

<https://wamu.org/story/23/11/10/this-physics-professor-ran-3000-miles-across-america-in-record-time/>



## This physics professor ran 3,000 miles across America in record time

November 10, 2023 5:24 PM ET

By [Megan Lim](#)



Jenny Hoffman on her epic journey. *(photo by Jill Yeomans)*

Mustering up the energy to go for a light jog can sometimes feel insurmountable. But for some, running is just a way of life. Take Jenny Hoffman, who just became the fastest woman to ever run across America.

**Who is she?** Hoffman is a physicist and professor at Harvard, and is now also the world record holder for the fastest time a woman has run across the country.

**What did she do?** Hoffman ran 3,000 miles from San Francisco to New York City in 47 days, 12 hours and 35 minutes.

- Hoffman beat the previous record by more than a week! According to [Guinness World Records](#), Sara Villines completed the trek in 2017 with a time of 54 days, 16 hours and 23 minutes.
- Hoffman had attempted the journey once before in 2019 but had to stop because of an injury.

**What is she saying?** *All Things Considered* host Ailsa Chang spoke with Hoffman about her achievement. Here's what she said.

**On why she felt compelled to do this:**

It's hard to explain, I don't know. It's something I have dreamed about, crossing this country under my own power, since I was a child. Once I got it in my head, I just couldn't let go. Every single day, every moment that I wasn't actively doing something else, it was there in the background as something that I just knew that I wanted to do. I would be driving, and I would see the open road ahead of me, and I would say, "I could be running this." It just kind of permeated everything.



Oh the places she'll go. (photo by Jill Yeomans)

**On what she learned about the country:**

I learned how friendly Americans are. We had a wonderful woman in Nebraska who gave us a dozen eggs fresh from her chickens. And we had a cement company in Utah who gave me a reflective vest that kept me safe all the way across the country. Just so many generous Americans. And you know, red states, blue states, whatever their yard signs, they were so generous and so kind.

**On the thoughts she kept coming back to on her run:**

When I first did this in 2019 I was spending a lot of time processing my father's passing, and that was really an important time to grieve. And this time in 2023, I was thinking a lot about all the things I'm grateful for and a lot about how I could use this journey to learn to be a better person and also to provide inspiration for others to pursue their audacious goals no matter what they may be. And I tried really hard to do a better job of publicly documenting my journey in hope that somebody somewhere sees that and thinks, "Maybe I can tackle that big goal that I was afraid to tackle."

*The interview with Jenny Hoffman was conducted by Ailsa Chang, produced by Karen Zamora and edited by Tinbete Ermyas.*

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## This physics professor ran 3,000 miles across America in record time

November 10, 2023 5:47 PM ET

Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

By [Ailsa Chang](#), [Tinbete Ermyas](#), [Karen Zamora](#)

NPR's Ailsa Chang speaks with physics professor Jenny Hoffman who just completed a run across the country.

AILSA CHANG, HOST:

Harvard physics professor Jenny Hoffman did something I could never imagine doing. She ran some 3,000 miles from San Francisco to New York City in 47 days, 12 hours and 35 minutes. That is the fastest a woman has ever done that journey on foot.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

JENNY HOFFMAN: I can't believe this is happening - 3,000 miles, 3,000 miles. God bless America.

CHANG: God bless America. That was Hoffman just before crossing the George Washington Bridge into New York City. Holy cow. Jenny Hoffman, welcome to ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

HOFFMAN: Wow, thank you so much for having me on your show.

CHANG: I mean, thank you so much for doing this run so I could talk to you. I have so many questions. But first, how is your body feeling right now? It's been about a week since you finished this epic run. How are you feeling?

HOFFMAN: I think my body's a little confused, still trying to figure out which end is up and what to do with myself.

CHANG: Maybe, why aren't you running today?

HOFFMAN: Yeah - had a dream last night that I had run the wrong way across New Jersey, and I woke up thinking, oh, my gosh, I ran the short way. Now I need to run north-south across New Jersey.

CHANG: Well, let me ask you this 'cause I know that you attempted this cross-country run back in 2019, but you had to stop because of an injury. What made you feel you had to do this again, you had to make the attempt again?

HOFFMAN: Oh, that's - it's hard to explain. I don't know, it just - it's something I have dreamed about - crossing this country under my own power - since I was a child. Once I got it in my head, I just couldn't let go. Every single day, every moment that I wasn't actively doing something else, it was there in the background as something I just knew that I wanted to do. I would be driving, and I would see the open road ahead of me, and I would say, I could be running this. It just kind of permeated everything.

CHANG: You ran through 12 states and 27 days of cornfields. I'm just curious, did you go into a trance at that point? I mean, mile after mile of cornfields, what was that like?

HOFFMAN: It really opened my eyes to the vastness of this country and how warped our perspective can be living in the coastal cities. But running through cornfields - yeah, it got a little old after a while.

CHANG: But I imagine cornfields are a good place to hide if you want to take care of business.

HOFFMAN: I did take some detours into some cornfields, and I had a tracker that broadcast my location every 10 minutes. And so every once in a while, I would get a message on my tracker from a friend saying, hey, I saw your last ping in a cornfield. What you doing in there?

CHANG: Guess (laughter). Well, you were just talking about kind of how eye-opening this trip was to do it by foot rather than, you know, just drive across the country. And I'm just curious,

what were some of the other things that stand out in your memory that you learned about this country running through it?

HOFFMAN: I learned how friendly Americans are. We had a wonderful woman in Nebraska who gave us a dozen eggs fresh from her chickens, and we had a cement company in Utah who gave me a reflective vest that kept me safe all the way across the country - so just so many generous Americans. And, you know, red states, blue states, whatever their yard signs, they were so generous and so kind.

CHANG: Yeah. I wanted to ask about the solo meditation parts because when I was training for my first marathon, I used all of that alone time to process my divorce that was coming up around the corner. What about you? What did you feel your mind kept returning to inside all those hours by yourself?

HOFFMAN: When I first did this in 2019, I was spending a lot of time processing my father's passing, and that was really an important time to grieve. And this time in 2023, I was thinking a lot about all the things I'm grateful for and a lot about how I could use this journey to learn to be a better person and also to provide inspiration for others to pursue their audacious goals no matter what they may be. And I tried really hard to do a better job of publicly documenting my journey and hope that somebody somewhere sees that and thinks, oh, maybe I can tackle that big goal that I was afraid to tackle.

CHANG: I love that. Jenny Hoffman - she is the fastest woman to run from San Francisco to New York City. Congratulations again, Jenny.

HOFFMAN: Thank you so much. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

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