

A Clarifying (Very Long) Trek

By Ronni Wilde
ReZoom Contributor



Dave Koskenmaki hiked the entire 2,663 Pacific Crest Trail, much of it through snow and ice, in five straight months.

Following a long and successful career as a Ph.D metallurgist working in industrial research labs, David Koskenmaki took an early retirement at age 56. He kept busy, but says he struggled with feelings of guilt and uselessness, particularly because his wife, children and friends were still working.

An avid outdoors enthusiast and lifelong runner, climber and camper, Koskenmaki says for many years he had toyed with the idea of doing a hike of the Pacific Crest Trail, a 2,650-mile scenic trail that runs from the Mexican to Canadian borders. The "toying" stopped with this April 2005 entry in his personal journal: "Lately, I'm realizing more and more that in my remaining years, I want to live my life to the fullest extent possible. I don't want to grow old some day and look back on my life regretting all the things I never did. So now is the time."

The following September, Koskenmaki (known as "SuperDave" in the hiking world) successfully completed a five-month, 2,663-mile adventure, enduring the elements in all their extremes. The most difficult part of the hike, he says, was the stretch through the Sierra Nevada mountain range, which had a very heavy snow pack and engorged, freezing streams that had to be crossed. He was forced to use crampons and ice axes to summit the numerous passes, many of which were snowbound for two to three miles in each direction.

At one point, he teamed up with a younger couple and they helped each other get through. Though he hiked the last 2,000 miles with his new friends, Koskenmaki had many, many miles of solitary walking that left him plenty of time to contemplate life. "When you are walking or running, the motion is like a mantra," he says. "I was trying to clarify my values and goals. The trail made me feel good about myself, not because I was a good hiker but, oddly, because I had so much time to think. I believe I am now less critical of others and of myself. We are all unique and worthwhile humans and deserve to feel good about ourselves."

Koskenmaki is appreciative of the support for his passion that his wife, Rosalie, and their three grown children gave him. The five-month separation was difficult for all of them. But since the hike, Koskenmaki has become more at ease with life and retirement. Now, he says, "I have hobbies that keep me busy and satisfied." And who knows? There are still many more mountains to climb.

[For a complete daily account of Koskenmaki's hike, [click here.](#)]

