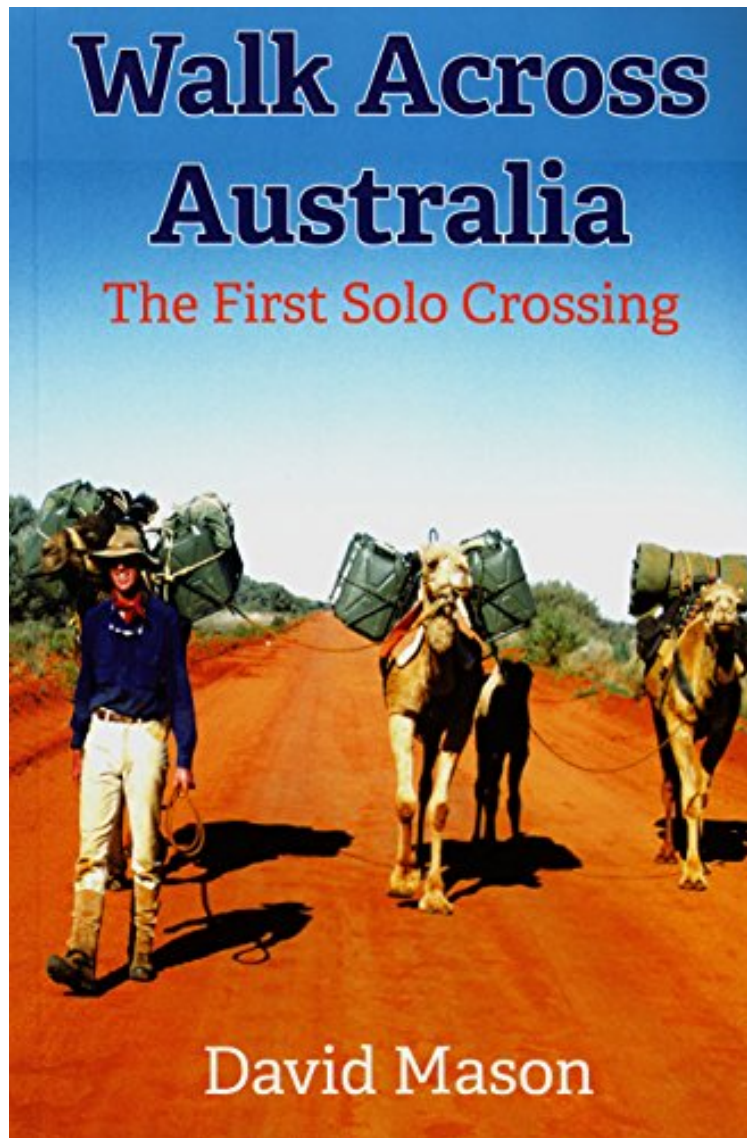


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## Walk Across Australia: The First Solo Crossing

*David Mason*

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**David Mason : Walk Across Australia: The First Solo Crossing** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Walk Across Australia: The First Solo Crossing:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A portrait of AustraliaBy JohnoWalk across Australia is one of those books that resonates back to the age of discovery and to the time when men challenged themselves in extraordinary ways when there was little chance of success and a high chance of failure.The idea for a walk across Australia started in another book Marching with the Devil (2005) (<http://www..com/Marching-Devil-Legends-French-Foreign>) in

which David Mason recounts his 5 years in the French Foreign Legion. One night while manning an observation post on top of a wind swept rocky hill in the middle of the one of the most desolate regions of East Africa, David Mason silently watched a Camel Train led by Ethiopian tribesmen move across the barren landscape under the light of the full moon. The image stirred in him a sense of melancholy and hope that there was more to life than what he was doing as a Corporal in the French Foreign Legion based in Djibouti, he took his note book and drawing a map of Australia drew a line across the heart of Australia, from east to west and decided that if he ever got out of the Legion alive he would one day take his own camels across Australia. David Mason, one to never back away from a dream or a challenge remembered that promise he made to himself and did it 5 years after leaving the Legion. In 1998 David Mason walked more than 5500 km, six and a half million paces across Australia from the most easterly point at Byron Bay on the NSW coast to the most western point at Steep Point in Western Australia. The entire venture took 236 days in which time three camels assisted him in the first solo crossing of the Simpson Desert and across most of the continent. Mason lost 22 kilograms had numerous and dangerous encounters with rogue camels, snakes, torrential rain and everything else the Australian Bush could throw at him. He also encountered many characters along the way from indifferent Tourists, bumbling and hostile government bureaucrats, struggling pastoralists, impoverished aboriginals, racist Bushies, those that are an integral part of the fabric of the Bush and those that view it as a foreign place to be shunned. In this way Walk across Australia is as much as a portrait of Australians as it is of the vast variety of landscapes that David Mason encountered on this epic walk. In one sense the story stirs an inner and primordial need to seek solitude and engage with nature while at the same time it makes us aware of the great divide between the Bush and the Cities and that while most Australians are proud to be Australian, more than 80% of us live on the coast and never get Out Bush let alone the hinterland, what does it truly mean to be Australian in a land as ancient and vast as ours? Although the Australian Bush is a vast place where one can easily perish it is becoming smaller as roads criss-cross the landscape and people from the city venture out for short trips never leaving the comfort of air conditioners or their mobile phones, never appreciating the vivid colors and the bush night sky, the utter uniqueness that is the Australian Bush. As with *Marching with the Devil*, David Mason spins a good yarn and makes the reader think, the book describes his emotional highs and lows during the trek as he thinks about the past and contemplates the future and knows that with each step he moves along a span of space and time. The bush shows Mason how fragile life can be and how utterly indifferent nature is despite an undeniable spiritual essence to the land. The book is also a history lesson, many places that he passed on his walk had been walked by others during the age of exploration before planes and satellites when the only way to find out what was over the next hill was to trust in faith and walk there. They don't teach school kids about Burke and Wills and other great Australian explorers anymore and it's a shame. I recommend this book.

"That part of me that I could not ignore needed to be tested. It needed to be tired, cold, hungry, thirsty and frightened. It was not just a need for adrenaline; the Foreign Legion gave me plenty of that. It was a need to see other parts of me. If what other people thought of me did not matter, knowledge of my own self certainly did. It meant that to be happy I had to know myself, and the only way I could do that was to be exposed to fear and hope and the possibility of losing everything. I wanted to see other parts of me that a comfortable life could never expose. I felt the need to strip away the noise and colour that made up so much of everyday life and find the noise and colour inside myself." \*\*\* In 1998, David Mason became the first person to walk solo across Australia at its widest point. After his experiences in the French Foreign Legion, his trek was at once a challenge and a way to reconnect with life, people, and Australia. It was one man, a swag, three camels, and his hopes and his fears. Mason did it all on foot (there was no riding of the camels) so that, at the end of the expedition, he could say that he had walked his country, every single step of the way. He was alone, with no support crew offering massage tables, beds, or beer. In the course of the expedition, David Mason also became the first documented person to walk solo east-west across Australia's Simpson Desert and its 1100 dunes. He sought to demonstrate that, in taking on challenges, one can truly experience a life more fully lived. For this achievement, Mason was named Australia's Adventurer of the Year and was awarded the Gold Medal of the Australian Geographic Society. In *Walk Across Australia: The First Solo Crossing*, David Mason shares the experiences of his personal achievement. \*\*\* "Walk Across Australia is a special treat for armchair travelers, highly recommended." - Midwest Book Review, Wisconsin Bookwatch, August 2014