

Experiential Nonfiction

"What's it like to...?" Many of us ask that question; a few not only try it out, but tell the tale. Here's a selection of such true-life adventures.

[Animal Vegetable Miracle: a year of food life](#)

by Kingsolver, Barbara

641.0973 KI

Novelist and essayist Kingsolver recounts her family's year as so-called localvores, eating (almost) only what they can grow on their farm in Virginia or buy from local sources. (Sometimes, you really need chocolate.)

[French Revolutions: cycling the Tour de France](#)

by Moore, Tim

914.404 MOO

Six weeks before the 2000 Tour de France, Moore, neither ultrafit nor an expert cyclist, rides the route as a personal (and hilarious) "Tour de Moore."

[Grand Obsession: a piano odyssey](#)

by Knize, Perri

786.2092 KNI

A journalist's return to the piano galvanizes a quest for the perfect instrument, for the meaning of perfection, and a consideration of the cost of perfectionism.

[Halfway to heaven : my white-knuckled and knuckle-headed quest for the Rocky Mountain high](#)

by Obmascik, Mark

796.522 OBM

A middle-aged non-mountaineer sets out to summit all 54 of Colorado's 14,000-foot-plus peaks. "Not alone," says his wife, who herself hates heights. This precipitates a search for climbing partners ("man-dates," as Obmascik dubs them). But man+mountain is the true, lasting romance.

[Heat: an amateur's adventures as kitchen slave, line cook, pasta maker, and apprentice to a Dante-quoting butcher in Tuscany](#)

by Buford, Bill

641.5945 BU

A New Yorker staff writer and foodie enrolls himself as "slave" first to chef Mario Batali in New York, then to a pasta maker and a butcher in Italy. He survives, bloodied, to tell the tale.

[Julie and Julia: 365 days, 524 recipes, 1 tiny apartment kitchen...](#)

by Powell, Julie

BIO POWELL

A NYC blogger chronicles her year of cooking every recipe in Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. We've noticed food stains on some of the library's copies. Perhaps we should check out bibs?

[Naked Wine: letting grapes do what comes naturally](#)

by Feiring, Alice

641.22 FEI

A fierce proponent of natural wines decides to practice what she preaches and create her own vintage. Stomping grapes comes naturally. So do pests, bad weather, and a host of unforeseen complications.

[Nickel and Dimed: on \(not\) getting by in America](#)

by Ehrenreich, Barbara

305.569 EHR

Taking along only \$1000 in start-up funds, a car, and her laptop, journalist and social critic Ehrenreich suffers the pain and humiliation of trying make a living as a low-skilled, minimum wage worker. This is experience fully lived, and ferociously articulated.

[Piano Lessons: music, love & true adventures](#)

by Adams, Noah

BIO ADAMS

NPR commentator Adams chronicles a year of piano lessons that culminates in a bravura Christmas gift for his wife: a candlelit performance of their favorite work, Schumann's Traümerei. He's in a tuxedo, snow falling gently outside...

[A Place of My Own: the education of an amateur builder](#)

by Pollan, Michael

690.837 POL

A writer with no experience in carpentry or construction "gets away from words" and builds a writer's studio in his yard. Assembly is required, and embraced. Then, he gets back to words.

[Tolstoy and the Purple Chair: my year of magical reading](#)

by Sankovitch, Nina

028.8 SAN

On her 46th birthday, Sankovitch, who'd hurled herself into hyperactivity to combat grief, chooses instead to "escape back to life" by reading--and writing about--a book a day, for the next year. "Escapism" is affirmed as life-enhancing: a lovely twist.

[The Year of Living Biblically: one man's humble quest to follow the bible as literally as possible](#)

by Jacobs, A.J.

220 JAC

A.J. Jacobs chronicles his attempt to obey the Bible--not just the Ten Commandments--as literally as possible, day after day, for a full year. It isn't easy.