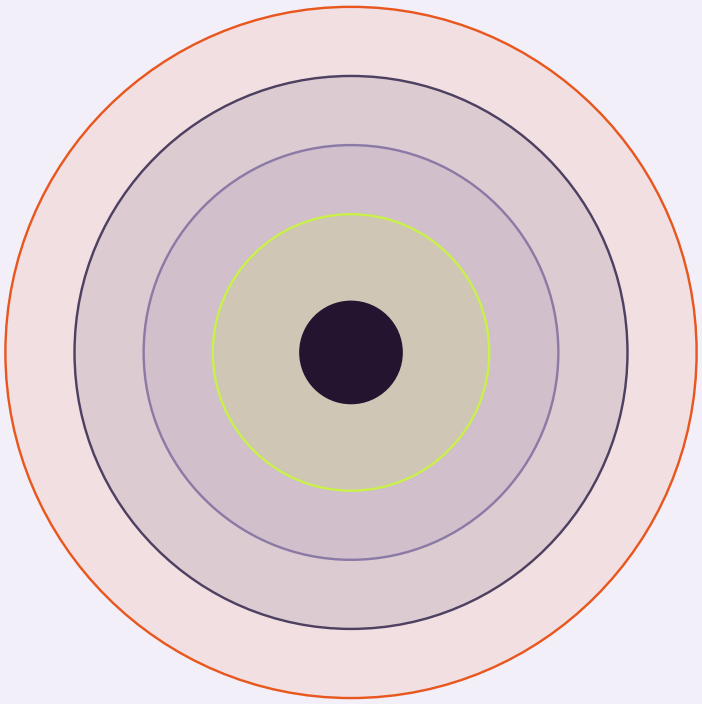


Into the Wild

A reading of the book by Jon Krakauer (1996)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

Inside this edition

The book in a minute 3

The takeaways 4

Your action book 6

Before you go 7

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

The setup checklist 9

Check in when you said you would 10

Take a small adventure each month 11

Debrief every trip in a field log 12

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Into the Wild, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Jon Krakauer is a journalist and mountaineer, and this book grew out of an article he wrote for Outside magazine in 1993. It reconstructs the last two years of Chris McCandless, who graduated from Emory University in 1990, gave his savings to charity, called himself Alexander Supertramp and drifted across the American West before walking into the Alaskan bush in April 1992. He was found dead in an abandoned bus off the Stampede Trail that September. Krakauer builds the story from McCandless's journals, postcards and photographs, and from interviews with his family and the people he met on the road. He sets him beside other young wanderers, such as Everett Ruess, and beside his own risky solo climb of the Devils Thumb in his early twenties. The book weighs idealism against hubris without settling the question, and looks closely at the competing explanations of how McCandless died.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The river you cross easily in April may be impassable in July, so plan the way out for the worst conditions, not the ones you walked in on.

McCandless crossed the Teklanika River without much trouble in spring. When he tried to walk out in July, it was running high with snowmelt and he turned back to the bus. The ground had not changed. The season had, and his plan had no answer for it.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Idealism and hubris can live in the same person, and the book refuses to pretend otherwise.

Many readers, especially in Alaska, saw McCandless as arrogant and unprepared. Others saw a serious young man living by his principles. Krakauer gives both views room and admits his own sympathy, which is why the book still starts arguments.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Going without a map can feel like purity, but a map takes nothing away from the adventure.

McCandless chose to travel light and with little information. Krakauer notes that a detailed map of the area would have shown him other ways across the river. Knowing the ground is not the same as taming it.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The gap between a story of daring and a story of loss is often luck, not merit.

Krakauer tells of his own solo attempt on the Devils Thumb in Alaska in his early twenties, a climb he admits was reckless. He came home and McCandless did not. Reading the two side by side makes it harder to judge from a safe distance.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Giving everything away is a statement; it is not yet a plan.

After Emory, McCandless gave his savings to charity and later left his car behind and burned the cash he had left. The gestures were sincere. They also removed the buffer that turns a hard week into an inconvenience instead of an emergency.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The people you meet on the road are part of the adventure, not a detour from it.

Wayne Westerberg, Jan Burres and the older man the book calls Ronald Franz were all moved by McCandless, and some of them kept writing to him. Near the end, his marked-up books suggest he had come to value happiness shared with other people.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Running away from something and running toward something can feel identical from the inside.

Krakauer traces the strain between McCandless and his parents with care and without blame. The book leaves open how much of the trip was a search for a truer life and how much was distance from home. Both can be true at once.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

One young man's choice belongs to a long line of people pulled toward the edge.

Krakauer places McCandless beside other wanderers, including Everett Ruess, who vanished in the Utah desert in 1934. Seen in that company, the pull toward solitude and risk looks less like madness and more like something very human that needs handling with care.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

How he died is still argued over; how ready you are is the part you control.

Starvation, a toxin in wild potato seeds and mould have all been proposed, and Krakauer has revised his own view in later writing. The debate may never close. The useful lesson for a reader is the one that does not depend on it: a map, a margin, a way out, and someone who knows where you are.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Leave a written plan with one person
- [ ] Get a detailed map and mark the exits
- [ ] Set your turnaround rule before you leave
- [ ] Practise one skill close to the road
- [ ] Build a way back into any bold change

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Check in when you said you would
- ◯ Take a small adventure each month
- ◯ Debrief every trip in a field log

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Leave a written plan with one person

Before your next solo outing, write your route, your return time and the time someone should raise the alarm.

Send it to one person and get a reply that they have it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Get a detailed map and mark the exits

Download an offline topographic map of the area you plan to visit.

Mark every bridge, road and shelter that could get you out, not just the way in.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Set your turnaround rule before you leave

Decide the time, weather or supply level at which you will turn back, and write it at the top of your plan.

Decide it at home, where pride and tiredness are not doing the thinking.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Practise one skill close to the road

Pick the skill your plan depends on most, such as first aid, navigation or a cold night outside.

Practise it this month somewhere you can walk out of in an hour.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Build a way back into any bold change

If you are quitting a job or moving far away, write down your fallback: months of savings, a person who would hire you again, a place you could stay.

Keep it even if you never use it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Check in when you said you would

Send a short message at every check-in time on your plan, even when all is well.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Take a small adventure each month

Do one new walk, route or overnight near home every month.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Debrief every trip in a field log

After each outing, write three lines: what went well, what nearly went wrong, and what you will change.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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30 ○						

December 2026

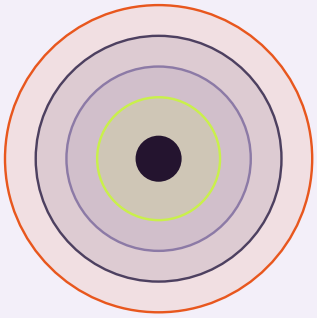
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Go as far as you like, but leave a map of the way back with someone who loves you.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER JON KRAKAUER