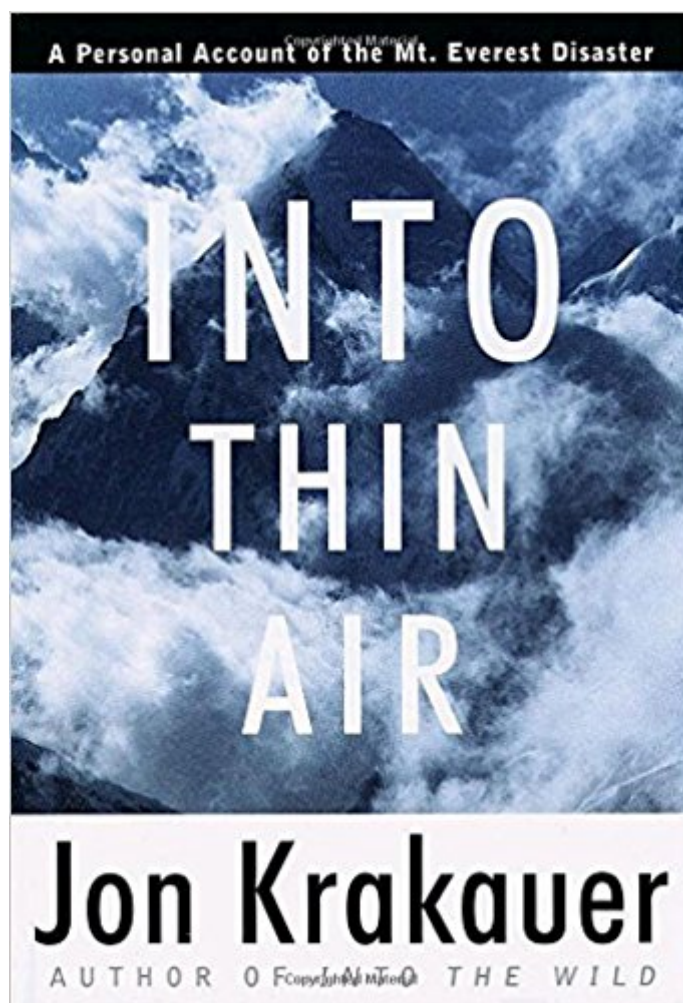


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Into Thin Air: A Personal Account Of The Mount Everest Disaster



Synopsis

When Jon Krakauer reached the summit of Mt. Everest in the early afternoon of May 10, 1996, he hadn't slept in fifty-seven hours and was reeling from the brain-altering effects of oxygen depletion. As he turned to begin his long, dangerous descent from 29,028 feet, twenty other climbers were still pushing doggedly toward the top. No one had noticed that the sky had begun to fill with clouds. Six hours later and 3,000 feet lower, in 70-knot winds and blinding snow, Krakauer collapsed in his tent, freezing, hallucinating from exhaustion and hypoxia, but safe. The following morning, he learned that six of his fellow climbers hadn't made it back to their camp and were desperately struggling for their lives. When the storm finally passed, five of them would be dead, and the sixth so horribly frostbitten that his right hand would have to be amputated. *Into Thin Air* is the definitive account of the deadliest season in the history of Everest by the acclaimed journalist and author of the bestseller *Into the Wild*. On assignment for *Outside Magazine* to report on the growing commercialization of the mountain, Krakauer, an accomplished climber, went to the Himalayas as a client of Rob Hall, the most respected high-altitude guide in the world. A rangy, thirty-five-year-old New Zealander, Hall had summited Everest four times between 1990 and 1995 and had led thirty-nine climbers to the top. Ascending the mountain in close proximity to Hall's team was a guided expedition led by Scott Fischer, a forty-year-old American with legendary strength and drive who had climbed the peak without supplemental oxygen in 1994. But neither Hall nor Fischer survived the rogue storm that struck in May 1996. Krakauer examines what it is about Everest that has compelled so many people -- including himself -- to throw caution to the wind, ignore the concerns of loved ones, and willingly subject themselves to such risk, hardship, and expense. Written with emotional clarity and supported by his unimpeachable reporting, Krakauer's eyewitness account of what happened on the roof of the world is a singular achievement. *Into the Wild* is available on audio, read by actor Campbell Scott.

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Customer Reviews

Into Thin Air is a riveting first-hand account of a catastrophic expedition up Mount Everest. In March 1996, Outside magazine sent veteran journalist and seasoned climber Jon Krakauer on an expedition led by celebrated Everest guide Rob Hall. Despite the expertise of Hall and the other leaders, by the end of summit day eight people were dead. Krakauer's book is at once the story of the ill-fated adventure and an analysis of the factors leading up to its tragic end. Written within months of the events it chronicles, Into Thin Air clearly evokes the majestic Everest landscape. As the journey up the mountain progresses, Krakauer puts it in context by recalling the triumphs and perils of other Everest trips throughout history. The author's own anguish over what happened on the mountain is palpable as he leads readers to ponder timeless questions.

Heroism and sacrifice triumph over foolishness, fatal error, and human frailty in this bone-chilling narrative in which the author recounts his experiences on last year's ill-fated, deadly climb. Thrilling armchair reading. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Ever since I watched the movie "Everest," I have been spellbound by the tragic events of that fateful day, May 10, 1996, and the circumstances that lead to the disaster. I wanted to know more, to learn about the lives of those who perished, and survived, and try to understand why. I sought out books, starting with this one; but also happened upon a series on the Discovery Channel entitled "Everest - Beyond the Limit," episodes of expedition led by team leaders who guide paying clients to the top via the north as well as the south climbing routes. It was quite fascinating witness the harrows of the ascent with the ultimate goal of the summit assault. The shows brought to life for me all of events I was reading about while providing insights to the treacherous terrains, precipitous slopes, plunging temperatures and staggering heights of an actual climb to a place perched atop a death-defying, jetliner cruising altitude of 29,028 feet! Told in gripping detail of the horrifying and unimaginable events that unfolded on that day, climber/journalist Jon Krakauer on assignment for "Outside" magazine, begins his account in the days leading up May 10. Krakauer introduces us to the climbers, the sherpas and team leaders of his own expedition as well as other competing

companies all vying to guide their clients, many of whom paid up to \$65,000, to the rooftop of the world! From there, with fascinating anecdotes of the author's own experiences, Krakauer guides us on his own personal journey--his physical challenges and struggles as well as the emotional suffering of the climb, the deaths, the survival and the flashbacks that continue to haunt him to this day. As with all personal accounts, there's always another side to the story and "Into Thin Air" is no exception. At the end of the book in postscript, the author includes notes about literary attacks, many of which he defends successfully; and sorrowful, some quite angry, responses from members of the families of those who lost their lives. I can't imagine what Krakauer must have lived through and his continuing nightmare about that disastrous day more than 20 years ago. A must read for those interested in attempts to summit Everest and to bear witness to the perseverance, sacrifice and steadfast determination that possesses intrepid explorers and drives them to stand on top of the world. Remember, reaching the summit is only half the journey and 80% of the Everest fatalities occur on the way back down.

Pretty good account from one of my favorite genres: True-life survival biography. I found the book compelling from the get-go, and downright gripping at times. He did a good job of piecing together where the various actors were on the mountain at pivotal moments of the final ascent and descent to and from the summit. My only beef: Could've benefited from more photos, e.g. Some of the other major characters in the story (The rich, debetente, Sandy Pittman; The guides and clients of the expedition; the members of the other expeditions [the Taiwanese team, the South Africans]...and especially THE SHERPAS! Why no photos of the SHERPAS?).

I have only read the Kindle version and now understand there are some differences between it and the original text. Whether anything of significance has been omitted, I don't know, but to me what I read is great. Why anyone would do what Krakauer, Boukreev, Hall, and so many others did, voluntarily risking their lives, mystifies a couch potato like me, but they all have my deepest respect for their skill and courage. So I am only in a position to judge Krakauer's storytelling; everyone made mistakes on that day, and his book does not leave me with a lesser opinion of any of the climbers. The story kept my rapt attention from beginning to end, every word, every name he credited, his postscript, and the criticisms by Boukreev, DeWalt, and others. At no point did Krakauer seem as though he were deflecting blame away from himself. I've never climbed a mountain, yet at times Krakauer had me gasping for air.

I knew very, very little about Mt Everest (i.e. "Isn't that a big mountain?") before coming across this book. I am such a more informed person since reading it thanks to Mr. Krakauer. I enjoyed reading this book, however, it was not an "easy" read for me. The author's choice of vocabulary had me constantly looking up words (thank heavens for the built-in dictionary on my iPad), which I found rather annoying. The other issue I had with the book was that there are so many expedition participants that I lost track of who was who and it didn't help that Mr. Krakauer would interchange the participant's first name and last name. I kept having to refer to the first pages of the book that listed the expedition participant's name and role. Other than these issues, I enjoyed reading it and am now reading another book about K2. I am now officially an armchair mountaineering enthusiast.

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