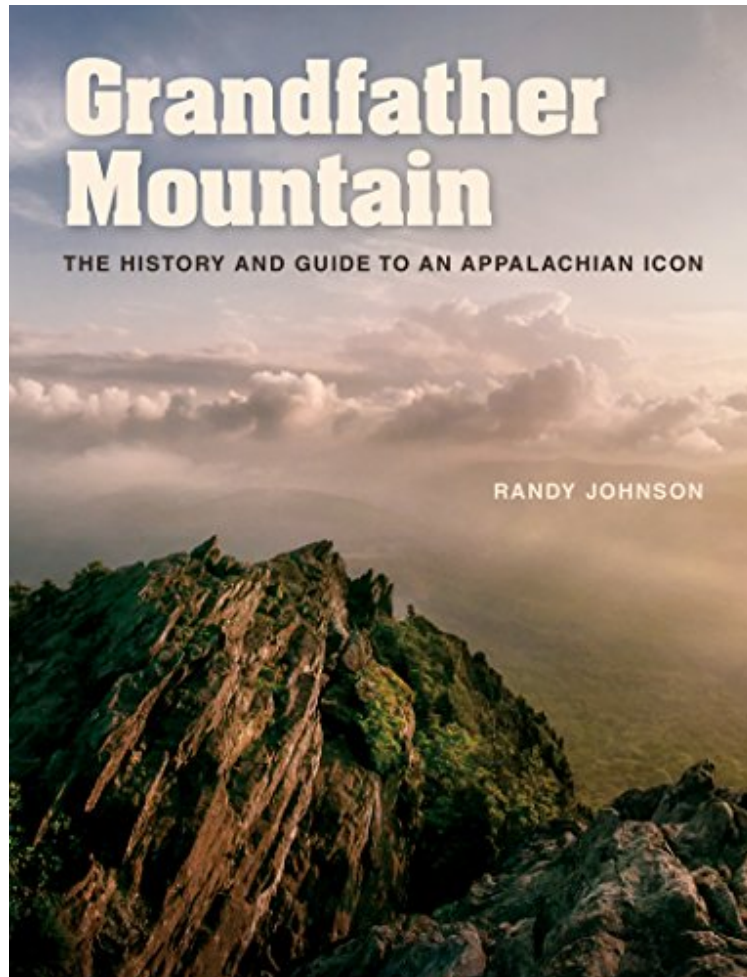


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Grandfather Mountain: The History and Guide to an Appalachian Icon

Randy Johnson

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Randy Johnson : Grandfather Mountain: The History and Guide to an Appalachian Icon before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grandfather Mountain: The History and Guide to an Appalachian Icon:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Winning, impeccably researched, a story equal to its subject By Mike Healey Grandfather Mountain formed by a collision of continents 300 million years ago, located in the High Country corner of northwestern North Carolina, and with an elevation of 5,946 feet and a sprawling footprint that covers 50 square miles of southern Appalachian lowlands is an epic mountain. As author Randy Johnson relates in his winning, impeccably researched, and richly illustrated Grandfather Mountain: The History and Guide to an Appalachian Icon

(The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), it has evoked awe for centuries. In 1794, the French botanist André Michaux (1746-1802) sang *La Marseillaise* when he reached the top. In 1898, America's most famous naturalist, John Muir (1838-1914), had a mystical moment when he reached its highest crag: I couldn't hold it in, and began to jump about and sing and glory in it all. A snow squall in September 1913 caused two expert hikers, Donald Beeson and friend Charles Mathes, to tuck into a cave as they climbed Grandfather's Attic Window Peak. With the weather blowing a hurricane and a fire blazing in front of the cave mouth, Beeson wrote, I doubt if I have ever enjoyed a supper more. A love letter to Johnson's favorite mountain, the book actually is four or five books in one. In all, it tells a story equal to its subject. It's an appreciation of a geological marvel that The Nature Conservancy calls an ecological site of global significance. Located where the southernmost part of the North meets the northernmost part of the South, Johnson writes, Grandfather is a sweet spot of biodiversity with 16 separate ecosystems that are home to 73 species of rare or endangered plants and animals. The book traces Grandfather's transition from private ownership in the 20th century to preservation as public land in the 21st, making it a study of contemporary conservation and a reassuring one at that. It's a vibrant history of the backcountry of southern Appalachia and of the United States. And it's a practical guide to hiking and photographing Grandfather. In this capacity, Johnson's expertise shines: he devised a hiker fee-funded, safety registration program to keep Grandfather's trails open in the 1970s, helped build the trail network in place today on the mountain and Blue Ridge Parkway, and has written several Falcon Guides including a bestseller on hiking North Carolina. The book's 35 sidebars add breadth and depth. Topics are as varied as the Civil War (Grandfather was a haven for local soldiers who'd deserted the Confederacy and also had its share of Union sympathizers), the Highland Games, which have been held on the mountain since 1956 (North Carolina's Scots and Scots-Irish ancestry is among the country's highest), and the back story of the engineering and building of the Linn Cove Viaduct, an astounding almost quarter-mile length of the Blue Ridge Parkway that floats through thin air. Johnson's firsthand knowledge and warm, understated writing win the reader's confidence. Like the botanist Michaux, like John Muir, Johnson is very much in awe of Grandfather Mountain. It shows on every page. At one point he says a massive mountain helps make a massive impression. His book does the same to the reader.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A gem of a book! By Uberdoc This book is a superb reference to the history of Grandfather Mountain and the surrounding area. Mr. Johnson is an expert on the history of the mountain and the area, and his love and respect for the uniqueness of Grandfather Mountain and its ecology clearly shows throughout the book. This book is a great addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of Appalachia, who lives in the area, or who loves Grandfather Mountain. The book is well written and a joy to read. The photographs and illustrations are excellent and very helpful overall. There were only a few minor confusing photographs: On the photograph on page 7 - I'm sorry, but I just don't see the Face of Grandfather Mountain there. Perhaps a different picture would illustrate this better? On the photo on page 16, I guess the upper photo is showing what the swinging bridge site looked like before the bridge was there, but I had difficulty seeing where the bridge was later placed. I take it it was across the deepest hump in the ridge? Overall, this is a gem of a book. The history of the area and its colorful cast of characters and personalities that played a role in the discovery, settlement and coming of age of Grandfather Mountain is thoroughly covered. The final two chapters on hiking and photographing the Mountain are an added bonus. Highly recommended!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A beautiful love story between a mountain and the men who ... By Susan T. Staton A beautiful love story between a mountain and the men who have explored and preserved it. Fascinating history told through stories and spectacular photographs. This book will make everyone who reads it want to meet "the Grandfather" in the North Carolina high country.

With its prominent profile recognizable for miles around and featuring vistas among the most beloved in the Appalachians, North Carolina's Grandfather Mountain is many things to many people: an easily recognized landmark along the Blue Ridge Parkway, a popular tourist destination, a site of annual Highland Games, and an internationally recognized nature preserve. In this definitive book on Grandfather, Randy Johnson guides readers on a journey through the mountain's history, from its geological beginnings millennia ago and the early days of exploration to its role in regional development and eventual establishment as a North Carolina state park. Along the way, he shows how Grandfather has changed, and has been changed by, the people of western North Carolina and beyond. To tell the full natural and human story, Johnson draws not only on historical sources but on his rich personal experience working closely on the mountain alongside Hugh Morton and others. The result is a unique and personal telling of Grandfather's lasting significance. The book includes more than 200 historical and contemporary photographs, maps, and a practical guide to hiking the extensive trails, appreciating key plant and animal species and photographing the natural wonder that is Grandfather.

Beautifully illustrated and packed with fascinating scientific and historical facts, it's perfect for outdoors enthusiasts who find themselves housebound during a long winter storm.--Richmond Times-Dispatch In this beautifully illustrated volume, Randy Johnson shares both his knowledge of and love for this iconic mountain.--Appalachian Voices Grandfather Mountain stands tall as the definitive guide to an essential Western North Carolina locale.--WNC

Magazine Grandfather Mountain's dramatic past revealed. . . . An ode to the newest state park in [Western North Carolina]. . . . The grand-scale coffee table book, with glossy historic and present day photos, detailed topographic maps and hundreds of stories, is a love letter to the mountain.--Asheville Citizen-Times Local folks will appreciate the thorough capturing of their ancestors described throughout the book, and newcomers to the region will be captivated by the astounding narrative.--Carolina Mountain Life Reveals the mountain's grandeur. . . . This deeply researched book often reads like a novel as Johnson's passion for his subject shines.--Mary Cornatzer, News and Observer An illustrated coffee-table love story. . . . Johnson's book illustrates the proposition that you should write about what interests you. His passion and enthusiasm for the place oozes from every paragraph.--Ben Steelman, Wilmington Star-News Randy Johnson has written the best book on Grandfather Mountain, one of the great landmarks of the Appalachian Mountains. Thanks to Johnson's undeniably warm and engaging voice, this book reveals in an original and comprehensive way the compelling natural and human history of Grandfather Mountain and the surrounding high country of western North Carolina. It belongs on the bookshelf of everyone who loves North Carolina's mountains.--Daniel S. Pierce, University of North Carolina, Asheville Randy Johnson's telling of Grandfather's story reads like a James Michener novel, with a passion and depth that can only come from being shaped by the mountain. He impresses that passion upon his reader.--Vicky Jarrett, former editor, Our State Magazine In this loving tribute Randy Johnson has captured the majesty of this national treasure. Through spectacular photographs and a lively, deeply researched narrative, Johnson celebrates the glory of 'the Grandfather' of mountains as no one else has. This volume is both a practical guide for those discovering the area, and a work of art commensurate with the grandeur of the mountain itself.--Robert Morgan, author of Lions of the West About the Author Randy Johnson is an accomplished travel editor and writer. He founded Grandfather Mountain's modern trail management program in 1978, was backcountry manager until 1990, and serves on Grandfather Mountain State Park's Advisory Committee.