



## **The Pursuit of Endurance: Harnessing the Record-Breaking Power of Strength and Resilience**

*Jennifer Pharr Davis*

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**The Pursuit of Endurance: Harnessing the Record-Breaking Power of Strength and Resilience** Jennifer Pharr Davis

**National Geographic Adventurer of the Year Jennifer Pharr Davis unlocks the secret to maximizing perseverance--on and off the trail**

Jennifer Pharr Davis, a record holder of the FKT (fastest known time) on the Appalachian Trail, reveals the secrets and habits behind endurance as she chronicles her incredible accomplishments in the world of endurance hiking, backpacking, and trail running. With a storyteller's ear for fascinating detail and description, Davis takes readers along as she trains and sets her record, analyzing and trail-testing the theories and methodologies espoused by her star-studded roster of mentors. She distills complex rituals and histories into easy-to-understand tips and action items that will help you take perseverance to the next level. *The Pursuit of Endurance* empowers readers to unlock phenomenal endurance and leverage newfound grit to achieve personal bests in everything from sports and family to the boardroom.

## **The Pursuit of Endurance: Harnessing the Record-Breaking Power of Strength and Resilience Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Pursuit of Endurance: Harnessing the Record-Breaking Power of Strength and Resilience for online ebook**

### **Corinne says**

I knew I wanted to read this book, but I took advantage of the opportunity to listen to Jenn read it herself as I drove through the Blue Ridge Mountains. As a long time follower of Jenn, I am really pleased at how much her writing has matured over time. In this book she explores what common threads help support endurance, especially athletes who have held FKTs (fastest known time) records on the Appalachian trail. Sometimes the scope of the book would widen to things outside this focus, but always containing information that I found interesting. She reached into the core of these FKT athletes during her conversations with them. I also loved how she would find the best in people while still addressing their less than flattering traits. For awhile I became tired of the chronicle of one white male after another, so I was happy to finally reach where Jenn discusses her own record attempt. I am familiar with her story, but I loved how she really put her record attempts in the context of womenhood. First she broke the women's supported record on the AT and thought... could I have done better? Why was she only reaching for the women's mark. She then went on the hold the overall record. I also love how supportive her husband has been through all of these things (perk of the audiobook also includes some songs by Brew!). She later followed with her interviews with Heather Anderson. The recent surge in female super heroes has really made me reflect on the importance of female role model. They are something I didn't really know was missing until they existed. I was also excited to hear her discussions with Scott Jurek, for as she reflected he is so famous it is hard to get to know him behind the scenes. I really enjoyed her constant questioning and the reflective voice Jenn had in "The Pursuit of Endurance." Pop Sugar Reading Challenge 2018 - A book that is published in 2018

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### **C.R. Elliott says**

\*I received a copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review\*

Normally I wouldn't talk about my life in a book review but with Pursuit of Endurance it feels appropriate. This year has been tumultuous with big moves and work changes on the horizon. I've been reaching for this book when I've needed extra strength to take the deep breaths and keep moving forward. I'm not an athlete nor am I particularly interested in attempting any records but I found the book blurb interesting and Jennifer Pharr Davis has an engaging storytelling style. At times the book had the effect of making me curious at training for a marathon or other physical feat but at others it just helped me to understand what helps people push through their own expectations of their own limitations. But, there wasn't a recklessness in the retelling. This book isn't just about endurance athletes but rather it offers lessons to anyone struggling toward their own goals. Jennifer Pharr Davis' portraits of FKT individuals paints a picture of people whose goals reside within themselves. People who have no external reason to trek over vast distances but do so because they are compelled to. In my life recently I have been struggling on a path that feels long and arduous, impossible at times but that I still feel compelled to continue upon. Reaching for Pursuit of Endurance as I wrestle with my own ephemeral goals was incredibly helpful. I recommend it highly to anyone who seeks to endure, there are wonderful lessons and stories within.

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## **David says**

### NEEDS MORE TRAIL STORIES.

I jumped in really hoping to get a feel for what it was like to hike or set an FKT. Instead, I received a set of loosely connected interviews with famous hikers or runners that glossed over the most interesting part: the actual hiking. Instead, it felt like a series of not very interesting biographies of very interesting people. The book touches on the science of long distance hiking and the gender imbalance, but all too briefly. It jumps around too much and ends up focusing on the bits that aren't super interesting to the average reader. I feel like the intended audience is for folks who already are familiar with the experience, but not with the scene.

Not a bad book, just not what I was hoping for.

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## **Julie says**

Again, misled by a title! I thought this was going to be a lot more about endurance, and maybe with some particular training tips or something in it.

Instead I got the story of thruhikers (a term I didn't know before) on the Appalachian Trail and some other trails around the world. And the author's story of breaking the fastest time record was just one of the stories she presented in here.

So while it wasn't full of general or practical advice on endurance specifically, I did learn quite a bit about hiking trails and the sorts of people who like hiking entire trails, often, and quickly! So it was interesting. And I might read some more books like this; a whole genre of nonfiction I hadn't really considered before.

So brava.

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## **Leah says**

Jennifer Pharr Davis' latest book The Pursuit of Endurance: Harnessing the Record-Breaking Power of Strength and Resilience is an inside look into the world of the FKT (fastest known time) and the athletes who accomplish these incredible feats of endurance. What personal challenges did they overcome in the effort to be the fastest and the best? Is endurance merely an athletic trait, or does it apply to humanity as a whole? Are women able to compete with the men in such endeavors?

This is the first time some of the personal stories of FKT athletes are told, and the very special thing about this book is that they are told through the heart of someone who has been there herself. The hiking community is small, and for many years I've heard names like Scott Williamson, Heather Anderson, Scott Jurek, Jennifer Pharr Davis, Liz Thomas. It makes sense that they all know each other. because their experiences create a bond only they can understand. Jen writes about these friends after visiting them, sitting down with them, and hearing their personal accounts over dinner, while walking on trails, and even summiting peaks together. Her own humility in wanting to learn opened doors for her to tell about events that might never have been brought to light if not for her own search as an endurance athlete.

Some of the names in this book are familiar from reading Jen's previous books about her own journey on the AT, but this time you really feel like you get to know Warren Doyle and David Horton in a more personal way. So many of the hikers who have managed to set FKTs on America's long trails are men, and I found myself wishing more women could accomplish this too. But then I had to stop and remind myself that a strong, powerful woman who set an FKT wrote this book. By the time I got to the chapter about Heather Anderson, I was ready to stand up and cheer. The really beautiful thing about all these stories, and about Jen being the one to write them, is that she is boldly saying that women do not need to be bound by gender when it comes to accomplishing physical pursuits that are typically dominated by men. "Once I set the FKT, I was a stronger, more outspoken feminist. I was finally at the point where I believed that my ability was of equal value, and it took feeling like an equal for me to realize that I wasn't always being treated like one. I had to walk more than ten thousand miles and set a record to dispel the gender bias I had accepted – the one that society, media, and the marketplace present, overtly and subconsciously, on a daily basis." In the end, endurance isn't a gender issue.

It felt like the writing of this book was a search to find the thing that makes endurance athletes unique. In the life of each person profiled there is some hardship they have to overcome, an inner drive that keeps them asking more and more of themselves. There are character traits that are similar, dedication and grit. But in the end, endurance is part of our humanity, the constant quest for inner strength. Maybe you won't be the one to set an FKT on a national trail, but perhaps there will be a personal mountain you will conquer.

As a hiker reading this book, I got the jolt of inspiration that I needed. I want to wake up earlier, hit the trail harder, push myself to achieve more. Working a desk job and being a cog in corporate life does so much to strip the soul of meaning. While some in this book were able to leave careers and pursue a different life, many of us feel the weight of responsibility and are unable to leave at a moment's notice. And that's ok too because we're all on our own path. But, we can still be inspired to live fuller, more passionate lives outside of the daily grind.

"Hiking is not escapism; it's realism. The people who choose to spend time outdoors are not running away from anything; we are returning to where we belong."

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### **Samar Dahmash Jarrah says**

Kept me going while on the stepper and cycling....

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### **Gerry says**

I met Jennifer Pharr Davis at a talk about this book. She signed a copy for me to give to my daughter who was preparing to undertake a thru-hike on the Pacific Crest Trail. I took a peak inside the cover and couldn't put it down before delivering it. I learned about passion for thru-hiking, perseverance and endurance, as well as an appreciation for nature and the simpler things in life. It was fascinating and captivating. JPD has done a wonderful job of revealing how the personalities and backstories of her hiking role models influenced their goals and achievements. I recommend this book to anyone who appreciates nature, hard work, setting challenging goals and testing their athletic limits.

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## Ron S says

National Geographic Adventurer of the Year and past record holder of the FKT on the Appalachian Trail, Jennifer Pharr Davis (JPD) explores endurance in this fascinating read. Part memoir, part character study of ultra-runners, thru-hikers, FKT record breakers and the latest theories and methodologies of humans pushing themselves to do that which doesn't seem possible. The character studies of people like David Horton, Heather Anderson and Warren Doyle are worth the price of the book (I had the good fortune to read this in ARC format: releases April 10th, 2018). Highly recommended for those interested in endurance sports, the Appalachian or Pacific Crest trails, ultra-running, adventure, or just enjoy reading about unusual and interesting people doing incredible things.

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## Deena says

I really enjoyed this book, because so much of it spoke to me as a (very amateur and slow) endurance athlete. Jennifer Pharr Davis broke the overall FKT (Fastest Known Time) record on the Appalachian Trail in 2011, and held on to it for four years, until Scott Jurek, arguably one of the most legendary ultra runners on the planet, broke her record in 2015 by only three hours. Pharr Davis isn't nearly as well-known as Jurek is, and her record-setting hike did not receive with nearly the amount of pomp and circumstance and publicity that Jurek's was, but to me, that made reading about her journey all the more special. She is a hiker, and an amazing, talented one for sure, but she came across to me as a regular person, which made her more relatable. The book left me with pangs of both nostalgia and wistfulness, as reading about Pharr Davis's and others' epic hikes on American long trails brought me back about 20 years when I spent a summer hiking at every opportunity I had and contemplated a thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. A big part of me wishes I had just done it when I had the time, youth, and freedom to do it. Instead, I lived a bit vicariously through this book and took away many valuable lessons and reminders of all of the ways in which we are equipped to endure in every aspect of life. (And hey, maybe an AT thru-hike is still in my future at some point.) This book isn't the flashy page-turner that Scott Jurek published earlier this year, and after reading Pharr Davis' interview with Jurek in her book, I can see that she didn't intend it to be that type of book. The focus was not entirely on her, but spread over several athletes and long trail record setters. Admittedly, it was a bit tedious in sections and read more like a stream of consciousness at times, but I still really enjoyed it. As a woman, I found it exceptionally empowering and feel inspired to press on with a lofty endurance run I have been contemplating for later this summer.

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## E.P. says

If you enjoy reading stories of Shackleton's attempt at reaching the South Pole, or of plucky horses like Seabiscuit who succeed against all odds, then chances are good you'll enjoy Jennifer Pharr Davis's "The Pursuit of Endurance." If you are an avid hiker but fear the idea of a high-speed through-hike, you'll probably love this book, even as you shake your head at the feats of endurance it chronicles. And if you're contemplating attempting an FKT (Fastest Known Time) yourself, then obviously this is a must-read.

For those of you who are wondering, an FKT is the fastest known time (because there's no official measuring or record keeping body) that a hiker/runner has completed a long-distance trail such as the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest Trail. This is not, as Pharr Davis discusses in some detail, an official sport, but a-hobby isn't exactly the right word, but it'll do for now--in which people try to cover hundreds or thousands of miles

of trail as quickly as possible, often covering 40+ miles/day and sleeping only a couple of hours a night, purely for the sake of proving that it is possible to walk, say, the approximately 2200 miles of the AT in under 50 days.

Pharr Davis, as a former holder of the AT's FKT and the first woman to set its overall FKT, is eminently qualified to write this book. She goes into the history of the major US trails, the various record attempts that have been made, the psychology behind FKTs and endurance sports in general, and the personalities of those who set some of the recent FKTs on the big trails. She managed to score interviews with most of the recent FKT setters, including some generally elusive ones, and describes their hikes--and her own, of course.

Indeed, for me personally the most interesting chapters were those about the FKTs set by women, including herself. While until recently it was assumed that women had no chance at keeping up with men, trailblazers like Heather Anderson and Pharr Davis herself have proven that that is not the case at all. In fact, after finishing the PCT for the first time with her boyfriend, Anderson "looked down at her washboard abs and strong legs, then she looked back at her gaunt boyfriend and took note. She surmised that women might be well suited--or even *\*better\** suited--for long-distance travel than men." While the jury is still out on that (although I tend to agree with Anderson), it is interesting to note that Pharr Davis mentions several times how her own main obstacles were mental: at first it simply didn't occur to her to try an FKT, and then she assumed she had no chance of keeping up with the guys. After she set the overall AT record at 46 days, 11 hours, and 20 minutes, she worried that maybe she had left something on the table--after all, she walked rather than ran, and got considerably more sleep than most of the other, male, record-setters. When Scott Jurek beat her record by a mere three hours four years later, it was hard not to wonder "Should I have insisted on getting a full night's sleep so often?" In any case, the experience of setting the FKT made Pharr Davis, she acknowledges, a "more outspoken feminist." She felt at peace with what happened, though, and writes generously about Jurek's successes and the troubles that being a celebrity athlete brought on him.

This is a book by, for (sort of), and about endurance athletes, but non-athletes can certainly enjoy it as well. Pharr Davis has a warm yet polished writing style, interweaving historical background, the science of endurance, and personal anecdotes into a highly readable narrative that is enthralling for the long-distance hikers and couchbound alike.

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### **Nate Hawthorne says**

I know, another book by a hiker about the Appalachian Trail. But this one covers it from a different angle. Ms. Davis interviewed many past holders of the FKT (fastest known time) on the trail and other trails. She was looking to gain perspective on the personalities of endurance hikers/runners to see if they have any common traits. Funny how none of these books about the trials and tribulations of being in the trail have deterred my fascination with wanting to hike it. I probably wouldn't go for a FKT though.

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### **Keely says**

Jennifer Pharr Davis is a hiking and endurance enthusiast, and one-time Fastest Known Time (FKT) holder for a thru hike on the Appalachian Trail. In "The Pursuit of Endurance," she alternates accounts of her hiking experiences with profiles of other notable thru hikers and runners, including Warren Doyle, David Horton, Scott Williamson, Andrew Thompson, Heather Anderson, and Scott Jurek. She also includes chapters on the

psychology and science of human endurance. I found it particularly interesting when she wrote about the advisability of running vs. hiking a rugged trail like the Appalachian. She hiked on all three of her thru efforts, including her FKT. Runner Scott Jurek beat that FKT a few years later—but only by three hours. By coincidence, I had just started listening to Jurek's Appalachian Trail book "North" right as I arrived at Davis's chapter on the tortoise vs. hare approaches. The things I most enjoyed about "The Pursuit of Endurance" were Davis's specific perspective as a woman athlete and her ability to connect her endurance pursuits to broader things, like building community, spreading enthusiasm for nature conservation and enjoyment, living our best lives as the movers we were made to be, and also bringing the mental toughness and perspective gained in endurance sports to work, relationships, and other areas of life. I do wish she had offered more specific anecdotes and descriptions from her experiences on the AT, but other than that, I loved the book.

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### **Jen says**

This book made a home in my favorites list. What a gem! A read full of adventure and metaphors for living life.

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### **Kim Kuhne says**

I'll start by saying that this was better than I expected, and I expected a lot!

I read Jennifer's first book, "Becoming Odyssa" a few years ago. That was much better than "Wild" for an account of long-distance hiking. "Becoming Odyssa" lead me to "Born to Run" and "Eat and Run", and finally the Backpacker article on Scott Williamson's multiple attempts to yo-yo the PCT. Pieces of all of these came up in their turn in "Pursuit of Endurance".

Jennifer spent 2 years working on this book-- interviewing, researching, and hiking with the subjects as she worked her way forward from the "first" Fastest Known Times to the most recent. She was looking to find the WHY and HOW these very different people are able to persist to reach such painful goals. She succeeded in creating a book about "endurance" and pushing thru to find true self.

This book is probably more meaningful to anyone that has been out hiking and pushed themselves to reach the goal on the trail. However, the accomplishments of the people interviewed here go far beyond just one hiking/running goal.

To quote Jennifer "Endurance isn't a human trait; it is THE human trait. We exist only as long as we persist. and there is confounding hope and limitless possibility in our ability to rise up, change direction, and take one more step."

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### **Jen Heininger says**

I loved this book. Very unlike her first two. Thorough and objective look at endurance athletes, mostly long trail record holders. It might not appeal to everyone but I have become a huge fan of Jennifer Pharr Davis

after reading all three of her books and I so appreciate her honesty and also her pragmatism. She is also very honest about her faith but not preachy or judgmental and her books don't come across at all like "Christian lit" -- she exemplifies C.S. Lewis' quote well, "The world does not need more Christian literature. What it needs is more Christians writing good literature." In this case it reads almost more like a history or sociology book but it is draws you in all the same.

And last but not least, I loved one of her quotes in regard to environmentalism and valuing trails and the preservation of them (of course this quote can be applied to ALL THINGS). "People won't work to protect something if they don't value it; and we typically don't value something unless we experience it." Yes, and Amen.

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