

A person stands on a rock in the center of a large, dark, cave-like opening. The opening frames a view of a sunset over a range of mountains and a beach. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, and the mountains are silhouetted against the bright light. The beach is visible in the foreground, with waves breaking on the shore. The overall mood is serene and adventurous.

Take a Walk on the Wild Side

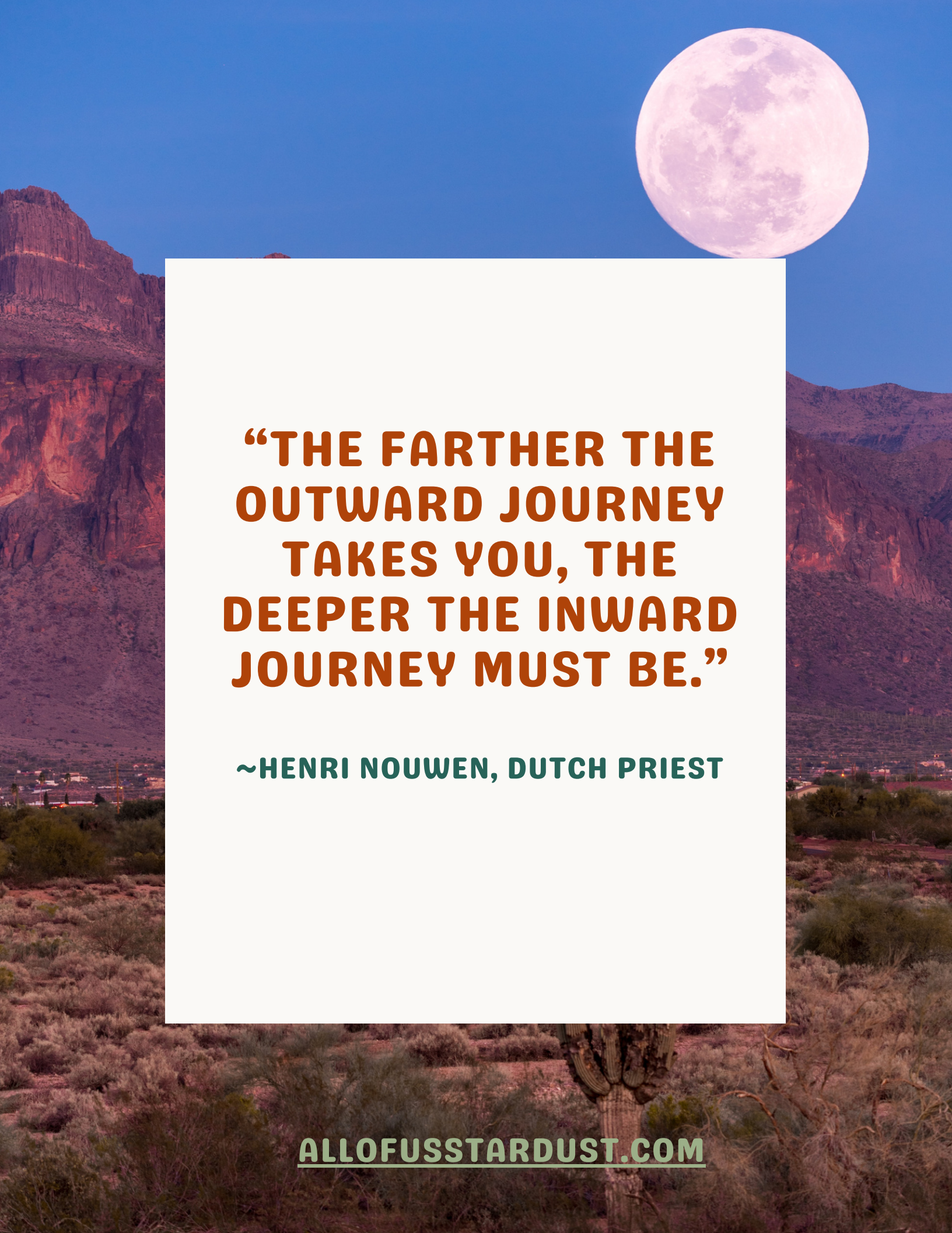
Beginner's Guide to
Solo Walks

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A full moon is visible in the upper right corner of the image, set against a clear blue sky. The background features a desert landscape with rugged mountains on the left and right sides, and a cactus in the foreground. The overall scene is bathed in a soft, warm light, suggesting either dawn or dusk.

**“THE FARTHER THE
OUTWARD JOURNEY
TAKES YOU, THE
DEEPER THE INWARD
JOURNEY MUST BE.”**

~HENRI NOUWEN, DUTCH PRIEST

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Introduction

On a personal note

If you read my [blog post](#) about my first solo walk, then you know it was not an easy start for me. Because of potential storms, I was very nervous for my first walk. In fact, I did end up sitting through two hours of three thunderstorms converging over me in the afternoon. It was boring and challenging. However, they didn't arrive until the afternoon when I had already met my stride and I was in the depths of truly enjoying my solo time.

Much of my anxiety was about the unknown. I had fears of getting lost because the solo walk asks us to wander without a goal in mind. I had fears of bumping into people or predators who might make me feel uncomfortable. (I talk about preparation later in the booklet.)

So why do it then? Why take on the day-long journey, if it brings on anxiety. For one, the solo medicine walk is a means of confronting your deepest fears. Each time I feel anxious, I am reminded why I must venture into the woods. The forest soothes me. Allowing myself to sit in silence with no goal or expectation but to listen to birds and feel the sun on my skin, is a gift to myself to just be.

Sometimes being, is simple. Sometimes there are nothing but rainbows and signs from the universe granting me guidance. Other days, it is challenging and I am faced with tarantula hawks and perfect storms.

(continued)

But whatever I face, at the end of the day I feel a sense of fulfillment and a deeper spiritual understanding. My deeply heartfelt question is always answered in one way or another. Sometimes it is simple, sometimes it requires more interpretation. Always, unexpected.

I leave the forest with new nature allies that will guide me on the path ahead. I feel gratitude, remembering that the earth and the beings of the earth are one and all of us our kin. I can co-collaborate with my environment and make peace with my modern life.

As we say in nature therapy, "Trust the forest" (or park, desert, beach, canyon, wherever you find your green space). You do not need to force it. Nature will guide you, all you need to do is ask.

What is a solo walk?

A solo walk, also called a medicine walk, is a ceremony in which you leave at first light to venture into nature and return at last light, fasting from food, phone and outside distractions. Most importantly, you set an intention for your walk, usually a question your heart is longing for an answer to. Though it is called a "walk," you do not need to walk the entire time. Wander aimlessly. Spend time where you feel called to rest. Go slow.

Time alone in nature without interruption invites deep listening to your intuition, as well as a powerful connection with the more-than-human world, which can act as a mirror for you, reflecting the answers you seek.

Solo walks can be used as a rite of passage for a specific event or a life transition. Some life moments that might call for a solo walk include but are not limited to:

- graduation
- mid-life
- Saturn return
- birthday
- marriage
- parenthood
- a difficult choice you need to make
- marking the turning season
- a needed respite

You don't need a special reason for a solo walk if you feel called to do one.

How to Prepare for your solo walk

Consider if you want to go a whole day or only a half day. This could depend on many things such as your comfort level being alone in nature, your physical aptitude for fasting or the amount of time you have. If you can't fast, you can still do a solo walk.

Choose a day. You might want to consider the weather. Being prepared for all weather and accepting it as it comes, may be part of your journey. However, if it is important to you that the sun is shining all day, then you may need to be flexible according to the weather forecast. Also, consider the length of the day. If it's close to summer solstice, you're going to be out a lot longer than close to winter solstice. Can you fast for 12 hours? If you can avoid busy weekends or holidays, all the better.

Journal or meditate beforehand on what your intention is for taking the solo walk. What do you wish to learn about yourself or gain from the journey within the natural world? You may also ask for your intention to appear during dreamtime. (Use the Intention Setting audio meditation for guidance)

Take time to decide where you will walk. You may wish to communicate with the land in your preparation work. Introduce yourself, explain your intention and ask permission. Feel into the energy of the land and use that to help you decide if it fits with your intention. (Use Forest Deva audio meditation for this.)

What you need for a solo walk

- An entire day or half-day free
- An intention, a question in your heart
- A threshold such as a door, a line of sticks, a trailhead, or a pair of rocks that you can enter and exit through to signal the beginning and end of your liminal journey
- A place to wander freely all day in nature where you feel safe, won't get lost and will encounter minimal humans (if you live in the city, you will need to access your nearest state park or national forest as a public park is not enough space to wander.)
- Someone who knows where you will be and when you will be back. And don't forget to let them know when you return. Make an emergency plan with them in the case that you don't return.
- If there is a person who is dependent on you, ask for help from a trusted friend or partner to be their go-to person for the day, to field any emergencies, pick them up and feed them. You should not have to worry about anyone else for the entirety of your solo walk. You don't want to check your phone either.

Wear proper clothes for the weather and sturdy shoes. You may also want to bring hiking poles. You will need a day pack to carry your supplies.

Packing list

- Pen and journal (and journal prompts list)
- Sunscreen
- Hat
- At least two liters of water (water filtration system optional)
- Your navigation device, such as GPS on your phone and/or compass and map if you intend to use them.
- Phone (on travel mode)
- Extra battery for your phone
- Extra layers of clothing, including rain jacket and pants
- A means of starting a fire that is kept dry
- Snack (whether you are fasting or not, just in case)
- First aid kit with antihistamine, pain relievers, bandages, antiseptic wipes, antibacterial ointment, splinter tweezers, blister treatment, etc.
- Toilet paper and trowel
- Camera (if not on phone)
- Whistle (to call for help if needed)
- Bear spray/horn
- Thermos with hot water (for forest tea, more on this below) can be included as part of your two liters of water



THE SOLO WALK

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Suggestions for your solo walk

Wander without any goal in mind, such as a destination, step count, scenic viewpoint or grand vision. Instead, remain open to the experience however it shows up for you. You do not need to stay on the trail either; allow yourself to follow your heart. Trust the forest to guide you and you may be pleasantly surprised with what you discover.

Take time to pause often and appreciate the beauty of the surroundings. Breathe in the fresh air and take in the sights and sounds of the forest. Use all of your senses to connect with nature. Take note of the different textures, smells, and sounds. Practice bodyfulness and focus on being present in the moment.

Consider your walk is a narrative mythic tale, a heroine's journey. Journal as you go and see what story unfolds. (Use journal prompts list if you want to.)

Be aware of the mythic imaginal realm all around you. What archetypes or symbols are showing up for you? What are the signs and synchronicities of your journey?

Spend time practicing tuning into your intuition (more about this further down.)

This time alone might bring up heavy emotions you need to process. Allow yourself to be with your emotions, don't push them away. Lean on the nature beings for support.

Suggested Ritual: Make Forest tea

You may want to incorporate the ritual of forest tea into your solo walk. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. It's important to research and understand the local plants that are safe to forage and eat with 110% confidence. Make sure you can clearly identify each plant and understand its uses and contraindications before adding it to your tea.
2. Take the time to get familiar with each plant. Learn about their personality and specific medicine. This will deepen your connection to the forest and the plants you are using.
3. Before you head out on your walk, fill up your thermos with hot water, so it's ready when you're ready to brew your tea.
4. As you wander on your solo walk, keep an eye out for tea plants to add to your water. Remember to always ask permission before harvesting any plants.
5. When you're ready to enjoy your tea, take a moment to sip and imbue the essence of the forest into your body. Practice gratitude and keep an open heart as you connect with the natural world around you.

Other rituals

You may want to create rituals while you are on your solo walk. It is up to you. Allow yourself to be creative and spontaneous.

Land art: using found natural objects, land art is a way to express your experiences creatively and may create a meditative state that could unlock more answers or inspiration for you. The beauty of it is its impermanence. Perhaps take a picture to remember it. Then you choose if you want to leave it to be found, or destroy any trace of its existence.

Power circle: create a circle around you with rocks. Give each rock a name to represent a person or thing in your life or community that you would like to enter and hold space with you. Then sit in the circle and meditate, write or draw.

Releasing prayers: As you're spending time on your personal journey, you may notice things coming up for you that you no longer want to perpetuate, such as old programming, beliefs or relationships. You can find a way to release these things metaphorically, such as throwing rocks into a river or crushing dried flowers to send their seeds into the world. Feel yourself letting go with each prayer.

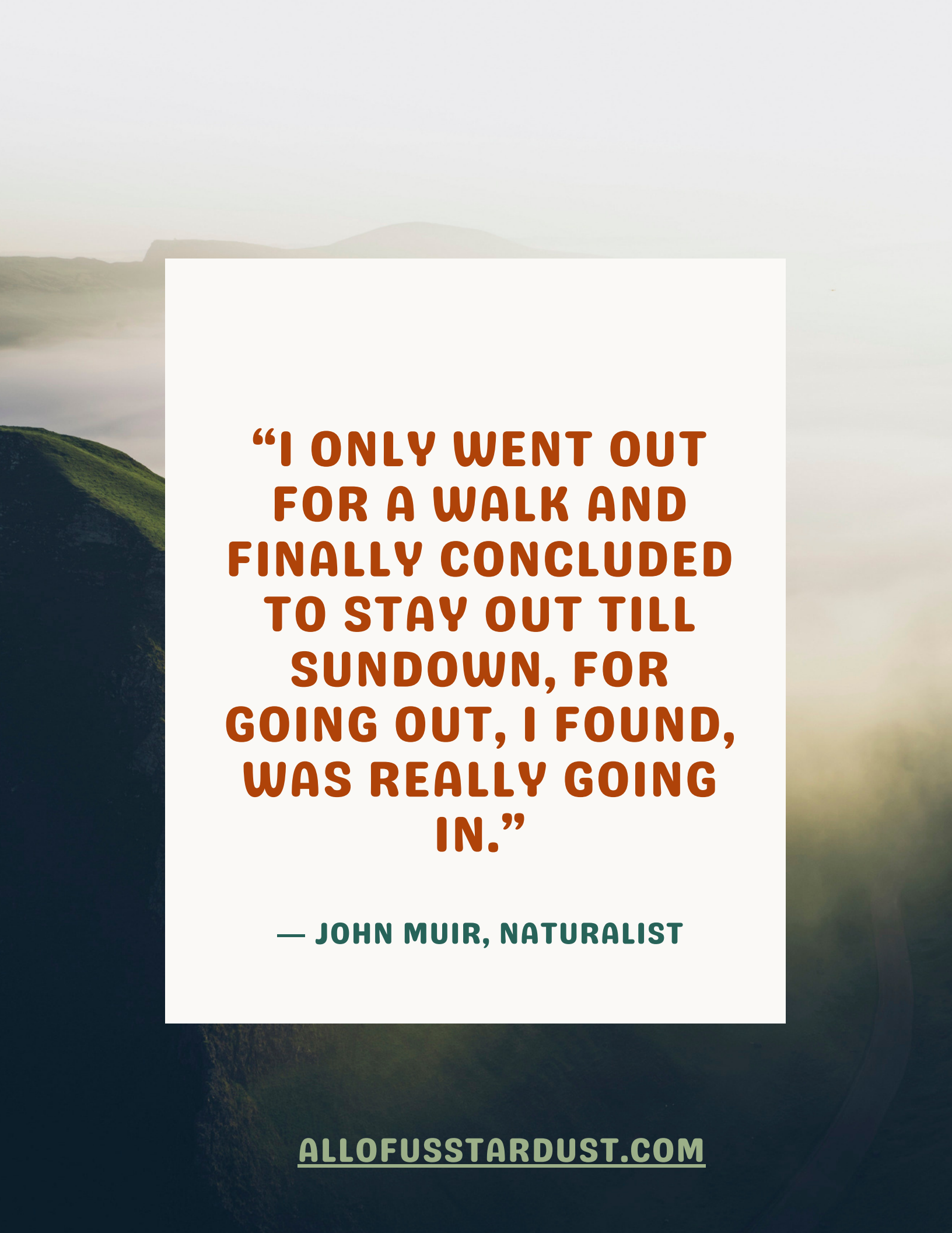
Connect with your nature intuition

When you enter a forest, you can call in the Spirit of the Forest. (See Forest Deva meditation). Take time to feel into this nature deva and let it know that you are friendly. Ask the Spirit of the Forest to protect you and give your preferences (*ie; I would not like to see any rattlesnakes, thank you.*) Sing the Spirit of the Forest a song of gratitude for watching over you.

Greet the nature beings you meet along the way and take time to sit with them and say hello. They may have a message for you. The more you quiet your mind, the more receptive you will be.

As a nature intuitive, I often see nature beings in my peripheral vision that are not there when I look directly at them. Some people may hear "fairy folk" or other nature beings chattering. Developing your nature intuition will allow you to use this as an opportunity to listen to the nature beings of the forest.

Remember, the forest is a place of wonder and magic, and by being open and receptive to the nature beings around you, you can tap into their infinite wisdom and guidance.



**“I ONLY WENT OUT
FOR A WALK AND
FINALLY CONCLUDED
TO STAY OUT TILL
SUNDOWN, FOR
GOING OUT, I FOUND,
WAS REALLY GOING
IN.”**

— JOHN MUIR, NATURALIST

Returning from your solo walk

- Let your emergency contact know that you have returned.
- Have a plan for how you will break your fast. Is someone cooking for you? Do you have a meal prepared ahead? You might be very hungry, so it is good to have something ready. Take it easy and eat simple foods that aren't greasy.
- Journal again to reflect more on the day's experience as a whole.
- Dreamwork that night might further help you to tap into the answers you received.
- Allow a couple of days to let your journey fully settle in.

An aerial photograph of a dense green forest. In the lower-left quadrant, there is a small cluster of buildings with blue roofs. A winding road or path is visible in the lower-right quadrant. The sky is filled with scattered white and grey clouds, and the overall lighting suggests a bright, sunny day.

SAFETY TIPS

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Don't get lost

Since I am prone to getting lost, this is a very important one for me. Please take it seriously as getting lost can be very dangerous and always be prepared with extra food, water, fire starter and clothes in case you have to spend the night.

Though my phone is on travel mode for the whole of my solo walk to insure that I do not get distracted by incoming calls and texts, I do use my phone for taking photos and recording my walk. I download maps of the area before I go on Gaia app. (You can use any hiking app.) I always leave a waypoint at where I start and, unless I am clearly following a trail with short excursions away from it, I record my walk. Caution: your phone battery can die. Be prepared with an extra battery pack if you are relying on it. If you are good at orienteering, of course you could use an old-fashioned paper map and keep track of your travels as you go.

If there is a map at the trailhead, I would recommend photographing it before you leave, so you have a reference point for the well-traveled trails in the area and any landmarks.

Pay attention to trail signs, mile markers and significant landmarks such as large trees, boulders or river crossings. Orient yourself with the four directions before you start. What is to the north? A mountain range or body of water. If you can find some such beacon, you will always know what direction you are going in. But you can't rely on this as sometimes, you don't have a good enough view.

Be Aware

It's important to keep safety in mind when spending time in the wild. While the chances of encountering a predator are rare, it's always better to be prepared. Learn what predators are in your area that could be harmful to humans. Bears? Rattlesnakes? Cougars? Even moose can be a great danger. It's important to learn what to do when you see one and how to react if it becomes aggressive.

Carrying bear spray, horns, walking poles, rocks, or a big stick can make you feel more secure. Remember that predators usually don't want to harm humans and can often be scared off by acting big and making noise. I spend a lot of time in the wild and rarely see a predator, but I am always prepared, mainly armed with knowledge.

If you're concerned about encountering a potentially dangerous human, I can tell you that this is very unlikely. That said, look up the statistics for your area or call your local Forest Department and inquire about safety. Taking a local self-defense course can help put you at ease. Bear spray can also be used as a defense against humans, just make sure you practice with it and use it downwind.

Remember that encountering an animal in the wild is a gift and an opportunity to learn. Pay attention to what kind of medicine the animal has for you and what you might have to offer in return. By being knowledgeable and respectful of the natural world, you can have a safe and fulfilling experience in the wild.

In addition to being prepared for predators, it's important to be aware of the poisonous plants in your area, such as poison ivy or poison oak. It's important to know how to identify them and avoid them. Of course, never eat anything that you aren't 100% sure about.

THANK YOU!

*I hope you have a blessed
solo walk.*

xoxo johanna

If you would like to connect further, you can:

JON MY NEWSLETTER

JOIN OUR "MOON"THLY NEW MOON RITUALS

TAKE THE QUIZ

OR CHECK OUT AN ONLINE CLASS



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