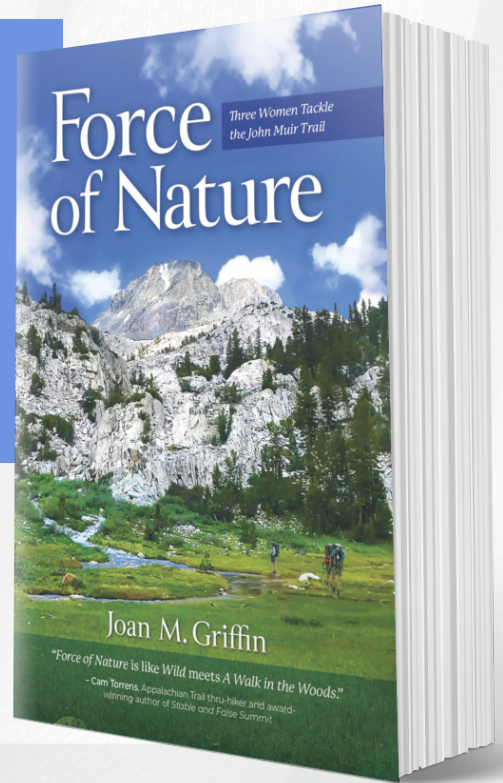


# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

Thank you for choosing  
to read and discuss  
*Force of Nature* with your book club!



## QUESTIONS

- A comprehensive list of questions you can choose from to stimulate and guide your book club's discussion.
- Feel free to come up with your own questions. (Please, share them with me, so I can add them to this list.)

## RESOURCES

Links to websites with more information about the John Muir Trail

- History
- Statistics
- Maps
- Photographs

## COMPANION BOOKS

- Books mentioned in *Force of Nature*
- Complimentary Titles: Since you liked *Force of Nature*, you might like these books, too.

## OTHER GOODIES

- *Force of Nature* Photo Album Link takes you to over 125 photos from the trail. See the scenery and meet The Three Women.  
[www.joangriffin.us/photo-album](http://www.joangriffin.us/photo-album)
- Food suggestions for book club meetings
- Coming Soon: *Force of Nature* Playlist

## BOOK CLUB GUEST SPEAKER

Joan Griffin is available to join your book club discussion in person or via Zoom.



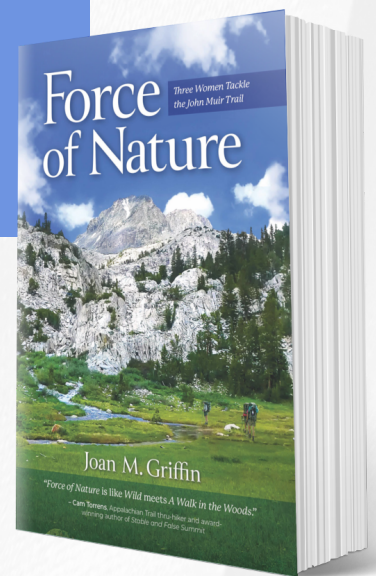
## JOAN M. GRIFFIN

email - [joangriff@gmail.com](mailto:joangriff@gmail.com)  
blog - [joangriffin.substack.com](http://joangriffin.substack.com)  
web - [joangriffin.us](http://joangriffin.us)  
fb - [@joangriffinauthor](https://www.facebook.com/joangriffinauthor)

# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The title, *Force of Nature*, can be interpreted in more than one way. What do you think it refers to? Why?
- We know, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” But we often do exactly that when choosing our next read. That’s why authors spend a lot of time planning the cover of their books. What elements of this book cover jump out at you? What elements of this book cover intrigue you enough to make you want to read it?
- Have you ever taken on a major challenge that involved preparing yourself physically and mentally? Describe it. What was the result?
- Do The Three Women’s experiences draw you to or push you from taking on a similar challenge? Have you ever, or do you aspire to go backpacking or even thru-hiking?
- Cappy left all luxury items behind, while Joan chose to bring small containers of skin care products and ship herself changes of clothing. What luxury items would you have chosen to take, even if they weighed a little bit more?
- Cappy loved to swim in the lakes, even though the water was very cold. Joan wouldn’t venture in, calling the water “snow melt.” Would you have gone swimming?
- Which of the minor characters, the cast of interesting hikers the women meet along the way, did you find most interesting? Why?
- Early in the story, Cappy, Jane, and Joan are dubbed with the trail name The Three Women. How do the women react to the news? Why are trail names important?



## BOOK CLUB GUEST SPEAKER

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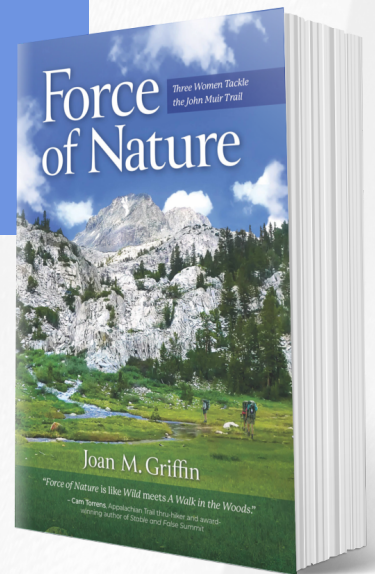
Contact Joan via email to arrange a meeting with your book club.  
[joangriff@gmail.com](mailto:joangriff@gmail.com)

JOAN M. GRIFFIN  
email - [joangriff@gmail.com](mailto:joangriff@gmail.com)  
blog - [joangriffin.substack.com](http://joangriffin.substack.com)

# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

## MORE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you have a personal connection with the Sierra Nevada or another mountain range? Or with another naturally wild place? Can you share a story?
- World-building – often used to describe an author’s creation of exotic-fantastic worlds in Sci-fi and Fantasy books. Griffin uses rich descriptive language to describe the Sierra Nevada wilderness setting. Was she able to transport you to the world where the women hiked?
- What are some of the powerful emotions Joan and her hiking partners dealt before and during the hike?
- What role does Joan’s necklace play in her hike?
- A common quote tossed around by hikers is “Hike your own hike.” Each of The Three Women approaches the journey in a different way. How would you describe their similarities and differences as hikers? Do you identify with one approach more than the others?
- How did you feel when Jane had to leave the trail? How did you feel about Zoe joining the group? What did each contribute to The Three Women?
- The original Three Women are in their Fifties. How do you think their story might have played out differently if they were younger, say in their Twenties or Thirties? Or if they were a group of men?
- One of the book’s reviews appears on the book’s front cover. Cam Torrens wrote, “*Force of Nature* is like *Wild* meets *A Walk in the Woods*”. You may have read *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed or *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson, two of the hiking world’s “must read books”. If so, how would you compare *Force of Nature* with the other two?



## FORCE OF NATURE HIKING PLAYLIST

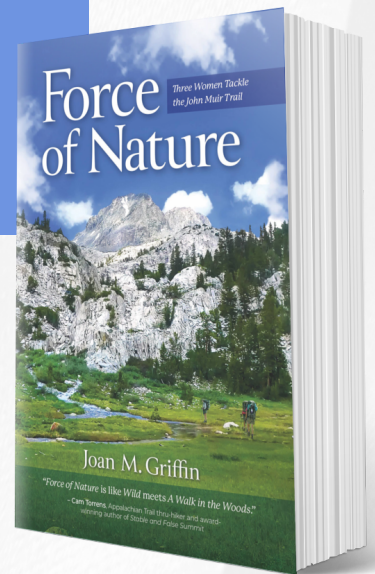
Joan is taking suggestions for her hiking playlist.

What music do you listen to while hiking or while wishing you were hiking? Send suggestions to Joan at [joangriff@gmail.com](mailto:joangriff@gmail.com)

# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

## MORE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the evenings, when the women are all snug in their sleeping bags, Joan reads aloud from Erik Larson's *The Devil in the White City*. Have you read that book? Do you think it was a good bedtime story choice? Why?
- Griffin writes several times about her and other's motivations for hiking the JMT. In the chapter "Truth or Dare" the group of travelers discuss their motivations. Near the end of their journey, the photojournalists interview all their fellow hikers about why they hiked the JMT. Griffin struggles to answer the question until much later. What are some of the reasons people take on a huge challenge like thru-hiking the JMT?
- Is this a "female empowerment" story? How so? How did the hike empower Griffin and her hiking partners? How does reading books like this serve to empower or inspire readers?
- Griffin wrote: "Who the hell goes backpacking and leaves crap like this behind? How can you be someone who loves the wilderness and also someone who desecrates it?" (p221) This incident of discovering trash in the otherwise pristine wilderness beside Evolution Creek infuriated the women. How did it make you feel?
- The night before the women begin their journey, Griffin asks the Universe for "a transformative journey." Did she get what she asked for? How so?
- Discuss Cappy and Joan's partnership and friendship. How do you think the journey impacted their relationship?
- Griffin compares her way of hiking with her partners with a yo-yo, "extending the distance to my comfort limit, then pausing to pull it in tight" (p279) What is she doing? Why?



## FORCE OF NATURE PHOTO ALBUM

Check out photographs  
from the journey at  
[joangriffin.us](http://joangriffin.us)

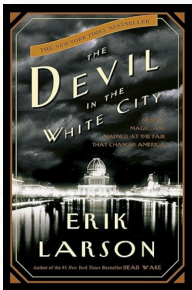
JOAN M. GRIFFIN

# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

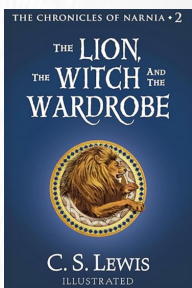
## COMPANION BOOKS

### THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY

Most evenings, once The Three Women were tucked snugly into their cozy mummy-style sleeping bags, Joan read aloud from Erik Larson's popular book. Interestingly, the "Devil" is a contemporary of John Muir himself. While the "Devil" was playing his murderous games in Chicago, Muir was working to preserve beautiful places like Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon, all of which play a role in *Force of Nature*, for future generations as US National Parks.

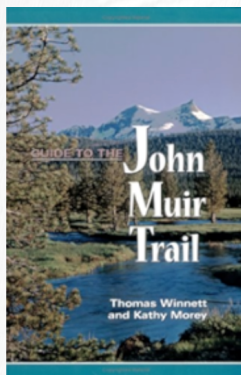
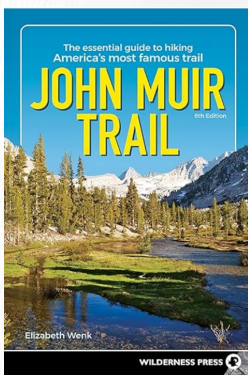


### THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

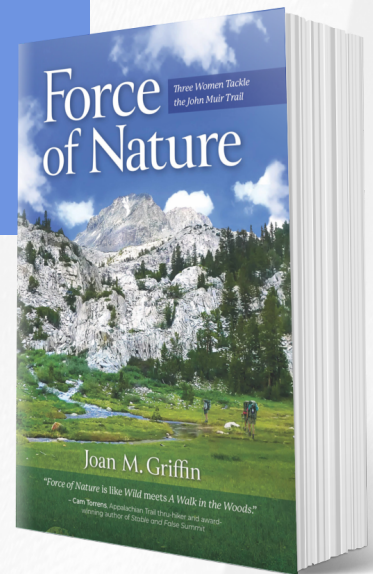


Late in the book, when The Three Women are enthralled with a series of lush Alpine meadows, they suggest that it would be the perfect setting for a performance of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or a model for the site where C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia's* stories might have taken place.

### JOHN MUIR TRAIL: ESSENTIAL GUIDE



In 2006, we referred daily to this essential guide to the John Muir Trail. The version The Three Woman used was written and updated regularly by authors Thomas Winnett and Kathy Morey. The author of the newest editions is Elizabeth Wenk. This step-by-step, turn-by-turn guide is an indispensable must-have. Not an accessory, but a necessity for both early planning and while on the trail. This book and the Harrison Maps appear in *Force of Nature* frequently, as Cappy refers to them morning and evening to keep us on track.



## FORCE OF NATURE PHOTO ALBUM

Check out photographs from the journey using this QR code.



# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

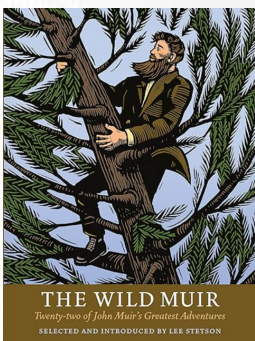
## COMPANION BOOKS

### SIERRA WILDFLOWERS: A HIKER'S GUIDE



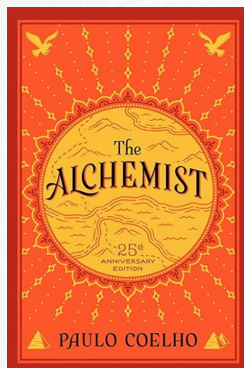
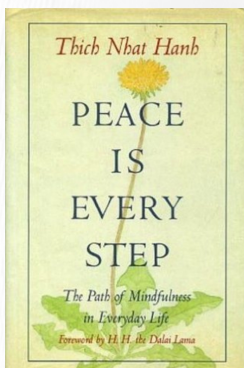
John Muir Laws, who is actually John Muir's grandson, is an amazing artist who has created a series of books about the flora and fauna of the Sierra Nevada. Though one doesn't want to load up on books while hiking, Laws' hiker's guides are slim versions of his ID books that contain the most gorgeous hand-drawn illustrations. In *Force of Nature*, Jane plays the role of wildflower guide during the first part of the journey.

### THE WILD MUIR: 22 OF MUIR'S ADVENTURES

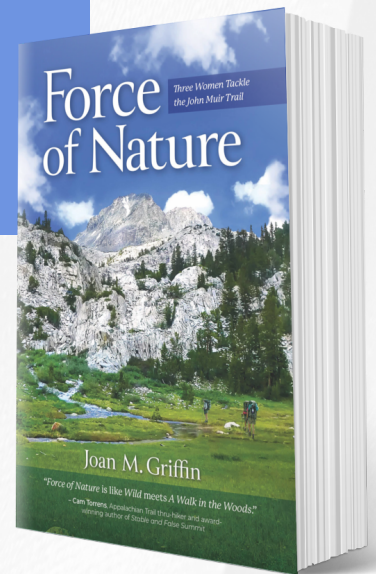


One of many books by the conservationist John Muir. This is a collection of fun adventure tales recounting Muir's time in the wilderness. My favorite is when he decides to find out what it's like to be a pine tree in a storm. He climbs high up into a tree and rides out a huge storm!

### PEACE IS EVERY STEP & THE ALCHEMIST



Thich Nhat Hanh's *Peace is Every Step* and Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* each play a role in *Force of Nature*. *The Alchemist* comes up during a deep philosophical conversation over dinner one evening when The Three Women have stopped to pick up their food caches at VVR (Vermilion Valley Ranch). *Peace is Every Step* is Joan's inspiration for using hiking as a form of walking meditation and one source of her aspiration to "become one with nature."



## FORCE OF NATURE CUSTOM BOOKMARKS

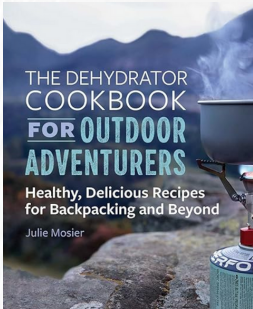
When your book club selects *Force of Nature*, email Joan to receive a set of handmade book marks for your club members' books.

# FORCE OF NATURE BOOK CLUB KIT

## FOOD - ON & OFF THE TRAIL

Book clubs often serve a meal or pull together a potluck with a theme that goes along with the book they're going to be discussing. *Force of Nature* has two food themes. There's the food The Three Women packed, prepared, and ate along the trail and the food they craved and savored at supply stops and at their final destination. You probably won't want to imitate the 3000 calorie/day intake!

## DEHYDRATED DINNER FOOD FOR THE TRAIL



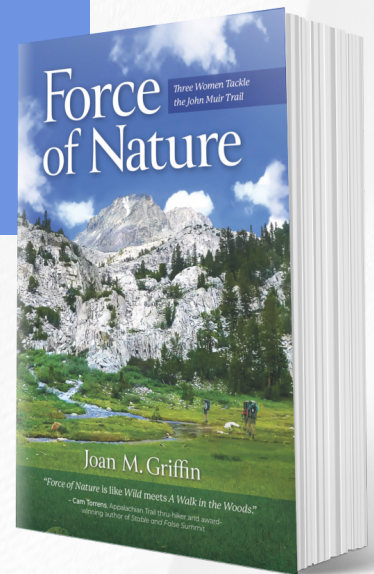
In preparation for the 2006 JMT hike, Cappy dehydrated all her own meals. Not Joan! She purchased her delicious meals from a company called Trail Foods that is unfortunately no longer in business. Lots of companies make easy-to-cook foods for use in the back country. Just add boiling water and steep. Some are way better than others, of course. Taste test a few. The standard commercial dehydrated food has a starchy base, like pasta or rice, and a savory, calorie-rich sauce. Common entrees included spaghetti with meat sauce, mac & cheese, red beans & rice, and rice curries.

## BREAKFAST & LUNCH ON THE TRAIL

- Oatmeal with nuts & raisins or Luna Bars with coffee or hot chocolate
- Peanut butter (in a tube) squeezed onto crackers and topped with dried cranberries
- Tuna or summer sausage on crackers with dried mango
- Peanut M&Ms, almonds or pecans, Fig Newtons, hard candy, orange Gatorade

## FOODS THE THREE WOMEN CRAVED

- Crispy, fresh green salads with tomatoes and other fresh and crunchy vegetables
- Ice cream, especially Haagen Dazs chocolate-dipped ice cream bars
- Fresh, ripe and juicy fruits of all kinds
- The famous bacon-cheeseburgers with fries at Whitney Portal



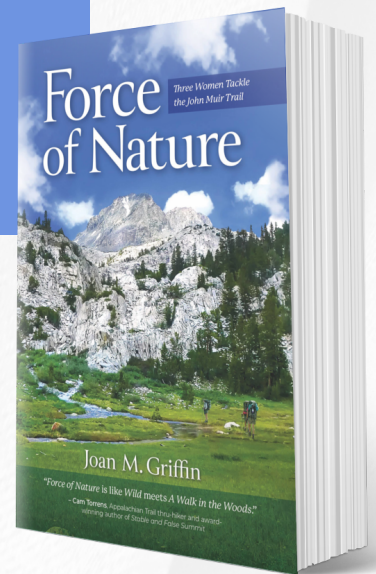
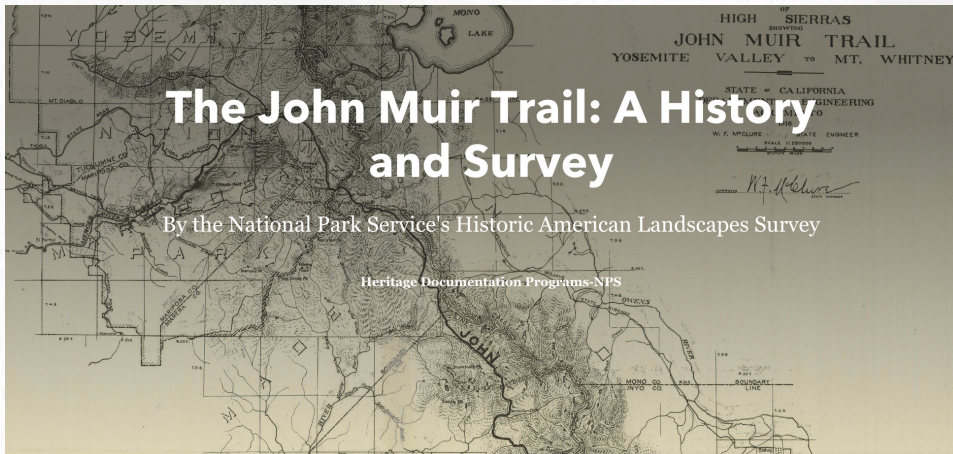
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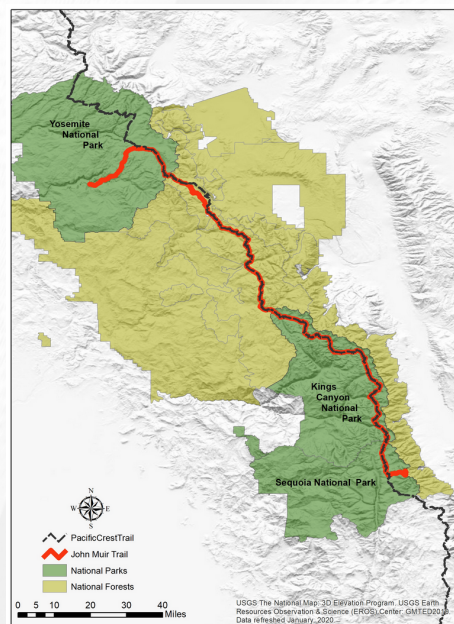
## JMT MAPS & HISTORY & MORE



## ADDITIONAL TRAIL INFORMATION

### THE JOHN MUIR TRAIL: A HISTORY & SURVEY CREATED BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICES

“Stretching approximately 214 miles from Yosemite Valley to Mount Whitney, in California, the John Muir Trail (JMT) is one of the oldest and most spectacular scenic trails in the United States. Following the crest of the Sierra Nevada as closely as possible, it traverses majestic heights, deep canyons, lush meadows, and alluring alpine lakes while crossing ten passes of 10,000’ or more.”



The [Pacific Crest Trail Association \(PCTA\)](https://www.pcta.org/) has an expansive website full of information, with an entire section on the John Muir Trail. It covers necessities like the permit process and bear canister requirements, food re-supply information, and suggestions for equipment, planning, and packing.

<https://www.pcta.org/discover-the-trail/john-muir-trail/>

Click on the map above (or use the link below) to find this rich historical and geographic resource about the JMT. The website includes numerous maps and old photographs depicting the JMT, first as dream, then under construction, and finally as a stunning reality!

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6b1637874cfe42ada2dcedf99a564c0f>