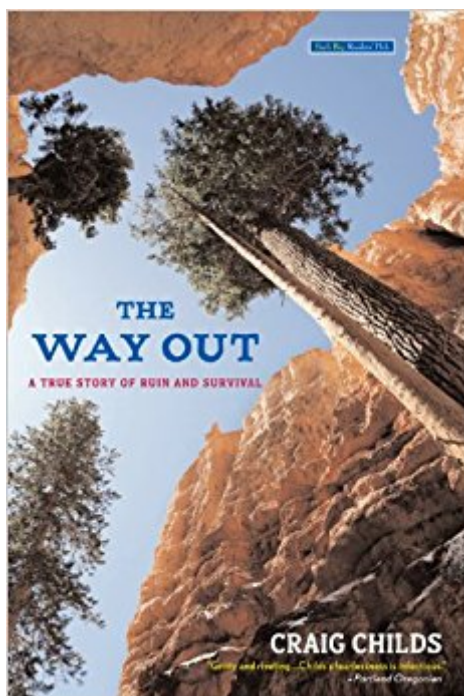


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# The Way Out: A True Story Of Ruin And Survival



## Synopsis

- A breakout book from a writer increasingly celebrated as the 21st-century bard of the American Southwest--a writer in the tradition of Barry Lopez, Peter Matthiessen, Terry Tempest Williams, among others. - In March 2003, Craig Childs received the Spirit of the West Literary Achievement Award, given to a writer whose body of work captures the unique spirit of the American West. - As a chronicle of adventure, as emotionally charged human drama, as confessional memoir, *The Way Out* is a transcendent book, a work destined to earn a lasting place in the literature of extremes. - Not since John Krakauer's bestselling *Into the Wild* has a book so compellingly explored the boundary between wilderness adventure and madness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For *THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE OF WATER* and *SOUL OF NOWHERE*: 'Utterly memorable and fantastic... certainly no reader will ever see the desert in the same way again' - Washington Post  
'Childs's own feats of asceticism are nothing if not awe-inspiring: he's a modern-day desert father' - New York Times Book Review

Craig Childs is a naturalist, adventurer, desert ecologist and frequent contributor to a US national radio morning programme.

I really liked Craig Childs' *House of Rain*, partly because it offered interesting observations and reflections on the Anasazi (Ancestral Puebloans), a culture I have studied a great deal, and partly

because of the author's skill at descriptive writing. That book left me wanting to know about the writer, an unusual person who spends weeks at a time walking across the southwest, even in the middle of winter. Hence, I was drawn to read *The Way Out*, which, in part, is a reflection on Childs' relationship with his father. In *The Way Out*, Childs' memories of his father, and the stories of Dirk Vaughn's former life as a cop, which were woven in and out of the tale of their hiking expedition, were interesting. Both of the companions had tortured pasts that, in a way, were mirrored in the torturous piece of nature they had to navigate. But I did not see much of a parallel between the "The Way Out" of their physical trek and "the way out" of their past experiences related to a "disturbed, raging, alcoholic father" and the very difficult, violent, and painful, life of a police officer. (Perhaps the book's title was not supposed to apply to their life stories, which were such a prominent part of the reader's experience???) Dirk's "way out" of his past was to retire from police work (after a horrific car accident that caused a death prompted him to quit) and become involved in the rugged outdoors, which does not really relate well to the book's title. As for Childs' past related to his father, I now have pictures of the father from Childs' eyes, and pictures of some of Childs' experiences with him, but I have no idea how those experiences affected Childs' or how (or if) he found a "way out" of his father-son relationship. Or a "way through?" Or a learning to live with whatever residue remains within him from his relationship with his father? Just reading stories related to his dad was not enough for me. Where did Craig Childs go with those experiences? What did he do with them? How did they shape him? How do they drive him? How do they relate to his need to take on treks in nature (such as the one the book describes) that few people would have the desire or ability to undertake? How is he like his father? How is he different? Other than being torturous, how did his father-son experiences relate to the physical journey the book describes? Childs is a very gifted writer, and, for the most part I enjoyed his book. But by the end I was tired of each little observation or experience being molded by the powers of the intellect into a creative metaphor. Some descriptions were too contrived for me, and I felt like I was wading through molasses to get to the end. I would have liked less creativity!

Childs represents the continuation of the legendary Western storyteller. His language is bright -- scintillating, even -- his views lucid, his descriptions vivid. As he and his buddy Dirk spend a fortnight in the backcountry of the Canyonlands of Utah, each bares, sands and polishes his past to bring strength to the journey they face. Throughout all, the immensity and solidity of the rocky landscape serves to both challenge and amaze them.

I just love this book. Elegantly written, keenly observed.

This is one of the best pieces of writing so far in the 21st century. Childs strips his ego naked in the full light of day as few writers have ever had the courage to do. Ernest Hemmingway, Jean Genet, and Tom Wolf never had the guts to go this far over the edge into absolute self-aware honesty. Along with THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE OF WATER, THE WAY OUT sets a whole new standard of excellence for English-Language writing.

I was completely taken by this book. Beautiful. Haunting. Disturbing. Intensely human. Perhaps my favorite Childs book - and I've read them all. This is a book that will stick with me, work inside of me. Well done sir, well done.

This man writes with his soul. He takes you on his journey. As an artist and someone who looks to nature for inspiration, this book is one I will reread for as long as I live. Transformative reading.

Craig Childs has a way with words that is spare but yet inviting and poetic at the same time. The Secret Knowledge of Water is my favorite book of his. But this is a good one, particularly if you are looking for an adventure story.

Like his writing very much. House of Rain was his 5 star masterpiece. All his books are worth reading especially if you enjoy the outdoors.

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