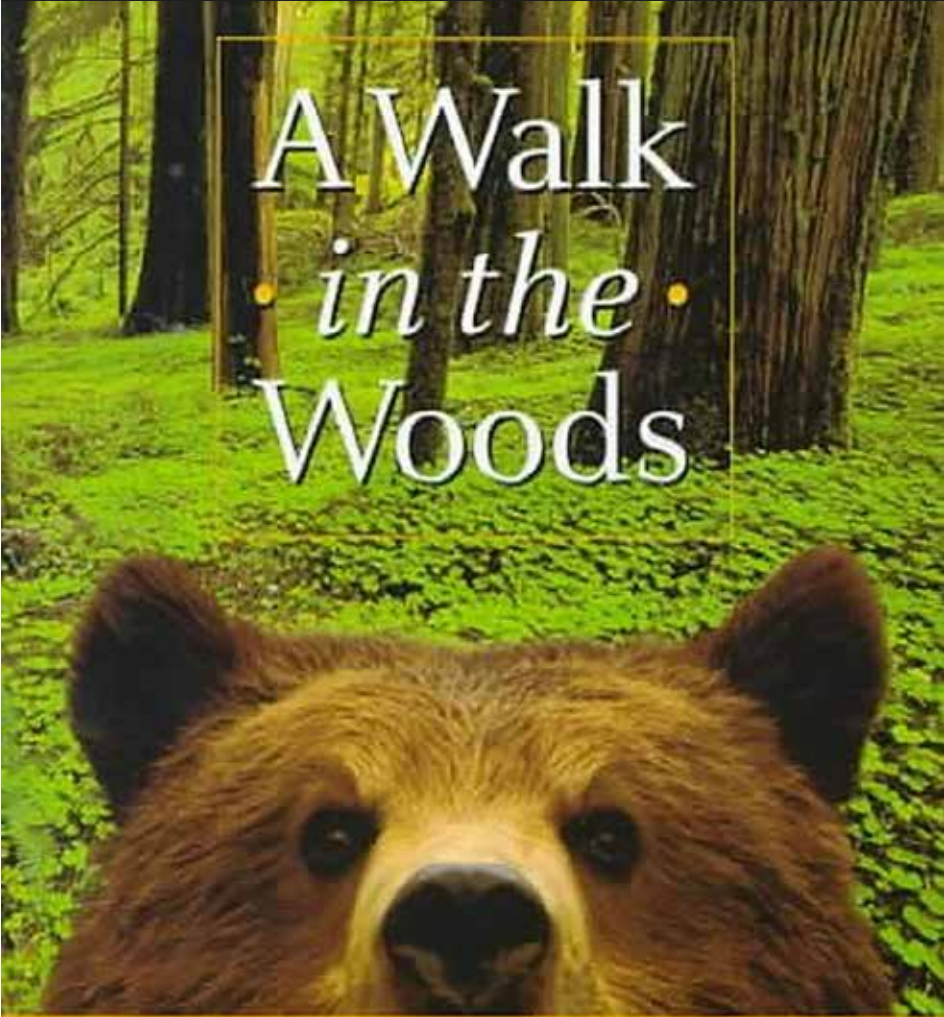


Wells County Public Library's
2017 ONE BOOK ONE COUNTY READ

presents



A Walk
in the
Woods

REDISCOVERING AMERICA ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

BILL BRYSON

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EXCERPT FROM A WALK IN THE WOODS

Distance changes utterly when you take the world on foot. A mile becomes a long way, two miles literally considerable, ten miles whopping, fifty miles at the very limits of conception. The world, you realize, is enormous in a way that only you and a small community of fellow hikers know. Planetary scale is your little secret.

Life takes on a neat simplicity, too. Time ceases to have any meaning. When it is dark, you go to bed, and when it is light again you get up, and everything in between is just in between. It's quite wonderful, really.

You have no engagements, commitments, obligations, or duties; no special ambitions and only the smallest, least complicated of wants; you exist in a tranquil tedium, serenely beyond the reach of exasperation, "far removed from the seats of strife," as the early explorer and botanist William Bartram put it. All that is required of you is a willingness to trudge.

There is no point in hurrying because you are not actually going anywhere. However far or long you plod, you are always in the same place: in the woods. It's where you were yesterday, where you will be tomorrow. The woods is one boundless singularity. Every bend in the path presents a prospect indistinguishable from every other, every glimpse into the trees the same tangled mass. For all you know, your route could describe a very large, pointless circle. In a way, it would hardly matter.

At times, you become almost certain that you slabbled this hillside three days ago, crossed this stream yesterday, clambered over this fallen tree at least twice today already. But most of the time you don't think. No point. Instead, you exist in a kind of mobile Zen mode, your brain like a balloon tethered with string, accompanying but not actually part of the body below. Walking for hours and miles becomes as automatic, as unremarkable, as breathing. At the end of the day you don't think, "Hey, I did sixteen miles today," any more than you think, "Hey, I took eight thousand breaths today." It's just what you do.

And so we walked, hour upon hour, over roller-coaster hills, along knife-edge ridges and over grassy balds, through depthless ranks of oak, ash, chinkapin, and pine. The skies grew sullen and the air chillier, but it wasn't until the third day that the snow came. It began in the morning as thinly scattered flecks, hardly noticeable. But then the wind rose, then rose again, until it was blowing with an end-of-the-world fury that seemed to have even the trees in a panic, and with it came snow, great flying masses of it. By midday we found ourselves plodding into a stinging, cold, hard-blowing storm. Soon after, we came to a narrow ledge of path along a wall of rock called Big Butt Mountain.

Bill Bryson, *A Walk in the Woods*, 1998. First Anchor Books, 2007. 100-102.

THE STORY

The Appalachian Trail—from Springer Mountain, GA, to Mount Katahdin, ME—consists of some five million steps, and Bryson (*Notes from a Small Island*, 1996, etc.) seems to coax a laugh, and often an unexpectedly startling insight, out of each one he traverses.

It's not all yuks—though it is hard not to grin idiotically through all 288 pages—for Bryson is a talented portraitist of place. He did his natural-history homework, which is to say he knows a jack-o-lantern mushroom from a hellbender salamander from a purple wartyback mussel, and can also write seriously about the devastation of chestnut blight. He laces his narrative with gobbets of trail history and local trivia, and he makes real the “strange and palpable menace” of the dark deep woods in which he sojourns, the rough-hewn trailscape “mostly high up on the hills, over lonely ridges and forgotten hollows that no one has ever used or coveted,” celebrating as well the “low-level ecstasy” of finding a book left thoughtfully at a trail shelter, or a broom with which to sweep out the shelter's dross.

Yet humor is where the book finds its cues—from Bryson's frequent trail companion, the obese and slothful Katz, a spacious target for Bryson's sly wit, to moments of cruel and infantile laughs, as when he picks mercilessly on the witless woman who, admittedly, ruined a couple of their days. But for the most part the humor is bright sarcasm, flashing with drollery and intelligence, even when it's a far yodel from political sensitivity. Then Bryson will take your breath away with a trenchant critique of the irredeemably vulgar vernacular strip that characterizes many American downtowns, or of other signs of decay he encounters off the trail (though the trail itself he comes to love).

“Walking is what we did,” Bryson states: 800-plus out of the 2,100-plus miles, and that good sliver is sheer comic travel entertainment.

Kirkus Reviews Issue March 1st, 1998; Review Posted Online May 20th, 2010
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/bill-bryson/a-walk-in-the-woods/>



BILL BRYSON

William McGuire “Bill” Bryson, OBE, is a best-selling American writer. His work is of the best-selling category and comprises humorous books on travel as well as books on the English language and science.

In 1995 Bryson wrote *Notes From A Small Island*. The book was an exploration of Britain. He also prepared a TV serial on the book which is how he became well-known and recognized in the United Kingdom.

Bill Bryson was born to Agnes Mary (McGuire) and sports journalist Bill Bryson Sr. on December 8, 1951 in Des Moines, IA. In 2006 Bryson published a book about his childhood in Iowa, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*. He took a sabbatical from college in 1972 and backpacked around Europe for four months. The following year, he returned with his high-school friend Matt Angerer (known to the public as Stephen Katz). Memorable moments of the trip show up in Bryson's writings.

Inevitably, his travels brought Bryson to England. Here he found work in a psychiatric facility and stayed on. At the facility he met and fell in love with a nurse, Cynthia Billen. The two were married and went to live in the United States so that Bryson could complete his education. Traveling back with Cynthia to the United Kingdom in 1977, he found work as a journalist. For many years he remained with newspapers. In 1987, much emboldened and confident, he gave up newspaper work and plunged into full-time writing as a professional writer.

Selected newspaper columns were adapted to become *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*. His adventures hiking the Appalachian Trail with his friend Katz resulted in *A Walk in the Woods* in 1998.

Another of Bryson's popularly best-selling works is *A Short History of Nearly Everything* published in 2003. The book answers a number of questions of a scientific nature for an unscientific audience. The book is rather entertaining but also has a lot of depth. It is clear and amusing, thus entertaining and educating the reader at the same time. More recent publications include *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, *One Summer: America, 1927*, and *The Road to Little Dribbling*.

BILL BRYSON - continued

Bryson has also written two popular works on the history of the English language, *The Mother Tongue* and *Made in America*, as well as *Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words*, which is an update to the 1983 edition *The Penguin Dictionary of Troublesome Words*.

Though Bill Bryson is a travel writer of repute, it is surprising to see that he has not written about the exotic lands that most find adventure in. Brazil, India and Japan do not seem to interest him. He seems more interested in the rather more conventional English speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. He finds much to explore in the known world of the first world countries. His work is more of the nature of describing trivia and banalities. He tends to shy away from the social critiques of the lands he visits.

Bryson's writing is very readable. The reader feels no need to struggle with the complexity of the daunting written word. Bryson expertly covers a vast amount of information in short pieces that keep readers engrossed and provide them with just the right amount of information that will keep them interested.

Critics often envy Bryson and his style. He makes it seem so easy to write. It's as though he were going about his routine just scribbling down some ideas as they occur to him, and lo: he has a book. Though his work 'carries a moral bent' (Casey Michel, blogcritics.org), it is not overpoweringly preachy. It has a subtlety that is appealing and endearing. Engaging with mild-mannered, witty Bryson through his work is an experience to enjoy.

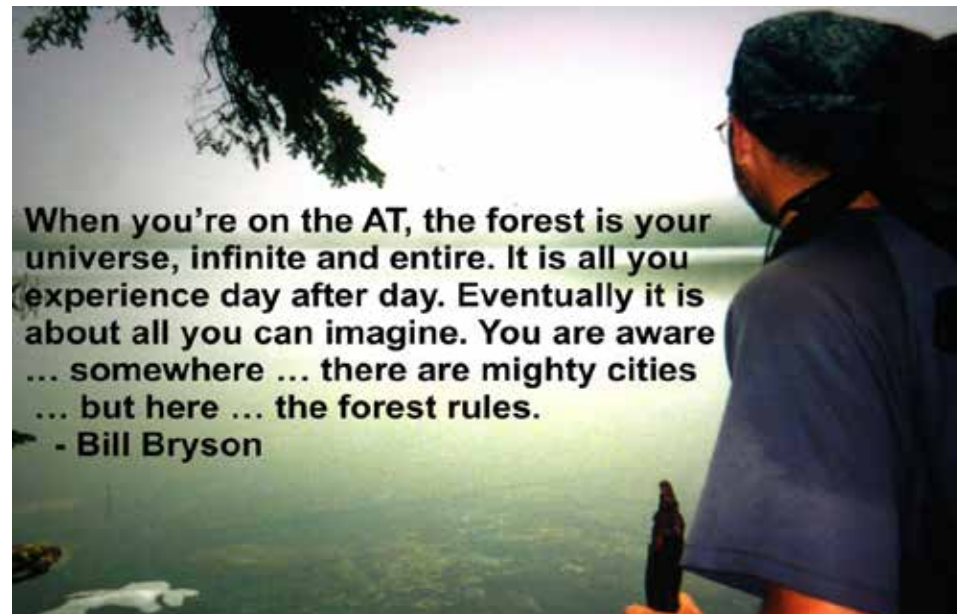
After returning to England as the Chancellor of Durham University, Bryson now lives in rural Hampshire, England, and holds dual nationality.

"Bill Bryson," *FamousAuthors.org*, <http://www.famousauthors.org/bill-bryson>
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Bryson



BOOKS BY BILL BRYSON

The Lost Continent: Travels in Small-Town America	1989
The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way	1990
Neither Here nor There: Travels in Europe	1992
Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States	1994
Notes from a Small Island	1996
A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail	1998
I'm a Stranger Here Myself	1999
In a Sunburned Country	2000
Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words	2002
Bill Bryson's African Diary	2002
A Short History of Nearly Everything	2003
The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid	2006
Shakespeare: The World as Stage	2007
Bryson's Dictionary for Writers and Editors	2008
Icons of England	2008
A Really Short History of Nearly Everything	2009
At Home: A Short History of Private Life	2010
One Summer: America, 1927	2013
The Road to Little Dribbling: More Notes from a Small Island	2015

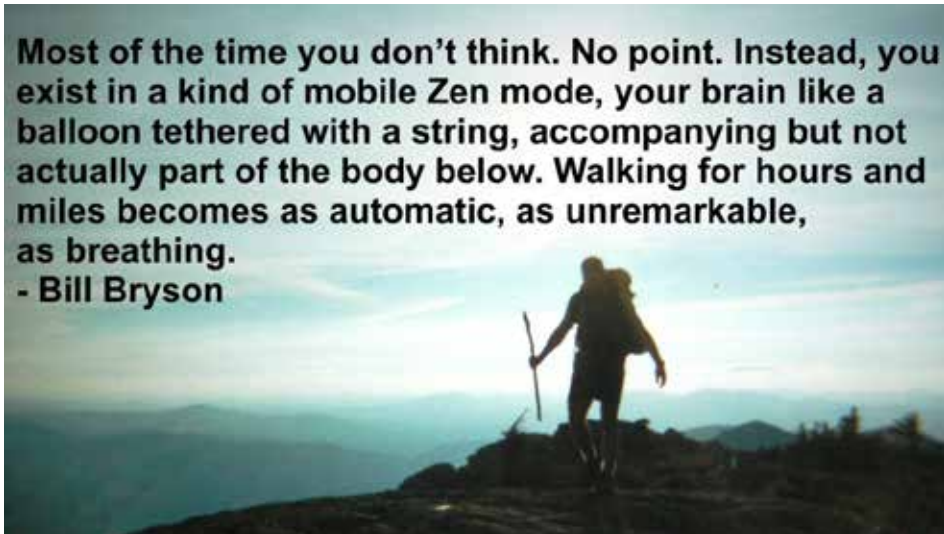


IF YOU LIKE A WALK IN THE WOODS ...

Armitage, Simon	Walking Home
Bell, Laura	Claiming Ground
Buck, Rinker	The Oregon Trail
Cahill, Tim	Tales from Nowhere
Caldwell, Gail	Let's Take the Long Way Home
Deeds, Jean	There are Mountains to Climb
Fry, Stephen	Stephen Fry in America
Gros, Frederic	A Philosophy of Walking
London, Jack	The Call of the Wild
Montgomery, Ben	Grandma Gatewood's Walk
Moore, Tim	The Grand Tour
Potterfield, Peter	Classic Hikes of North America
Strayed, Cheryl	Wild
Thomas, Phyllis	Off the Beaten Path: Indiana
Thubron, Colin	To a Mountain in Tibet
Townsend, Chris	Grizzly Bears and Razor Claws
Trillin, Calvin	Quite Enough of Calvin Trillin
Walls, Jeannette	Half Broke Horses
Weiner, Eric	The Geography of Bliss
White, Dan	Under the Stars
Wren, Christopher S.	Walking to Vermont

Most of the time you don't think. No point. Instead, you exist in a kind of mobile Zen mode, your brain like a balloon tethered with a string, accompanying but not actually part of the body below. Walking for hours and miles becomes as automatic, as unremarkable, as breathing.

- Bill Bryson



APPALACHIAN TRAIL FACTS

The Appalachian Trail ...

- ... was completed in 1937.
- ... has its southern terminus on Springer Mountain in Georgia.
- ... has its northern terminus on Mt. Katahdin in Maine.
- ... is a unit of the National Park Service.
- ... is approximately 2,175 miles long, depending on reroutes in any particular year.
- ... was the first national scenic trail, designated in 1968.
- ... crosses six national parks.
- ... passes through 14 states.
- ... crosses eight national forests.
- ... is maintained by 30 trail clubs and multiple partnerships.
- ... takes approximately 5,000,000 steps and six months to complete.

The lowest elevation on the Appalachian trail is 124 feet above sea level on the Bear Mountain Bridge, crossing the Hudson River in New York. The highest elevation is 6,625 feet in the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee, just below Clingman's Dome. More than 9,000 people have reported hiking the entire AT.

The AT is not a flat trail. Over the miles, thru-hikers gain over 464,464 ft., or more than 89 miles. This equates to climbing Mt. Everest 16 times! It required 241,936 volunteer hours to maintain the AT in one year according to records in 2014. Thru-hikers lose an average of 30 pounds during their journey, and it's not uncommon to see a loss of 50 to 100 pounds.

Most thru-hikers go through 4 or 5 pairs of shoes. In general, you can get 500 miles out of your footwear.

There are over 250 three-walled structures which serve as refuges for hikers.

While reports say that the percentage of female thru-hikers is on the rise, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy reports that only one in four are women.

Hiking is expensive! The average dollar amount spent on a thru-hike is \$5,500. Hikers estimate spending \$2-\$3 per mile on the trail. Money goes to food, lodging, laundry, transportation, and gear repairs & upgrades, among other things. And that doesn't even count the initial outlay for gear, which also can run into the thousand\$.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL FACTS - continued

Thru-hikers may see a few black bears, and sometimes snakes, but more likely to be a threat are deer ticks (Lyme disease!) and stomach bugs.

A.T. Vocabulary Lesson:

Blaze: A trail marker. In general, blazes may be as simple as a hatchet mark on a tree or an affixed marker made of metal, plastic or wood. Often blazes are painted with white rectangles, 2" wide by 6" high. There are approximately 165,000 blazes on the AT.

Thru-Hiker: One who completes the entire trail in one continuous journey within a single calendar year.

Section-Hiker: One who hikes the trail in segments with the goal of completing the entire trail over time, often a period of many years.

Blue-Blazer: A hiker who takes side trails, often marked with blue blazes rather than the white blazes that mark the actual AT.

Purist: A hiker who sticks to the official Appalachian Trail, being sure to pass every one of the 165,000 white blazes.

Yellow-Blazer: One who skips portions of the trail by riding in a motor vehicle.

Flip-Flopper: A hiker who begins at a mid-point on the trail, hikes to the end, then goes back to complete the unfinished portion. By covering the entire trail within one year, you can be designated a Flip-Flop Thru-Hiker.

Slack-Packer: A long-distance hiker who carries a daypack rather than a full backpack.

PUD: A pointless up and down. Generally, there's no particular view from the top of a PUD and no particular landmark of note. Same for the bottom of a PUD. A series of PUDS can be downright exhausting, more so than a 3,000-foot ascent and descent with a vista at the summit and a forest creek at the bottom. One of the best known PUD sections is the 14-mile section known as the "Rollercoaster" in Northern Virginia.

L.U.R.S.H.: An acronym for lazy, unwashed, resting, stinky hikers.

Get more trail information:

ATC's Ultimate Trail Store	atctrailstore.org
WhiteBlaze	whiteblaze.net
Trail Journals	trailjournals.com
Postholer	Postholer.com
Appalachian National Scenic Trail	nps.gov/appa
The Trek	thetrek.co/appalachian-trail

A WALK IN THE WOODS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

... or, **QUESTIONS TO PONDER WHILE WALKING IN THE WOODS ...**

Have you hiked any part of the Appalachian Trail? Would you want to? What would be the hardest or scariest part? Would you go alone?

The theme of friendship runs throughout the book. Do the two men remind you of friends you have? What are the most important aspects of friendship to you?

Bryson notes the attraction of hiking: "You have no engagements, commitments, obligations, or duties... you exist in a tranquil tedium, serenely beyond the reach of exasperation." If you're a hiker, backpacker, or camper, are your experiences similar to Bryson's? What other opportunities allow you to "exist in a tranquil tedium"?

What do you think of the author's sense of humor? His opinions? His writing style?

In fiction, a journey usually symbolizes a journey of self-discovery - at the end, the protagonist comes to learn something about him/herself. Although AWITW isn't a novel, do either of the men come to greater self-awareness by the end of their adventure?

There is a lot of work and money involved in keeping the trail open and as safe as possible for hikers. Do you think it's been time/money well-spent? Do you see the trail still being available for future generations? Why or why not are adventurous undertakings such as hiking the Appalachian Trail important to people?

What do you think of the informational tidbits/tangents on history (of the trail, of the National Park Service), geology (of Centralia and the mountainside in Lehigh Valley), ecology (the effects of global warming, zinc mining, dam building), and social customs (the interaction and views of different people) in the book?

Do you appreciate this sort of information while you're reading, or find it disruptive? Does it encourage you to discover more on the subjects?

Author interview: bit.ly/BillBrysonInterviewAWITW



OUABACHE STATE PARK

What's in a name?

This area of Wells County was once occupied by the Miami, whose villages flanked the banks of the river that bears the name Wabash, which meant "white river." People have called the park by many different pronunciations, but currently the park is called "o-bah-chee."

CCC Camp

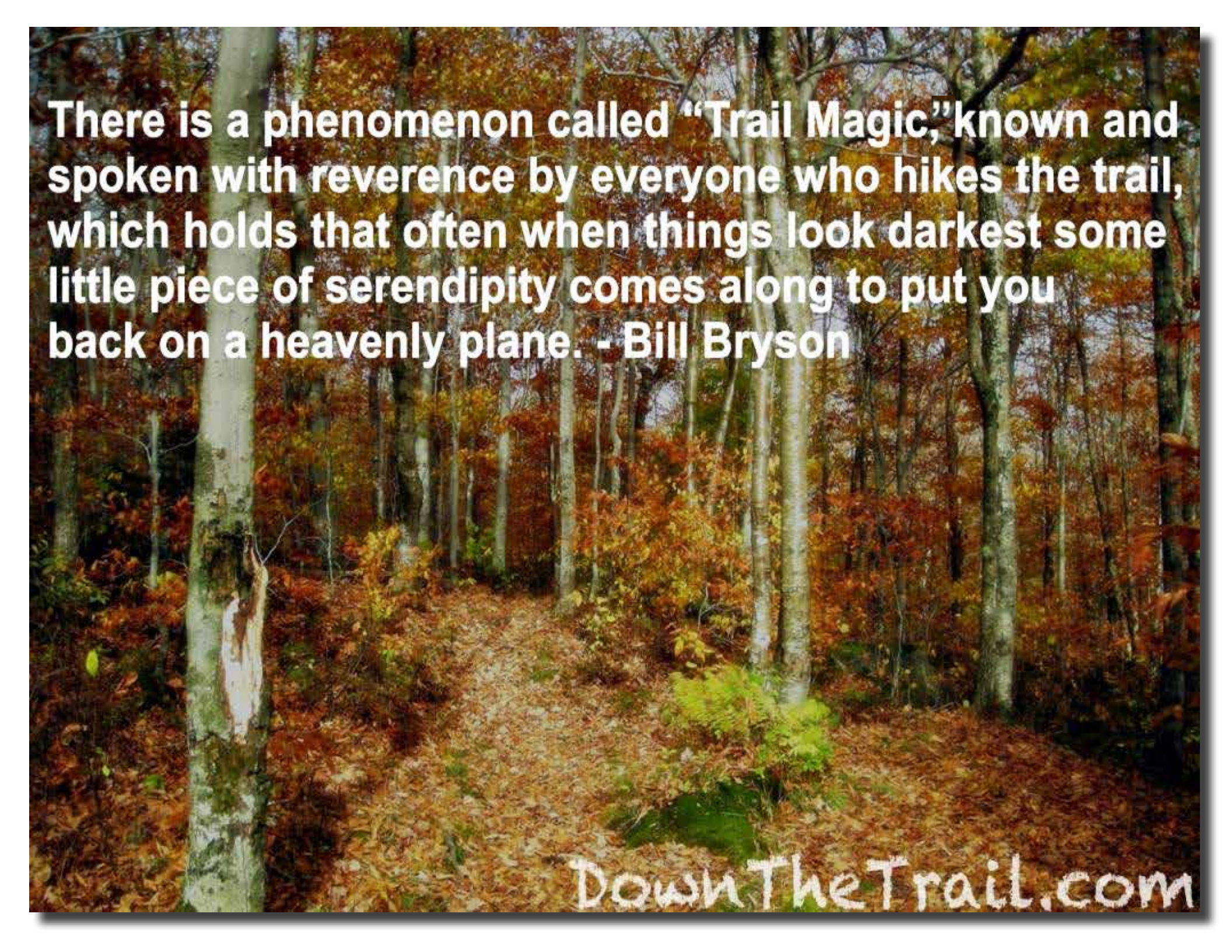
The work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) can be seen throughout the park. These young men constructed many of the buildings and facilities, including the 100-foot fire tower. The tower has been closed for safety concerns for two years, but is currently undergoing repairs.

Bison Exhibit

Ouabache State Park is the only state property that has bison. This herd allows visitors to observe this large mammal that once roamed freely across North America. At Ouabache, a one-mile trail around the 20-acre bison enclosure allows visitors to see the animals up-close and personal.

The park is looking forward to the beach completion on Kunkel Lake and Mother Nature providing enough rain to fill the lake. This will allow our visitors to fish and swim, and rent boats, canoes, and kayaks again. The park currently offers camping, playground and picnic areas, and a paved bicycle path that leads into Bluffton along the Wabash River. They offer shelter rentals from May through October for family gatherings and company picnics. Also, from November through mid-January they are open for the Wonderland of Lights.



A photograph of a forest path in autumn. The path is covered in fallen brown and orange leaves. The trees are tall and thin, with some showing signs of peeling bark. The overall scene is a dense forest with a mix of green and autumnal foliage.

There is a phenomenon called "Trail Magic," known and spoken with reverence by everyone who hikes the trail, which holds that often when things look darkest some little piece of serendipity comes along to put you back on a heavenly plane. - Bill Bryson

DownTheTrail.com

A WALK IN THE WOODS - THE MOVIE

Director Ken Kwapis

2015

Rated R

Writers Michael Arndt, Bill Holderman, Bill Bryson (Book)

Stars Robert Redford, Nick Nolte, Emma Thompson, Mary Steenburgen, Nick Offerman, Kristen Schaal

In this comedy adventure, celebrated travel writer, Bill Bryson, instead of retiring to enjoy his loving and beautiful wife, and large and happy family, challenges himself to hike the Appalachian Trail - 2,200 miles of America's most unspoiled, spectacular and rugged countryside from Georgia to Maine. The peace and tranquility he hopes to find, though, is anything but, once he agrees to being accompanied by the only person he can find willing to join him on the trek - his long lost and former friend Katz, a down-on-his-luck serial philanderer who, after a lifetime of relying on his charm and wits to keep one step ahead of the law - sees the trip as a way to sneak out of paying some debts and sneak into one last adventure before its too late. The trouble is, the two have a completely different definition of the word, "adventure". Now they're about to find out that when you push yourself to the edge, the real fun begins. ~ *Broad Green Pictures*



NAVIGATING EARLY by Clare Vanderpool

Returning to themes she explored so affectingly in *Moon Over Manifest* (2011), Newbery Medalist Vanderpool delivers another winning picaresque about memories, personal journeys, interconnectedness—and the power of stories.

Thirteen-year-old Jack enters boarding school in Maine after his mother's death at the end of World War II. He quickly befriends Early Auden, a savant whose extraordinary facility with numbers allows him to "read" a story about "Pi" from the infinite series of digits that follow 3.14. Jack accompanies Early in one of the school crew team's rowing boats on what Jack believes is his friend's fruitless quest to find a great bear allegedly roaming the wilderness—and Early's brother, a legendary figure reportedly killed in battle. En route, Early spins out Pi's evolving saga, and the boys encounter memorable individuals and adventures that uncannily parallel those in the stories. Vanderpool ties all these details, characters, and Jack's growing maturity and self-awareness together masterfully and poignantly, though humor and excitement leaven the weighty issues the author and Jack frequently pose. Some exploits may strain credulity; Jack's self-awareness often seems beyond his years, and there are coincidences that may seem too convenient. It's all of a piece with Vanderpool's craftsmanship. Her tapestry is woven and finished off seamlessly. The ending is very moving, and there's a lovely, last-page surprise that Jack doesn't know but that readers will have been tipped off about.

Navigating this stunning novel requires thought and concentration, but it's well worth the effort. (Historical fiction, 10-14)

Kirkus Reviews Issue Nov. 15th, 2012; Review Posted Online Oct. 31st, 2012
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/clare-vanderpool/navigating-early/>



ONE BOOK ONE COUNTY PROGRAMS

Outdoor Pursuits @ the 4-H Park

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Saturday - 9/9/2017

Mark Durham will be doing an "Outdoor Pursuits" program at the 4-H park. It will be outside if the weather permits but in the quonset hut if raining.

Taxidermy Program @ the Ossian Branch

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Tuesday - 9/12/2017

Local taxidermist, Robert Taylor, will give a presentation as part of the One Book One County program on the art of taxidermy. Presentation will last about 40 minutes and then there will be plenty of time for questions. Program will be geared towards families and adults, so children are welcome to attend.

Guided Hikes @ Ouabache State Park

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM 10/7/2017

Join us for a guided nature hike through the park with Indiana Naturalist Dr. Jordan Marshall at Ouabache State Park, as part of the One Book One County program. Geared towards families and all ages. Registration required, so we have an accurate count to give the park for entrance fees. The Friends of the Library will be covering the entrance fee for anyone that does not have a State Park Pass, just make sure to note that you'll need the entrance fee covered in the required question when submitting your registration. You'll need to let them know your name at the entrance gate on that day of the hike. On the day of the hike, we will meet at Ouabache State Park. Park near the "Wildlife Exhibit/Bison enclosure." This will be an easy/light walk.

Hiking the Appalachian Trail Speakers @ the Main Library

6:30 PM - 7:30 PM 10/23/2017

Roger & Judy Summers of Ft. Wayne will speak about their experiences on a "thru hike" of the Appalachian Trail. Roger has also done several section hikes of the trail and should be doing another in early October. Jill Buskirk, special needs teacher at Bluffton High School, will also be sharing her hiking experiences and if the technology works, we will actually be video chatting with her live while she is on the Appalachian Trail, so you'll get to see part of her tent and camp set-up for the evening.

FUN AND USEFUL WEBSITES

Project Gutenberg	gutenberg.org
Distributed Proofreaders	pgdp.net
Bartleby	bartleby.com
Internet Archive	archive.org
Mercury Theatre	mercurytheatre.info
New York Review	nybooks.com
Internet Archive	archive.org
YouTube	youtube.com
NetFlix	netflix.com
Hulu	hulu.com
Acorn (British TV)	acorn.tv
PBS American Masters	pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters
Lib. of Congress Webcasts	loc.gov/today/cyberlc
A Way With Words	waywordradio.org
Guide to Film Locations	movie-locations.com
Amazon	amazon.com
Barnes & Noble	bn.com
1940 CENSUS	ancestry.com/1940-census
Find A Grave	findagrave.com
AARP Games	games.aarp.org
Word Twist	wordtwist.org (Boggle-like game)
Sudoku	websudoku.com
Internet Scout Report	scout.wisc.edu/report
Facebook	facebook.com
Pinterest	pinterest.com

NOT SURE WHAT TO READ NEXT?

Kent District Library Books in Series:	goodreads.com
ww2.kdl.org/libcat/whatsnext.asp	gnooks.com
Novelist Plus - access through	whatshouldireadnext.com
www.wellscolibrary.org	whichbook.net

SIGN UP FOR NEXTREADS NEWSLETTERS!

Your librarians put these newsletters together just for you to keep you up-to-date on the newest publications of your favorite genres, and also to let you know about great reads you may have missed!
<http://www.libraryaware.com/1702/Subscribers/Subscribe>

FREE & BARGAIN EBOOK SOURCES

Download the library's eBooks and eAudioBooks from our website, wellscolibrary.org or from nidl.lib.overdrive.com or use the Overdrive or Libby app!

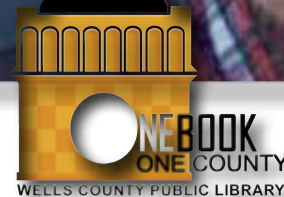
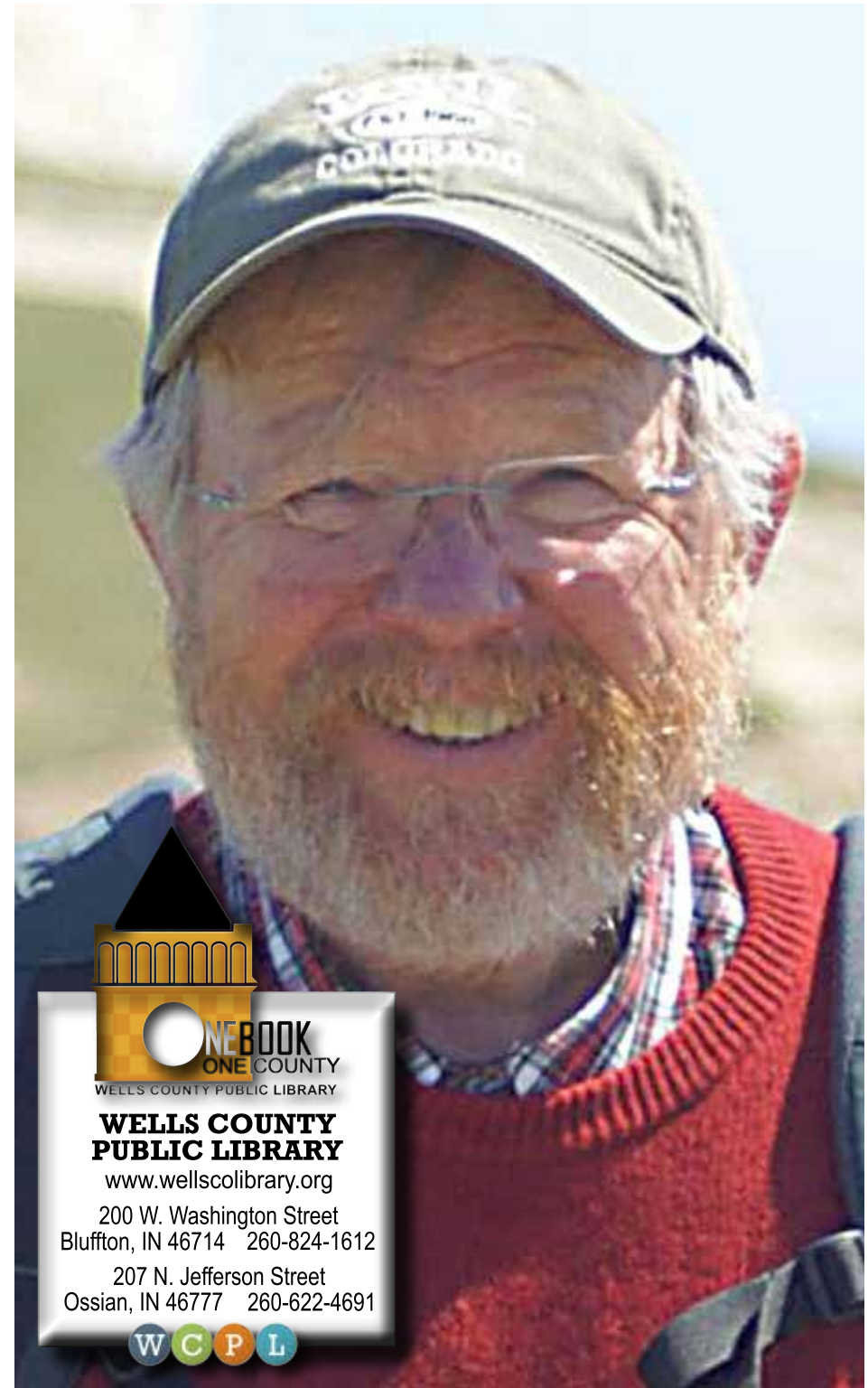
baen.com	hooksprogress.org
barnesandnoble.com/readouts/	instafreebie.com
bookbub.com	nfs.sparknotes.com
dailylit.com	(No Fear Shakespeare)
delanceyplace.com	online-literature.com
digital.library.upenn.edu/books	openculture.com
digitalbookspot.com	openlibrary.org
electricliterature.com	press.uchicago.edu/books/
ereaderlove.com	freeEbook.html
gutenberg.org	rifflebooks.com

HAVE YOU HEARD OF NETGALLEY?

If you're a reviewer, blogger, journalist, librarian, bookseller, educator, or work in the media, sign up for a FREE account on netgalley.com to read and review titles BEFORE THEY ARE PUBLISHED!

WCPL ONE BOOK ONE COUNTY SELECTIONS

- 2009 *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam
- 2010 *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein
- 2011 *Room* by Emma Donoghue
- 2012 *The Reading Promise* by Alice Ozma
- 2013 *The Bone Garden* by Tess Gerritsen
- 2014 *Where Am I Eating?* By Kelsey Timmerman
- 2015 *Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain
- 2016 *A Place Called Hope* by Philip Gulley
- 2017 *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson
and *Navigating Early* by Clare Vanderpool



**WELLS COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

www.wellscolibrary.org

200 W. Washington Street
Bluffton, IN 46714 260-824-1612

207 N. Jefferson Street
Ossian, IN 46777 260-622-4691

