



Journeys of Simplicity: Traveling Light with Thomas Merton, Basho, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard & Others

Philip Harnden

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Where do our journeys take us?

What do we leave behind?

What do we carry with us?

How do we find our way?

You are invited to consider a more graceful way of traveling through life. With arresting clarity, *Journeys of Simplicity* offers vignettes of forty travelers and the few, ordinary things they carried with them from place to place, from day to day, from birth to death.

Edward Abbey Nellie Bly Raymond Carver Dorothy Day Marcel Duchamp Dolores Garcia Emma "Grandma" Gatewood Mohandas Gandhi Peter Matthiessen William Least Heat Moon John Muir Robert Pirsig Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton Henry David Thoreau Father Zossima and others

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Journeys of Simplicity: Traveling Light with Thomas Merton, Basho, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard & Others Details

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From Reader Review Journeys of Simplicity: Traveling Light with Thomas Merton, Basho, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard & Others for online ebook

Amy Beasley says

A friend sent this to me, thanks for the share. I had been captivated by the title and wondered why he gave it a low rating. At some points, this book charmed me, at others I found the author's voice annoying. I had to read this in a couple of sittings because it wasn't a big pull for me where I am at the moment devotionally. Good Idea-but lacked a constant cohesive spark.

Kelly says

Top ten book. On my nightstand.

Gail says

"You are invited to consider a more graceful way of traveling through life. With arresting clarity, Journeys of Simplicity offers vignettes of forty travelers and the few, ordinary things they carried with them--from place to place, from day to day, from birth to death."

Joe says

Although a very short book it was well done and had some very interesting people in it. I suppose a book on simplicity should be simple and this one was. There are several people in it that I had not heard of before and I would like to and plan to look into their lives and writings further. It does want to make me start throwing everything out but I can't and won't at least not yet!

Gretchen says

My favorites: Annie Dillard's Writing Tent, Where Father Terrence Lived, John Jack's Bequest to Violet, Baggage for the Arctic Tern's 22,000 mile Migration, Around the World with Nellie Bly.

James says

A book which shares vignettes of spare poetry about the beauties of unencumbered living. Drawn from disparate sources, both literary and real life, the brief chapters in this book show the minimal material possessions that are required for living fulfilled lives. Some of the vignettes are of well-known figures like Edward Abbey, Thoreau, Merton, Muir, and Werner Herzog; others, drawn from literature include Ishmael, Father Zossima, and Bilbo Baggins; yet others were unfamiliar to this reader, including Dolores Garcia, Father Terence and Emma Gatewood. This book is worth meditating upon as a reminder of what is essential for living a life.

Madhuri says

Makes you think about how you travel and live. What possessions are necessary and how much clutter you gather

Kelley Taylor says

Simplicity, Paring down, weeding out, figuring out what it truly the essence of what material things your soul needs...these are the things this book reminds us of and indeed the inspiration that almost gives strength. I believe many times we are so afraid of what we will lose or what we may never gain. That way of thinking is a way of either keeping us right where we are, or, holding us back because of the weight of attainment ahead of us. If we simply remind ourselves that traveling light is key to freedom in achievement as well as peace, we can do REALLY DO anything our heart desires.

Sunil says

Sometimes a book just finds you.

I can't remember why I downloaded this book; I had neither heard nor known of it. I caught it on amazon while looking for some other book.

As I read Harnden's introduction, I knew right away it was a unique book. And in spite of his suggestion not to read it in one go, I found myself at the end of the book in 2 hours - heavy, yet strangely calm and peaceful. And like many great books, it made me pause many a times throughout my reading, and reflect - at times completely without any thought on my mind. After the book ended, I kept revisiting the chapters, rereading, on occasions checking the references, but soon I realised the book will never have a psychological end; I will have to revisit it again and again and again, as long as I will live.

Book, though technically it isn't one, is an assortment of vignettes of unique travels and journeys, forty one in total- the unencumbered journeys - as Harnden describes them are drawn from real life, fiction and in fact one of them is a bird (the arctic tern). The journeys are arranged as chapters. The first part of each chapter gives a brief introduction of the 'traveller', the second part describes the journey and its context, and third,

arranged as a list (in a poetic skeleton) is the list of possessions these travellers carried with them during these unique, exceptional travels. The book uses Travels and journeys as a metaphor for life , and the main motif of these journeys is sparseness and the wonder of simplicity.

Some of these journeys (lives) are well known (Thoreau, Gandhi, Jesus), while some of them are unbelievably incredible (Emma Gatewood, Ephraim M'kiara) some are awe-inspiringly informative (I didn't know that Herzog walked from Munich to Paris to visit Eisner, or that Marcel Duchamp travelled only with a toothbrush in his jacket pocket).

In a time where all of us as a society have collectively accepted to measure the worth of our identities and lives by our possessions, the book documents that all life will eventually amount to no more than how meaningfully you lived it. No more and no less. As Harnden illustrates in his example in the introduction 'Like a single Leaf'

The only crib I can force myself to think of, is that the book has too many American examples with Europe losing out (e.g Wittgenstein). This means the assortment can be improved.

As I have written, the book deserves endless revisiting, and as a testament, I will carry it during all my journeys.

To keep myself reminded.
That life is no more than this.

Theresa says

A simple concept with a meaningful message: look at these lists of items people carried on journeys or lived with in one place. Imagine being in their shoes and what it is like to only have 5 or 10 things and making do. Think of the creativity, ingenuity, resourcefulness and freedom that comes from needing so few things.

I read a few pages before going to bed over the course of a week or so. I recommend that format for letting these simple lists sink in.

Living with less stuff is a major theme of this year for me and this was a non-preachy, effective book to help me mull on what that means for me.

Cheryl says

This is a lovely little book that those who see less as more will enjoy.

Erika says

This is a really simple, but thought-provoking book about the journeys people take, what they bring with

them (material or immaterial) and what they leave behind. I loved pondering these lists of items and what they said about the owners (and wondering what I would bring if I had been in that situation). "We take delight in things; we take delight in being loosed from things. Between these two delights, we must dance our lives."

Juliet says

The author's quirky hobby--collecting lists of what various people owned or carried on their journeys--bound in one lovely book. Some of these people are known for their simple lifestyles, others you've never heard of. Some are book characters, for goodness sake, and some of what they own and carry exists only in emotion and memory. Simple and thought-provoking.

Harry Allagree says

A wondrously simple collection of brief biographies & concrete examples of the simplicity of 41 personages. Included are mostly actual persons, but also fictional characters from literature, from ancient times to the present. Editor Philip Harnden says the book is for anyone "journeying" through life. The overall recommendation is to "travel light", to live simply.

Thomas says

Slim, 100 page book that left me thinking about it more than bigger, heavier productions. Lovely concept--generally two pages for each "traveler". The left page is a poetic synopsis of each individual, sometimes just one sentence about them. The facing page has a list of what they carried, or what limited items their rooms might have held.

I received this book this month as a gift from my friend Brad. It was on the coffee table waiting for me when I got back from 2,500 miles of backpacking the Continental Divide Trail. I traveled as light as I was able, shedding 30 pounds of bodyweight, and arriving home with a backpack that weighed 17 pounds, without food or water.

Since I have come home, I have read just two books, including this one. I have a very strong desire to get rid of things since coming off the trail. This book gives me hope. I am reading it again.
