

## Mountain Lines: A Journey through the French Alps

**Jonathan Arlan**

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*In this spirited account of a walk through the Alps, inspiration carries through.*

“One discovers a whole new level of solitude on the inside of a cloud five thousand miles from home,” writes Jonathan Arlan in *Mountain Lines*, an account of his long traipse through the Alps. That thought becomes a theme of his meditative work, which finds him caught between his thirst for turning corners, and his nostalgia for the land behind him.

At a monastery stopover between Tokyo and home, Arlan traced a path on a map that led through the Alps to Nice, France. He summoned resolve. A year later, he was back, and ready—if in spirit more so than through preparation—for his four-hundred-mile jaunt through the mountains.

There’s an openness to Arlan’s travelogue that makes it easy to underestimate the scope of his journey, and the treacherousness—though he does mention rainstorms and chilling mistakes. He stops for soupy hot chocolate in towns along the way, and happens into strangers who fill him with the moonshine needed to power on; he thumbs through massive novels in the sunlight, and captures almost-unreal flowers on his cameraphone along the way. His is a text where “quiet trespasses between borders” and mornings that are perfect and “gauzy” stand at the fore—and in which you almost forget that his backbreaking, leg-ache-inducing walk was no simple undertaking.

By avoiding bombast in favor of capturing moments on the trail, *Mountain Lines* invites interlopers in more graciously than other narratives in the genre. The trip proves to be a realignment for Arlan; its open-ended spirit of welcome invites the same sort of adventurousness in its audience. Pick your starting point, and then go: *Mountain Lines*, which refuses to relinquish its question marks even at the trail’s end, is a reminder that such journeys are never a waste.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (February 3, 2017)

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