intertwining like those on an intricate Persian carpet.Occasionally we'll get a view of the fire lookout up top, a two-story building with floor-to-ceiling windows, quite a ways off. We've been at it for an hour and a half now and passed several people, except for that disgustingly fit couple who were running. Running uphill, hard. Something seriously wrong with those people. Something wrong with the slowpokes we passed, too. We're walking at the proper pace, the Cahill pace.Now we've got about 300 more feet to the summit, and it's a steep 300 feet. The trees here--the Engelmann spruce, the whitebark pine, and the subalpine fir--are all stunted and twisted, no more than six feet high, just barely clinging to life on the slope of the mountain. And now the trees are gone, and on either side of the trail the land is lumpy with little hillocks of alpine tundra. Tiny white flowers, smaller than a dime, are all hunkered down low in the rocks to avoid the wind and catch the sun.The fire lookout is glassed in, and it feels good to stand inside, out of the wind, and look out to the south. There are a few other folks up here, and some of them are signing the guestbook. Only a few hundred have signed the book in the past month, though Mount Washburn is one of the most popular backcountry trails in the park. An estimated ten thousand people make the climb every year. Folks who sign the guestbook have come from Japan and Poland and Switzerland and Connecticut and Oregon and Virginia. There is even some drama in the comments: "Wow! I wish my husband was here. He locked the keys in the car...so my six year old son and I came alone while he worked it out. He should have come with us!" Hey, just kick in the window. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.Outside, on the rocks under the lookout, are three or four little furballs, pikas, scrambling frenetically about on the talus slope. These small rodents have one of those jet-propelled metabolisms: they do not hibernate. They just keep busy all winter, burning hot, scampering over the rocks, under the snow. They don't run fast like hares, but they can outmaneuver most predators on rocky slopes.In the alpine meadow off to the west are half a dozen bighorn sheep. No rams. Only females and juveniles. They are golden brown in color and lying in the grass, which is almost exactly the same shade of gold. You'd miss them if you scanned the field too quickly.Washburn is named for General Henry Washburn, the surveyor general of the Montana Territory, who led a volunteer group of citizen explorers from Montana into the Yellowstone country in 1870 to investigate rumors of steam erupting out of the ground and other seemingly improbable wonders. The group had heard rumors of a great lake, but they weren't finding it. Washburn climbed the mountain we're standing on and returned to tell everyone that he had seen the lake.

Nathaniel Langford, who was along on the trip, later wrote a book about this pioneering expedition and said that Washburn's information, delivered directly from the summit of the mo...