

77 LIFE LESSONS

Stories, insights and inspiration for the road ahead in your life

BERGLOPER ROB

Rob Lucassen

Live. Walk. Discover.

Colophon

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Foreword – Care to walk along?

How wonderful that our paths have crossed.

Maybe you picked up this book on purpose. Maybe it found its way to you more or less by chance. I myself believe that some encounters happen at exactly the right moment.

This book holds 77 walks. But really, they are 77 life lessons, wrapped in stories.

Stories about the things we all run into in life. Love and loss. Trust and fear. Holding on and letting go. Setting boundaries. Forgiving. Starting over. Falling and getting back up. And above all: coming to understand, a little better each time, who we really are.

Because I believe that in this life we ultimately have two important things to do:

learning and living.

By learning I don't just mean gathering knowledge. I mean, above all, our development as human beings. Growing into who we are, learning to recognize our own patterns, and daring to face the life lessons that come with them.

And let's put one thing first: we all have life lessons. Truly, all of us.

Nobody is perfect. Not me, not you, and not even the person you sometimes think has it all figured out.

The lessons simply differ.

One person might need to learn to guard their boundaries better. Another, to trust a little more. One struggles with letting go, while another needs to learn to connect. Standing up for yourself, receiving, forgiving, being patient, loving yourself, daring to ask for help — every person carries their own pieces.

Where exactly do they come from? That alone could fill a book.

Part of it is perhaps already woven into our character. We inherit traits from our father and mother. We are shaped by our family, our childhood, and everything we experience along the way. And I myself believe there is also a deeper layer beneath that: our soul, and the lessons that belong to our own personal journey.

But you don't have to see it the way I do at all.

Maybe the most important question, in the end, isn't even where our life lessons come from.

The most important question is:

What do we do with them once we begin to recognize them in ourselves?

I have wrestled with this quite a bit myself.

By nature, I'm someone who likes to take care of others. A trait I also recognized strongly in my father. A tremendously kind man. Perhaps sometimes too kind. These days I see something of that in my eldest daughter too.

In my own life, that beautiful trait became, over time, a pitfall as well.

I wanted to please others. I adapted too much, gave up too much of myself, and didn't guard my own boundaries well enough. I was, put simply, too much of a pleaser.

Eventually my marriage broke down and I fell into a depression.

Those were not easy years. But looking back, I can also see that life was calling me back in line. I couldn't keep going the way I had been.

I had to ask myself a question I probably should have asked much sooner:

Where did I actually go?

My life lesson wasn't that I needed to become less loving.

Quite the opposite.

My life lesson was that I had to learn to be loving toward myself too. To hit the brakes sooner. To guard my boundaries better. To listen to my own feelings and not lose myself while trying to take care of others.

That's what I mean by facing a life lesson.

Not condemning yourself for who you are. But daring to look honestly at yourself. At your qualities, your patterns, and your pitfalls. And then exploring what you can still learn from them.

Not to become perfect, but to become more aware.

And that's exactly where the 77 walks in this book come in.

Every walk begins with a story. Sometimes something small from everyday life. Sometimes an encounter. Sometimes something funny, moving, or unexpected.

But beneath every story lies a life lesson.

That's why I call them walks.

Life, after all, is quite a bit like a long walk. Sometimes it flows beautifully. Sometimes it's uphill. Sometimes the wind blows straight into your face. Sometimes we take a wrong turn, and sometimes that very wrong turn is exactly what brings us somewhere we would never have reached otherwise.

And walking holds something special for me.

When you walk with someone, you're not sitting across from each other. You don't have to keep looking at one another. You walk side by side, facing the same direction. Silences aren't awkward. You're moving, your mind grows quieter, and often, naturally, room opens up for a different kind of conversation.

That's what I love about walking coaching.

And really, I want to experience this book with you in exactly the same way.

I don't walk ahead of you. I walk beside you.

With every walk, I tell you a story and share what I discovered in it. Maybe you recognize yourself in it. Maybe not at all. Maybe my story stirs up a thought in you that I myself never would have had.

That's perfectly fine.

We don't have to agree on everything to learn something from one another.

That's why, after every walk, you'll find a Bergloper Quote, a Bergloper Question, and a song for the road. Not as homework, and certainly not because I claim to know the right answer. They're there simply to let the story walk along with you a little longer.

Maybe you'll read a walk at home on the couch. Maybe on the train. And maybe you'll actually lace up your shoes and go for a half-hour walk.

That last one, by the way, I can wholeheartedly recommend. Not because I'm any great expert on nature — please don't ask me the Latin name of the tree we're walking beneath — but because spending some time walking does something to you.

Your mind grows quieter. Your breathing changes. You find your way to your feelings more easily. And when it grows quieter inside, there's often more room for your intuition, your soul, or whatever may be greater than yourself.

But then there's still that second word left.

Live.

Because I don't believe we're here only to constantly analyze our life lessons and work on ourselves.

We're also allowed to simply enjoy the journey.

To love. To laugh. To listen to music. To meet friends. To travel. To walk. To do something a little wild. To have a good conversation. To drink a cup of coffee in the sun. And sometimes to do something that, just for once, doesn't need to hide a deeper life lesson at all.

Because for me, becoming more aware doesn't mean life has to grow more and more serious.

Maybe it's actually the opposite.

The more we learn about ourselves, the more freely we can live.

And so, in the end, this book isn't really about my path.

It's about yours.

About your choices. Your patterns. Your life lessons. Your joy. Your growth. And your own unique way of climbing the mountain.

The best version of yourself, I believe, isn't waiting for you somewhere far off at the top.

It's already inside you.

Maybe our journey is mostly about learning to know her, step by step, a little better each time.

So lace up your walking shoes — literally, or in your mind.

I'll tell you 77 stories along the way.

You take from them whatever fits you.

We'll learn a little.

We'll live, mostly.

And maybe, along the way, we'll both come a little closer to ourselves.

Care to walk along?

Rob

Bergloper Rob

How to read this book

My advice is really quite simple:

Start at walk 1 and make your way steadily through to walk 77.

But don't turn it into a race.

Beneath every walk lies a life lesson. Some you'll recognize right away. Others maybe only later. And some might set you thinking about something you don't normally pause to consider.

That's why I wouldn't read this book in just a few days.

Read, say, one or two walks a day.

Then let the story settle for a while. Think about the Bergloper Question. Listen to the song that goes with it. Maybe go for a half-hour walk.

And maybe the best part of all: talk about it with someone.

With your partner, a friend, your children, or anyone you enjoy having a good conversation with.

How do you actually see this?

Do you recognize this in yourself?

What would you have done?

You'll notice that two people can read the same story and still see something completely different in it. And that's exactly where beautiful conversations can begin.

You don't have to agree with me either, by the way. These are my stories, my experiences, and my view of the life lessons hidden within them.

You're allowed to see something different in them.

Maybe that's even the whole point.

So take it easy.

One or two walks. A little reflection. Maybe a conversation about it. And then, above all, back to what matters most:

living.

Tomorrow we'll walk a little further.

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Walk 1 – The Supermarket

When did you actually lose yourself?

I have a special talent. I always pick the wrong line at the supermarket. You know how it goes. You glance around, make a quick judgment call, and think: that one's moving fast. Three minutes later you're still standing on the same tile. In front of you is someone who suddenly remembers there's a loyalty card buried somewhere at the bottom of their bag. Behind you a baby starts crying, and at the register next to yours the groceries fly by as if they're in a hurry. I fall for it every week. And honestly, I'm starting to suspect it's not the line's fault.

Last Friday it happened again. I stood there with a basket of groceries, waiting. Bread, yogurt, a bag of chips I didn't really have a good reason for, and coffee. That coffee, though, I genuinely needed. In front of me stood an older woman. Small. Grey hair. Neatly dressed. In her basket lay exactly four things: half a loaf of bread, a carton of milk, a small tub of strawberries, and a bunch of yellow tulips. That was all. Behind me stood a young father with a girl of about five. She had apparently decided that a shopping cart wasn't meant to be sat in properly, but to be draped across sideways. "Dad..." "Yes?" "Mom doesn't allow this." "I know." "So why are you letting me do it?" He glanced around. "Because Mom isn't looking right now." I couldn't help laughing. So did he. The girl thought for a moment. Just a moment. Then she shouted across the entire supermarket: "Mom! Dad's letting me sit sideways in the cart!" I genuinely have no idea where Mom was. But half the supermarket suddenly looked our way. The father looked at me. "Kids are amazing..." "...until they start telling the truth," I finished for him. We both burst out laughing. I think children are the only people who still say what they think without first checking whether it's convenient. Maybe somewhere along the way, we unlearned that.

The line inched forward. The older woman placed her groceries on the belt one by one. First the bread. Then the milk. Then the strawberries. And last, the tulips. The cashier picked up the flowers. "What a cheerful color." "Yes," the woman said. "I buy them every Friday." "For your husband?" She smiled. "No." For a moment it stayed quiet. "For myself." She said nothing more. No explanation. No story. She said it as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. And maybe it was. She paid, took her bag, and walked calmly outside.

I watched her go for a moment. Not because she'd done anything remarkable. But precisely because it was so ordinary. Outside, she carefully set the tulips on the passenger seat of her car. As if flowers, too, prefer not to travel alone. I smiled. Funny, really... We buy a new phone case without thinking twice. A new charger. New shoes. But something nice for ourselves? Suddenly we need a reason for that. When it was finally my turn, the cashier looked at my groceries. "Just one bag of chips?" I nodded. "Yes." "That's what they all say." I had to laugh. Apparently she'd already caught a few people that day making the same good intentions. I carried my groceries outside. In the parking lot I saw the woman driving off. The yellow tulips were still sitting beside her on the passenger seat. And suddenly I thought: maybe that wasn't a bunch of flowers at all. Maybe that was someone who simply hadn't forgotten herself. I hope I never do either.

Bergloper Quote

"Taking good care of yourself isn't a luxury. It's a way of not losing yourself." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

I walked home with one question in my head: when did you last treat yourself to something, simply because, without needing a reason first?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "Let It Be." Sometimes you don't need to find an answer right away. Sometimes it's enough to simply pause on a simple thought. The lyrics of this song breathe exactly that calm.

Walk 2 – The Empty Chair

On a Sunday morning, a café holds a different kind of quiet than on a Tuesday afternoon. Maybe that's exactly why it stands out. I was early. That doesn't happen often on a Sunday, so I decided to reward myself with coffee and a slice of apple pie. I like to tell myself that apple pie on a Sunday is practically healthy. There's fruit in it, after all. The café was still quiet. Someone by the window was reading the paper. Two cyclists were discussing that morning's route. Otherwise it was mostly still. Until my eye landed on a small table toward the back. A table for two. One chair was taken. The other stayed empty. An older man sat calmly looking outside. In front of him stood two cups of coffee. I found that curious. Not strange. Curious. For a moment I thought he was waiting for someone. Ten minutes later, those two cups were still sitting there. The waitress walked by. "May I take that cup away?" The man smiled kindly. "No, thank you." That was all. She nodded. As if she knew exactly why.

When I paid later, I couldn't hold back my curiosity any longer. "May I ask you something?" "Of course." "Why two cups?" He glanced at the empty chair. Then at the second cup. Only then did he look at me. "My wife and I used to come here almost every Sunday." He smiled. Not sadly. More gratefully. "She passed away four years ago." For a moment he looked at the chair again. "But on Sundays, we still have coffee together." He said nothing more. And honestly, nothing more needed to be said. Some stories don't fit into many words. I wished him a good day. He wished me the same.

Outside, a fresh wind was blowing. I walked slowly homeward. Along the way I kept thinking about that empty chair. Funny, really... We often think love lives in the big moments. A wedding. A vacation. A special gift. But maybe love lives instead in the small habits that stay. In a cup of coffee. A regular seat at a table. A walk. Or an empty chair that isn't really empty at all. Since that Sunday I look at empty chairs differently. Sometimes they tell a story. You just have to take the time to listen.

Bergloper Quote

"Whoever has truly loved knows that memories sometimes simply stay seated beside you." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

On the way home, one question kept walking alongside me: which small habit or memory still lets you feel someone close by, even though they're no longer here?

Listen along the way

Elvis Presley – "Can't Help Falling in Love." Listen to the lyrics sometime. Not just as a love song, but as a reminder that real love doesn't stop when someone disappears from view.

Walk 3 – The Wrong Turn

I have a love-hate relationship with my navigation system. Actually, more of a hate-love relationship. Because let's be honest — without that friendly voice, I'd probably still be driving in circles around some industrial estate. It happened again recently. "Take the exit in three hundred meters." I heard that just fine. I just thought: I've got this. That turned out to be optimistic. A few seconds later the same calm voice spoke up. "You have missed the exit." No blame. No deep sigh. No "Rob... come on, pay attention." Just calmly: "Turn around when possible."

I had to laugh. My navigation system is a lot kinder to me than I often am to myself. When I make a mistake, I quickly think: great job, again. Or: you should have just paid attention. My navigation doesn't do that. It really only says one thing: no worries, just try again. Maybe we should talk to ourselves the way a navigation system does. Calmly. Without judgment. I drove into a small village I had no reason to be in. Normally I'd be annoyed. Not this time. There was a village square, a terrace, and an ice cream parlor. Sometimes you just have to accept that the universe has other plans. Or, in my case... three scoops of lemon ice cream. I sat down on a bench. Next to me sat an older man. He looked at my ice cream. "That looks better than my diet." I looked at his apple pie. "I don't think you're doing so badly either." He started laughing. The kind of laugh that makes you laugh along without meaning to.

"You know," he said, "almost all the best things in my life started with something going wrong." I looked at him. "I met my wife because I once took the wrong train." He took a sip of coffee. "I met my best friend because my car broke down." He pointed at my car. "And you're probably sitting here because you took a wrong turn." "That's right." He nodded, satisfied. "See." That was all he said. Maybe that was the best part. He offered no explanation, no life lesson. He simply told me two sentences and left the rest to me.

On the way home I kept thinking about that man and about my navigation system. Funny, really... We're often afraid of taking a wrong turn. In our work, in love, in a decision. As if every detour is wasted time. While it's precisely there that something unexpected sometimes waits for you. An encounter. A conversation. A terrace. Or simply... three scoops of lemon ice cream you don't actually regret at all. Since then I listen to my navigation differently. When it says "turn around when possible," I no longer hear that I did something wrong. I hear: "You're allowed to start again." And honestly... I find that a far kinder way to live.

Bergloper Quote

"A wrong turn isn't always a mistake. Sometimes it's an invitation." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept driving, I kept thinking about that wrong turn. Which "wrong turn" in your life turned out, in hindsight, to be one of the most beautiful detours?

Listen along the way

John Denver – "Take Me Home, Country Roads." Listen to the lyrics sometime. Not because it's about a destination, but because coming home sometimes begins somewhere you never intended to end up.

Walk 4 – The Bus Driver

I stepped onto the bus the way I often do. Phone still in my hand, my mind still stuck on the previous conversation, my thoughts already racing ahead to everything the day still had in store. "Good morning." The bus driver said it in a way that made you feel he truly meant it. I looked up. "Good morning." He smiled. That was all that happened. I found a window seat and looked outside as the bus rolled slowly on. At the next stop an older woman got on. She walked carefully, as if every step required her full attention. The driver waited patiently until she was seated. Only then did he pull away again.

No one seemed to think it was anything special. Honestly, neither did I. Until, a few stops later, a boy of about sixteen got on. Hood up. Earbuds in. Eyes locked on his phone. "Good morning," said the driver. No reaction. Once more. "Good morning." The boy looked up. For a moment he seemed to wonder whether that was really meant for him. Then he nodded. "Hey..." Nothing more. But as he walked further into the bus, I saw something shift. His face relaxed. It was just a small moment. Maybe I imagined it. Maybe I didn't.

I suddenly wondered how many people had truly seen that boy that morning. Not because they recognized him. But because they gave him a moment of attention. My thoughts drifted back to earlier years. My mother always said you should greet people. As a child I sometimes found that tiresome. You'd walk through the village and it seemed like everyone knew everyone. "Good afternoon." "Afternoon, ma'am." "Afternoon, sir." I thought it was old-fashioned. Now I sometimes think we lost something quite valuable along the way. We have faster cars. Faster internet. Faster phones. But our encounters seem to keep getting shorter. At the supermarket we look at the card reader. In the elevator, at the little numbers above the door. On the street, at the screen in our hand. As if eye contact has slowly become the exception. At my stop I stood up. As I got off, the driver looked at me again. "Have a good day." I smiled. "Thank you. You too." As the bus pulled away, I stood there a moment longer. I watched him go. He would probably carry hundreds more people that day.

But maybe that wasn't really his most important work. Maybe he wasn't just taking people from A to B. Maybe every day he let hundreds of people, even if only for a few seconds, feel that they were seen. And maybe... that's one of the most beautiful gifts you can give someone. It costs nothing. It takes only a few seconds. But for someone, it can be the difference between being invisible... or briefly, truly existing.

Bergloper Quote

"Sometimes we make the world more beautiful with grand gestures. But far more often it starts with something very small: a smile, a nod, a genuine good morning." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When did you last make a stranger feel truly seen?

Listen along the way

Louis Armstrong – "What a Wonderful World." A song that invites you to look again at the people and small moments around you. Sometimes the world already grows more beautiful once we truly see each other.

Walk 5 – The Dog Without a Leash

I was walking through the woods one Sunday morning. Not fast. Not slow. Just at the pace where thoughts naturally start to wander. In the distance I saw a man with a Labrador. At least, that's what I thought — because honestly, that dog didn't look like he was walking with his owner at all. He was following his own route. Left between the trees for a moment. Then right along the path. He sniffed every bush as if he wanted to personally get acquainted with it. Every now and then he'd glance back. Not for long. Just one look. And then he'd happily run on again.

"What a wonderful dog," I said as we passed each other. The man smiled. "He thinks so too." As if he'd heard his name, the Labrador came trotting cheerfully toward us. He looked at me. That look dogs sometimes have. As if to say, "It'll be fine." I scratched the top of his head. "Does he always walk off-leash?" I asked. "Almost always." "Aren't you afraid he'll run off?" The man glanced at his dog. Then back at me. "No." "Why not?" He smiled. "Because he knows where he belongs." We wished each other a good walk.

I walked on. A few minutes later I heard someone running behind me. I turned around. There came the Labrador, in big leaps. In his mouth... my glove. It had apparently slipped unnoticed from my coat pocket. He sat down neatly in front of me. As if he'd simply come to report that I'd forgotten something. "Thanks, buddy." His owner came walking up calmly. "See," he said, laughing. "He sometimes wanders quite far off." He glanced at his dog. "But he always comes back." He said nothing more. He didn't need to. On the way home, that one sentence kept walking alongside me.

He knows where he belongs. Funny, really... maybe people aren't all that different. We too sometimes lose the path along the way. Through our work. Through expectations. Through worries. Through the busyness of everyday life. But deep down... we often still know, surprisingly well, where we belong. Not to a place. But to ourselves. Maybe coming home isn't a destination at all. Maybe it's simply daring to listen again to that quiet voice that's been walking with you all along. And sometimes... all you need for that is a dog without a leash.

Bergloper Quote

"Maybe freedom isn't being able to go anywhere. Maybe freedom is knowing you can always find your way back to who you truly are." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me. When did you last truly feel at home... simply with yourself?

Listen along the way

Simon & Garfunkel – "Homeward Bound." A song about being on the road and the longing to come home. Sometimes coming home isn't a place, but the feeling of being close to yourself again.

Walk 6 – The Raincoat

There are two kinds of people. People who bring a raincoat. And people like me. Who look outside in the morning, see a clear blue sky, and think: "Ah... it'll be fine today." About an hour later I was walking through the woods. And at that exact moment, a dark cloud decided my optimism could use a little correcting. Within seconds it started to rain. Not a few drops. One of those proper Dutch downpours that makes you wonder if someone up there accidentally knocked over a bucket. I looked around.

No shelter. No tree that really helped. Just a wooden bench. So I sat down. As if getting soaked had simply become part of the walk. After a few minutes an older woman came walking up. She wore a bright yellow raincoat. The kind of coat that seems to radiate a bit of sunshine even on a grey day. She looked at me, laughing. "No raincoat?" I shook my head. "I believe a little too much in good weather." She started laughing. "My husband always used to do that too." She sat down next to me. Just like that. As if a wet bench were the most natural meeting place in the world.

"So?" I asked. "Did that make him any wiser?" She thought for a moment. "No." "Just wetter." We both had to laugh. For a while we said nothing. We just listened to the rain. After a while she said quietly, "I used to always be annoyed by rain." "Not anymore, really." "How come?" She shrugged. "I'm seventy-two." "You find out, eventually, that some downpours aren't enemies." She looked up. "And usually..." "...the sky turns blue faster than you think." She said nothing more. She didn't need to. After about ten minutes it turned dry.

The sun broke carefully through again. She stood up. "Well..." "I'll walk on." I wished her a good day. When I looked back later, she was walking on calmly. Not faster because the sun was out again. Not slower because she'd gotten wet. Just at her own pace. On the way home I kept thinking about her. Funny, really...

How much energy do we spend on things we have no control over? A rain shower. A traffic jam. A remark from someone. A mistake from the past. Maybe not every downpour needs to be solved. Maybe sometimes you're simply allowed to walk right through it. And maybe... you enjoy the sun even more afterward.

Bergloper Quote

"Some downpours last longer than you'd like. But almost all of them eventually pass. And sometimes you only notice how much warmth the sun gives... after you've gotten a little wet."
— Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: which downpour in your life are you still trying to hold back, when maybe you're simply allowed to walk through it for a while?

Listen along the way

B.J. Thomas – "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head." A light-hearted song about carrying on without letting your mood be dictated by what falls from the sky.

Walk 7 – The Cappuccino

I have a fixed habit. After a walk I often end up on a terrace. Not because I can't function without coffee. Well... maybe a little. That morning the sun was shining. Not intensely. More like a friendly sun that says, "Stay a while longer." So I did. I ordered a cappuccino. The waitress set the cup down in front of me. With a small cookie.

I find that special every single time. You order coffee. And without asking for it, you get something extra. I picked up the cookie. At that exact moment a little boy of about four walked past my table. He wasn't looking at me. Not at the cappuccino. Only at the cookie. His mother noticed immediately. "No, no," she said, laughing. "That cookie isn't for you."

I looked at the boy. Then at the cookie. And back at him. "I think this cookie would taste a lot better to you than to me." He looked at me. "Really?" I nodded. He looked first at his mother. She smiled. Carefully, he took the cookie. "Thank you." He walked off as if he'd just found a treasure chest. His mother paused for a moment. "He's definitely going to tell this story tonight." I smiled. "I think I'll remember it too." She walked on.

I took a sip of my cappuccino. And suddenly I wondered something. When did we start believing that happiness always has to be big? A new car. A far-off trip. A promotion. A bigger house. While a child can still become completely overjoyed... over a single cookie.

My cappuccino was finished by then. Only a rim of milk foam remained in the cup. I stood up. Paid. And walked on. Without a cookie. But with something else. A smile. And maybe... in the end, that was worth more.

Bergloper Quote

"Sometimes the best part of a day isn't what you receive, but what you pass on with love." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: when did someone else's small gesture unexpectedly make your day a little more beautiful?

Listen along the way

Supertramp – "Give a Little Bit." A song about how something small that you give can unexpectedly mean a great deal.

Walk 8 – The Old Oak

I often walk the same route. Not because it's the shortest way. Not because the most beautiful trees stand there either. Some paths simply feel familiar. As if they know your name. Halfway along stands an enormous oak. I don't know how old it is. Maybe a hundred years. Maybe two hundred. It doesn't really matter. It just stands there. As if it has never been in a hurry for anything. I always glance up. Every single time I'm amazed anew by its enormous crown. How can something so large... be so calm?

That morning there was a stiff wind. The leaves rustled. Branches swayed gently back and forth. Next to the oak stood a young birch. Slender. Supple. Still very much growing. The wind played with its branches. It bent left. Then right again. For a moment I thought, "It's going to snap." But it didn't. It simply moved along. Not out of weakness. But because, apparently, it had done so its whole life. The old oak barely moved at all. Its roots ran deep. Very deep. I stood there watching for a while. Two trees. Both strong. Each in its own way.

Then I suddenly found myself thinking about people. When I was younger, I thought strength meant always standing firm. That you had to defend your opinion. That you had to prove your worth. Now I'm not so sure anymore. Maybe strength is sometimes stepping aside instead. Listening. Setting your opinion aside for a moment. Moving with the wind without losing yourself. I glanced back once more. The young birch was still dancing with the wind. The old oak still stood calmly in its spot. Neither one was trying to be the other.

And suddenly I thought: maybe that's the whole point of growing older. Not harder. Not bigger. But more and more yourself. I smiled. The trees hadn't walked along with me. And yet... I'd had company along the way.

Bergloper Quote

"Nature is never in a hurry. An oak doesn't try to become a birch. And a birch doesn't want to be an oak. Maybe inner peace begins the moment we too stop trying to be someone else." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: where in your life are you allowed, today, to simply be yourself, without comparing yourself to anyone else?

Listen along the way

Gloria Gaynor – "I Am What I Am." A powerful reminder that you don't need to become someone else to be good enough.

Walk 9 – The Old Watch

I have a soft spot for old watches. Not because they can do more than new ones. Quite the opposite. They don't send messages. They don't count steps. They don't measure your heart rate. They don't remind you of anything. They really only do one thing. They show you what time it is. During a walk through a flea market, my eye caught on a small silver-colored watch. The glass was covered in fine scratches. The leather strap was visibly worn. You could see it had lived. The seller noticed me looking. "Nice, isn't it?" I nodded. "Does it still run?" He smiled.

"For over fifty years now." Carefully he turned the watch over. On the back was a small engraving: *For Jan. Time is the finest gift.* Nothing more. I stood there quietly for a moment. Who had Jan been? Who had given him this? Had he worn it every day? Or had it lain in a drawer for years? I would never know. And maybe that didn't matter. I handed the watch back. Some things are more beautiful to simply hold for a moment... than to take home.

Along the way, I kept returning to those few words. *Time is the finest gift.* I used to think time was something you could win. Or lose. As if it were a competition. Now I see it differently. Maybe we don't long for more time at all. Maybe we long for more attention. A cup of coffee without a phone. A walk without hurry. A conversation in which no one checks their watch. Maybe those are the moments that later become memories. At home I took off my own watch.

I set it on the table. Suddenly I noticed its ticking. Calm. Patient. As if it wanted to tell me that time itself was never in any hurry at all. Maybe we were the ones rushing. I smiled. And decided to do nothing at all for a while longer.

Bergloper Quote

"The clock tells you how much time passes. But only you decide how much attention you give that moment. Maybe that's the true value of time." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: to whom would you like to give not more time this coming week, but more attention?

Listen along the way

Fleetwood Mac – "Landslide." A song about change, growing older, and looking with gentleness at what life does to you.

Walk 10 – The Bench

Some benches have a beautiful view. Others simply stand in exactly the right spot. This bench stood at the edge of a meadow. Not beside a river. Not atop a hill. Just along a walking path where dozens of people passed by every day. I'd known it for years. And yet... I had never once sat down on it. Until that morning. Not because I was tired. More because the bench looked as if it had been waiting for me for a while.

I sat down. In front of me a few cows were grazing. In the distance someone cycled past. Otherwise, really, nothing happened. And precisely because of that, more happened than I had expected. After a few minutes an older man came walking up. "Is there room?" he asked. I looked at the bench. "I think there's plenty." He smiled and sat down beside me. For a while we said nothing. It didn't feel awkward at all. Quite the opposite. It felt as if the silence had already opened the conversation.

After a few minutes he pointed toward the meadow. "Look at that." I looked. "What do you see?" "A few cows." He smiled. "Exactly." "And yet we've both been looking at them for a while now." We had to laugh. "Funny, really," he said. "Once you finally have no hurry left..." "...cows turn out to be surprisingly interesting." We both burst out laughing again. Then it grew quiet once more. Not the kind of silence that needs filling. But a silence in which everything has already, really, been said.

After a while he stood up. "Enjoy your walk." "Thank you. You too." He walked on calmly. I stayed sitting a little longer. Not because the view was so special. But because I noticed I didn't need to be anywhere else. When I finally got up, I looked back once more. The bench stood there again. Patient. As if it knew that tomorrow someone else would sit down again.

Maybe someone who was tired. Maybe someone grieving. Maybe someone who simply wanted to rest for a while. The bench wouldn't ask any questions. Wouldn't offer any solutions. It would simply be there. And sometimes... presence is the most beautiful thing you can give someone.

Bergloper Quote

"Not every journey calls for a next step. Sometimes it's the moment you sit down for a while that brings you closer to yourself." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: when did you last give yourself permission to simply not have to do anything at all?

Listen along the way

Eagles – "Peaceful Easy Feeling." A relaxed song that fits not needing to go anywhere and simply being present.

Walk 11 – The Apple

Sometimes I buy more fruit than I need. Not on purpose. It just happens. That morning I was walking home with a paper bag full of groceries. Halfway there I heard a soft sound behind me. *Tok...* I looked back. An apple had rolled out of my bag. Before I could even bend down, a girl of about six ran up to the apple. She picked it up carefully. "I think this is yours." She held it up with both hands. "I think you're absolutely right." I took the apple. "Thank you." She smiled. "My grandma always says apples don't just roll away on their own."

I had to laugh. "Then your grandmother is a wise woman." She peeked curiously into my grocery bag. "You have a lot more." "That's true." I took a nice red apple out of the bag. "May I give you one?" She looked first at her mother, who smiled and nodded. Carefully she took the apple. "Thank you." As if she'd received something truly special. She walked a few steps away. Then turned around once more. She waved. The apple held tightly against her. I waved back. Nothing more happened. And yet...

I walked on with a smile. Along the way I thought of something my father used to say often. "What you give away with love, you never truly lose." As a child I didn't understand that. Now, suddenly, I did. At home I put the remaining apples in the fruit bowl. One spot was empty. Yet the bowl didn't feel any less full. I glanced out the kitchen window for a moment. And smiled again. Some things simply can't be counted.

Bergloper Quote

"A kind gesture might make your possessions a little smaller, but it often makes your world a little bigger." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: what could you give away today that would send not only the other person, but you too, home with a smile?

Listen along the way

U2 – "Beautiful Day." An invitation to keep noticing what is there, even on ordinary days.

Walk 12 – The Feather

I was walking along a narrow forest path. It was early. So early that the birds were already busy with their day, while most people were probably still on their first cup of coffee. The wind had nearly died down. The forest still seemed to be half asleep. In the middle of the path lay a feather. Not large. Not remarkable. Just a white feather. I bent down and picked it up. It weighed almost nothing. Still, I stood there looking at it for a while. Strange, really. A few minutes earlier this feather had still belonged to a bird. Now it lay here. Right on my path. Maybe it was chance. Maybe not. A little further along, a robin landed on a wooden post. He looked in my direction. At least, that's how it felt. I stopped. So did he. Neither of us was in any hurry. After a few moments he flew off again. Silently. As if he knew exactly where he needed to be. I looked at the feather again. I used to want to hold on to a lot of things. Plans. Certainties. Answers. As if life could be steered that way. Now I see it differently. Some things actually become more beautiful when you don't try to hold on to them.

An encounter. A conversation. A smile. Trust. Maybe that's true of happiness too. I walked on. At the end of the path I stopped once more. I opened my hand. A gentle breeze did the rest. The feather rose slowly. For a moment it seemed to hang there, still. Then it danced away between the trees, until I could no longer see it. I smiled. Not everything you come across along the way...

is meant to be taken home. Some things are only there to remind you... how light life can sometimes be.

Bergloper Quote

"Maybe you don't have to hold on to everything. Some things only truly reveal themselves... once you give them room." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: what in your life would grow lighter if you stopped trying to hold on to it today?

Listen along the way

Bob Marley & The Wailers – "Three Little Birds." A warm reminder that trust sometimes begins simply by not making things bigger than they are.

Walk 13 – The Zebra Crossing

I was walking through the center of a small village. No hurry. No destination that couldn't wait a little longer. Just walking. Ahead of me lay a zebra crossing. On the other side stood an older woman. She held her grocery bag tightly. She looked left. Then right. Then left again. Cars drove past. No one stopped. She took a small step forward. Hesitated. And stepped back again. At that exact moment a white delivery van approached. I thought: that one will surely drive on too. But the driver slowed calmly. He smiled.

And made a simple gesture with his hand. "Go ahead." The woman looked surprised for a moment. Then a small smile appeared on her face. Not big. Not exaggerated. Just the smile of someone who, for a moment, felt seen. Slowly she walked to the other side. Halfway across she turned around once more. She raised her hand. The driver nodded. And drove on. Nothing more happened. And yet...

I stood there a moment longer. It had probably taken ten seconds. At most. Ten seconds. Apparently that was enough to make someone's day just a little kinder. I looked at the white stripes on the asphalt. Funny, really. A zebra crossing seems meant simply for crossing. Maybe it's also a place where, every day, we get to choose again. Do I drive on? Or do I make a little room? Not just with my car. Maybe in my schedule too. In a conversation. In my attention. As I crossed myself, I looked back once more. The delivery van was gone.

The woman walked on calmly. They would probably never meet again. And yet... they had made each other's day a little more beautiful, if only for a moment. Maybe that's enough.

Bergloper Quote

"Sometimes kindness doesn't change the world. But it does change the few meters around you. And maybe... every more beautiful world begins exactly there." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: where could you pause, just for a moment today, so someone else can move forward?

Listen along the way

Nat King Cole – "Smile." A song about the quiet power of a smile, especially when life isn't entirely cooperating.

Walk 14 – The Tree That Was In No Hurry

This morning I walked along a narrow forest path. The sun broke gently through the canopy and birdsong surrounded me on every side. It was the kind of morning that naturally invites you to slow your pace. After a few hundred meters I stopped beside an old oak. Its trunk was broad and marked by time. Its branches reached high into the sky, and beneath its crown hung a stillness you could almost feel. Everything about it showed that this tree had already lived a full life behind it. I placed my hand on the rough bark. That might sound a little strange. Still, I do it fairly often. Not because a tree talks back, but because nature sometimes says more than words ever could.

Standing there, one simple thought came to me. This tree has never been in a hurry. It never tried to grow bigger than the trees beside it. It never worried about who stood tallest or grew fastest. Year after year it did the same thing. It grew. Ring by ring. Branch by branch. Root by root. And without ever realizing it, it became a striking presence. I smiled. Because we humans often do exactly the opposite. We live in a world where almost everything has to happen faster. Recover faster. Become successful faster. Become happy faster. Even personal growth sometimes seems like something you have to tackle as efficiently as possible. And in the process we forget that life isn't a race. We compare ourselves to colleagues, friends, or people on social media. We look at what they've achieved and wonder why we haven't gotten there yet. But every tree grows under different circumstances. One stands in sunlight all day long. Another has to fight for years for a small ray of light. Some trees endure fierce storms. Others grow sheltered in a quiet spot. Yet no tree ever tries to be someone else. It simply does what it's meant to do.

Maybe that's one of the most beautiful lessons nature offers us. During my walks I meet a lot of people. Young and old. And remarkably often I hear the same words. "I should have been further along by now." Further in my career. Further in my relationship. Further in my recovery. Further in my life. But who really decides what "further" means? Society? Social media? Other people's expectations? Or maybe it's time to listen to our own heart again? There was a period in my own life when I too thought everything needed to happen faster. I wanted answers. Solutions. Peace. Preferably all at once.

Only later did I discover that some lessons can't be rushed. You can water a seed every day. But you can't force it to be a tree by tomorrow. That thought has given me a lot of peace. Maybe you're not behind at all right now. Maybe you're actually busy growing roots. And you don't see roots. No one walks through a forest and says, "What beautiful roots." Yet it's exactly those roots that are the reason a tree stays standing when the storm comes. It's the same with people. The time you invest in self-knowledge, in processing grief, in forgiveness, in love, or in learning to trust yourself is often invisible.

But that's precisely where the strength forms that you can build on later. Not all growth is visible. Some changes happen in silence. And only months or years later do you look back and think, "How much I've actually grown." Before walking on, I looked once more at the old oak. It had probably known thousands of ordinary days. Days without applause. Without compliments. Without remarkable achievements. Just growing a little each day. Maybe that's the secret of a beautiful life. Not trying to achieve everything today.

But taking one step today. And another tomorrow. That's how trees grow. And maybe people grow in exactly the same way.

Bergloper Quote

"What is firmly rooted doesn't need to hurry." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: where in your life could you give yourself a little more time to grow at your own pace?

Listen along the way

Enya – "Only Time." A calm song that fits trusting your own pace and the thought that not everything needs to be finished today.

Walk 15 – The Unknown Path

During a walk I almost always choose the same route. Not because it's the most beautiful. But because I know it. I know where the benches stand. Where the birds usually perch. Where the path turns a little muddy after a heavy rain. It feels familiar. And maybe that's exactly why I suddenly stopped in my tracks that morning. Right beside the familiar path ran a narrow sandy trail into the woods. I'd seen it dozens of times. But I had never once walked it. There was no sign. No route marker. No arrows. Just a narrow track between the trees.

I stood looking at it for a while. Funny, really. Why had I been walking past this for years? I actually knew the answer. Because I didn't know where it would come out. I had to laugh at myself. How often don't we do exactly that in ordinary life? We stay in a job that no longer really suits us. We put off a conversation. We save a dream for "later." Not because the current path is so wonderful. But because we know where it ends. The unknown always feels more daunting than the known. Even when the known no longer makes us happy.

I took a deep breath. "All right, then." And without thinking further, I stepped onto the narrow trail. It felt strange. As if I were crossing a boundary. After a few minutes I could no longer hear the sounds of the main walking route. No cyclists. No runners. Just the rustling of leaves. And my own footsteps. The path grew narrower. Sometimes I had to duck under a low-hanging branch. For a moment I doubted myself. Maybe this was a dead end. At that moment I heard a voice behind me. "Most people turn back here." I looked around. A man of about seventy came walking up calmly with a walking stick.

He smiled. "Don't be startled." "I walk here almost every morning." He stopped beside me. "And almost everyone turns back after a few minutes." "Why?" I asked. He shrugged. "Because they don't know where the path leads." He glanced around. "Funny, really." "We all say we want adventure." "But preferably with a route map." I had to laugh. There was more truth in that than I wanted to admit. The man pointed at the path ahead of us. "Shall we walk on?" I nodded. And without knowing exactly where we'd end up...

we walked together toward the unknown. We walked side by side for a while. Not fast. As if the path itself determined the right pace for this walk. After a few minutes I asked, "Do you know this path well?" He smiled. "No." That answer surprised me. "But you just said you walk here almost every morning?" "That's true." "And yet I still discover new things." He bent down and picked up an acorn. "Look at this." He placed it in my hand. "How many acorns do you think are lying here?" I shrugged.

"Thousands." "Exactly." "And yet this one is unique." He turned the acorn slowly between his fingers. "That's the beauty of nature." "It never tries to recreate yesterday." Those words stayed with me. Maybe that's true of people too. We often try to go back to how things used to be. To an old job. An old relationship. An old version of ourselves. While life might actually be inviting us to keep growing. We walked on. Suddenly the forest opened onto a small clearing. In the middle stood an old wooden bench.

Not on any map. Not along any official route. As if it was meant only for people curious enough to stray from the familiar path. The man sat down. I sat beside him. In front of us a field of tall grass swayed gently in the wind. "Beautiful, isn't it?" he said. "Yes." "I didn't even know this was here." He smiled. "That's exactly the gift of an unknown path." "You never find what you expected." "But often something you needed." I looked out over the field. How many beautiful places might there still be that I would never discover...

because I kept choosing the same route? Not only while walking. But in my life too. Maybe habits are safe. But they can also, without you noticing, become a boundary. A boundary behind which new encounters, new insights, and new possibilities wait for us. The man stood up. "I'll walk on." So did I. At the fork he paused for a moment. "May I leave you with one more thing?" "Please." He looked at the narrow path behind us. "Remember this well..." "Not every unknown path takes you where you thought you'd end up." He smiled.

"But almost every unknown path teaches you something you'd never have discovered on the familiar road." He raised his hand and walked on calmly. I stood there a moment longer. Then I looked back once more at the little path. From a distance it barely looked remarkable at all. Maybe that was exactly the lesson. The most beautiful opportunities in life rarely announce themselves grandly. They often begin as a narrow little path...

that almost everyone walks past without a second thought. Since that walk, I try every now and then to ask myself one simple question. Do I choose today what I already know... or do I dare take a step toward something I don't know yet? Because maybe growth doesn't begin with a big decision. Maybe it simply begins...

with the courage to choose a different path, just once.

Bergloper Quote

"Growth sometimes begins the moment you dare to leave the familiar path." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: which familiar path might you be allowed to leave, to discover what else is waiting for you?

Listen along the way

Fleetwood Mac – "Go Your Own Way." A song that fits the courage to choose your own direction, even when it doesn't yet feel entirely familiar.

Walk 16 – The Reflection in the Water

It was a windless morning. The kind of morning where the world doesn't quite seem awake yet. The birds were already there, but sang more softly than usual. As if they too didn't want to disturb the silence. I was walking past a narrow pond I'd passed dozens of times before.

Yet this time I suddenly stopped. Not because of the pond. But because of the water. It lay so still that it looked as if someone had laid an enormous mirror between the trees. The sky. The clouds. The reed beds. Everything was reflected with perfect clarity. For a moment I no longer knew what was up and what was down.

At that moment I heard a voice behind me. "Beautiful, isn't it?" I turned around. An older woman was walking slowly with a small black Labrador on a red leash. She stopped beside me and looked, as I did, at the water. "Barely a ripple," she said.

"It looks just like a mirror." She smiled. "It really is one, actually." I looked at her, puzzled. "The calmer the water..." She paused for a moment. "...the better you can see." We both stood there in silence, looking at the pond. After a while she picked up a small twig from the ground.

Very carefully she let it fall into the water. Circles appeared immediately. The mirror vanished. The trees broke apart. The clouds suddenly seemed to fall to pieces. She looked at me. "Funny, isn't it?" "Nothing has changed." "Only the water is moving." I felt right away that she wasn't only talking about the pond.

"That's true of our heads too, actually," I said. She smiled. "Exactly." "When there's unrest..." "...we often no longer see reality as it truly is." She let her little dog sniff the grass for a moment. "I used to be a teacher." "Children sometimes came into my classroom angry."

"Or sad." "Or scared." "And I never tried to solve the problem right away." I looked at her, curious. "What did you do instead?" "I waited." "Just waited for a while." "Because a restless mind doesn't listen." I found that a beautiful sentence. A restless mind doesn't listen.

Maybe not to someone else. But not to itself either. I looked at the water again. The circles slowly grew smaller. Very slowly the mirror returned. Not because anyone had repaired it. But because the water settled on its own. I found myself thinking of moments in my own life when I wanted to make a decision at all costs.

Precisely at the moments when my head was most crowded. Looking back, those were rarely my best choices. Maybe an answer doesn't always need to be searched for. Maybe it first needs the chance to become visible. Just like a mirror in still water. The woman looked at the pond once more.

"May I ask you something?" she said. "Of course." "When did you last make an important decision while you were truly calm?" I had to laugh. "That's a confronting question." "I know." She smiled kindly. "Most people make their biggest decisions exactly when their heads are busiest."

I thought back to various moments in my life. A new job. A difficult relationship. A choice I thought had to be made quickly. Looking back, I saw a pattern. The more hurried I felt, the less clearly I actually saw. As if my thoughts kept throwing pebbles into the water.

The woman seemed to be able to read my thoughts. "We often think we need to think harder." She shook her head. "But sometimes we need to stop thinking instead." She pointed at the water again. "Look." The mirror had returned completely. The clouds drifted calmly by.

The trees stood upright in the water again. None of it had to try. It simply happened. "You can't force calm," she said. "You can only make room for it." That sentence struck me. How often do we try to organize calm? Another course.

Another app. Another book. Another vacation. All well-intentioned. But real calm doesn't come, maybe, from adding something. Maybe it comes from leaving something out. The woman whistled softly to her dog. "Come along now." The little dog walked straight to her.

No hesitation. No hurry. Just trust. She shortened the leash a little and looked at me. "You know..." "The water taught me something very important a long time ago." "What was that?" "That a mirror never lies." She smiled. "But it only shows you something once it's still enough."

Then she wished me a good day and walked on slowly. I stayed behind, alone. For a few more minutes I watched the reflection. Then a gentle gust of wind swept over the pond. For a moment the trees disappeared again into hundreds of small ripples. And suddenly I understood something.

Life will always cause ripples now and then. A difficult day. A disappointment. A conflict. Grief. That's part of it. The art isn't creating a life without ripples. The art is trusting that the water always grows calm again.

Since that morning I think of that often. Not when everything is going well. But precisely when my head feels full. Then I don't try to find an answer right away. I give the water time to grow still first. Because only once the ripples fade

do you see clearly again what was there all along. And maybe that's the most beautiful mirror life can give us.

Bergloper Quote

"When the water inside you settles, what was there all along often becomes visible on its own."
— Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I kept walking, one question stayed with me: which decision or question in your life might you first give some stillness, before searching for an answer?

Listen along the way

Enya – "Watermark." A hushed piece that leaves room for exactly what this walk is about: calm, stillness, and clarity.

Walk 17 – The Old Bridge

There's an old bridge I walk to now and then. Not because it's beautiful. Not because it's famous. And certainly not because there's anything special to do there. It's just a stone bridge over a narrow river. The railing is a little weathered, moss grows between the stones, and if you drive past in a car, you're past it before you've really seen it.

And yet I almost always stop there for a moment. Maybe precisely because of that. Some places don't need to be impressive to do something to you. That morning it was quiet. It had rained during the night and the path smelled of wet grass and earth. In the distance I heard a tractor. A blackbird sat high up in a tree, as if it felt the day needed to be officially opened.

I walked slowly toward the bridge. Not because I was tired. More because my head apparently needed it. In the recent period I'd had many conversations with people who were all on their way somewhere. To a better job. A calmer life. A stronger team. More balance. More freedom. More themselves. And yet I often heard the same doubt beneath the words. "Where am I actually walking to?" I recognize that question. There have been periods when I too walked fast. Calendar full, head full, plenty of plans. From the outside it might have looked like I was doing well. But on the inside I sometimes mostly felt that I was catching up with myself.

That's a strange sensation. You walk forward. But you lose yourself. When I stepped onto the bridge, I saw that someone was already standing there. An older man, grey coat, cap on, both hands resting calmly on the railing. He was looking at the water as if there were something to read there.

I stopped a few meters away. "Beautiful, isn't it," he said without looking around. "Yes," I said. "I think so too." He nodded slowly. "Water is never in a hurry." I looked at the river below us. The water flowed calmly on. Not fast, not slow. Just at its own pace.

"And yet it always arrives somewhere," he said. I smiled. "We humans could trust that a little more too." Now he looked at me. "Exactly." He said nothing more. And that was really enough. Sometimes you don't need a long explanation. Sometimes someone says one sentence and you feel it isn't only about water.

We stood side by side for a while. Two men on an old bridge. Below us the river kept flowing, as if our conversation was none of its concern. But somewhere I felt that I had stopped at exactly the right time. After a while the man broke the silence. "May I ask you something?"

"Of course." He kept looking at the water. "When did you last truly stand still?" Not waiting a moment at a red light. Not sitting on the couch with the television on. But truly standing still. I thought about it. My first instinct was to say: this morning.

But that wasn't true. My body might have stood still. My thoughts, meanwhile, had already scheduled three appointments, written an email, and solved a problem that didn't even exist yet. He smiled when he saw my hesitation. "I thought so." "How can you tell?"

"Because almost everyone nowadays looks without seeing." He pointed at the river. "How long have you been standing here now?" "About ten minutes." "And how many different colors of water have you seen?" I looked down again.

I'd never noticed before. Close to the bank the water was dark green. In the middle it reflected the sky and looked almost silver. Where the sun hit it, small golden glimmers appeared, changing every second.

"I hadn't seen that." He nodded, satisfied. "That's what I mean." "We all look." "But we see so little." His words stayed with me. How often do I listen to someone while already forming an answer in my head? How often do I walk through a forest without truly looking at a single tree?

How often do I ask someone how they're doing while I'm already on my way to the next question? Maybe we're not busy because we have so much to do. Maybe we're busy because we've unlearned how to be fully somewhere. The man bent down and picked up a small stone from the ground.

He tossed it carefully into the river. Together we watched the circles slowly grow larger. "One small stone," he said. "And look how much movement it causes." He looked at me. "That's true of people too." "Sometimes you think a smile, a kind word, or a small gesture means nothing."

He smiled. "Until you discover that it's exactly those small things that can change someone's life." I found myself thinking of people I had met years ago. Some of them probably don't even remember what they said to me. I do. One sentence. One encounter.

One arm around my shoulder. Sometimes that's enough to send someone walking in a different direction. We underestimate the power of small moments. Maybe because they seem so ordinary. The man put his cap back on. "I'll walk on." I held out my hand.

"Thank you." He shook my hand firmly. "For what?" "For the conversation." He smiled. "I think the bridge was the best teacher today." I watched him as he slowly disappeared among the trees. His pace was calm. As if he could never be late for anywhere. I stayed behind, alone, a little longer.

The river kept flowing. The birds kept singing. Nothing had changed. And yet everything felt different. As I walked back to my car, I thought about what the old man had said. Maybe a bridge isn't built to be crossed as quickly as possible.

Maybe a bridge is, now and then, exactly the place where you're allowed to stop for a while. Because you can only move on... once you truly see where you are. Since that morning I walk differently. Not faster. Not slower. But more attentively. And every time I cross a bridge, I think for a moment of that old man.

And of the river that continued on its way without hurry. Maybe that's the most beautiful way to live. Not constantly focused on the other side. But trusting that, step by step, you naturally arrive where you need to be.

Bergloper Quote

"You don't always have to look toward the other side. Sometimes you only discover the next step once you truly see where you're standing now." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I walked away from the bridge, one question stayed with me: where in your life are you so focused on the other side that you forget to see where you're already standing today?

Listen along the way

Simon & Garfunkel – "The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)." A light-hearted reminder to slow down now and then and truly look at what's happening around you.

Walk 18 – The Key

I'd lost my car keys. At least, that's what I thought. Everyone knows that feeling. You pat your pocket. Check the counter. Walk to the hallway again. Then to the kitchen. Then back to the hallway, as if the keys had decided, in the meantime, to move somewhere else after all.

After ten minutes of searching I started to feel mildly irritated. "This can't be happening," I muttered aloud. I even checked the fridge. Why people do that when they've lost something, I honestly still don't know. As if a key would decide to lie down between the cheese and the yogurt.

I had to laugh at myself. Still, I kept searching. Only when I finally sat down did my eye fall on my coat. It hung exactly where it always hangs. I put my hand in the inside pocket. There they were. The whole time. I held the keychain up and shook my head, laughing.

"Impressively thorough search there, Rob." That same afternoon I decided to go for a walk. Not because the weather was nice. Not because I had somewhere to be. Just because walking usually clears my head faster than thinking does. The path ran alongside a small park.

Children were playing on the playground. A young mother pushed a stroller calmly over the gravel path. On a bench an older woman sat reading a book. She looked up now and then as a dog ran cheerfully past. Life seemed to be in no hurry anywhere.

I sat down on a bench. Not long after, a boy of about eight came my way. He kept looking at the ground. Step by step. Very focused. He walked along the grass, checked under a bench, and even paused for a moment by a bush.

"Have you lost something?" I asked. He looked up. "My key." I smiled. "That sounds familiar." He showed me a little cord that would normally hold a house key. "Mom let me cycle to soccer practice by myself." His face was serious. "And now I've lost it."

I stood up. "Shall we look together?" His eyes lit up a little. "Please." Slowly we walked back the same route. Unhurried. Because hurrying rarely helps when you're searching. We looked through the grass. Under a bench. Along the bike path. Every few meters the boy bent down again.

After a few minutes he said quietly, "Dad always says it's better to stop looking." "Oh yeah?" "Yes." "Because usually you find something once you calm down." I looked at him, smiling. "Your father sounds like a wise man." He shrugged.

"Mom says that too." We both had to laugh. At that moment he suddenly stopped in his tracks. "There!" Something glinted in the sun between two paving stones. He bent down, picked up the key, and held it up triumphantly. "Yes!" His whole face changed. Barely a minute earlier the world had seemed far too big.

Now he could handle it again. He looked at the key as if it were the most important treasure of the day. I congratulated him. He thanked me kindly and then ran off toward his bike. After a few meters he turned around once more. "Have a nice day!"

"You too." I watched him cycle off happily. Then I looked at the key still sitting in my own coat pocket. And suddenly I thought: maybe that's why keys are so special. Not because they open doors. But because they remind us that we sometimes search everywhere...

except the place where the answer was lying the whole time. I stayed sitting on the bench a while longer. Not because I was tired. But because that small incident had done more to me than I could explain at that moment. A key. Such a small piece of metal.

Not even two inches long. And yet it can be the difference between inside and outside. Between tension and relief. Between helpless searching and relieved laughter. I thought back to that morning. To myself. To how I had truly searched everywhere. In the kitchen. On the table.

On the counter. Even in the fridge. Except in the place where the key had been the whole time. How often do we actually do that in our lives? We search for calm in a vacation. For happiness in a new job. For validation in other people's opinions.

For love in someone else. For answers in books, podcasts, and trainings. While the most important questions might not lie outside us at all. Maybe they've been much closer the whole time. I walked on. The path curved gently past a small pond. An old willow hung its branches almost into the water. On a bench a woman sat feeding a slice of bread to the ducks.

She smiled as I walked past. I smiled back. Nothing more was needed. Sometimes a smile is enough to briefly connect two strangers. I found myself thinking of all the conversations I've had over the past years. With entrepreneurs. With managers. With people who felt stuck.

Almost everyone eventually asked the same question. "Rob... what should I do?" Remarkably, almost everyone already knew the answer deep down. They weren't looking for a solution. They were looking for permission. Permission to finally

listen to something they'd already been feeling for a long time. That's maybe the special thing about intuition.

It never shouts. It whispers. And that's exactly why we find it so hard to hear. Because the world around us keeps talking louder. I paused for a moment by the pond. A duck dove underwater and surfaced again a few meters further. No hurry. No hesitation.

Just trust. Maybe that's why animals are so calming. They don't try to become someone else. They don't compare themselves. They don't wonder if they're successful enough. They simply are. Nothing more. I looked at my own reflection in the water. The older I get, the less I believe life is about constantly gathering more.

More knowledge. More possessions. More success. More and more I think life actually becomes simpler when you dare to return to what you already knew. Like that boy. He didn't find his key by searching harder. He found it by staying calm and looking.

Maybe that's true for us too. Not just for keys. But for trust. For love. For direction. For who we truly are. When I was almost back at my car, I automatically felt in my coat pocket. There were my keys. I smiled. Not because I'd found them.

But because they had taught me something that day. Since then I sometimes think of that boy when I'm searching for something. Not just for objects. But for answers too. And then I ask myself one simple question. Am I actually searching in the right place?

Because sometimes the door you've been standing in front of for so long... isn't locked at all. You've only forgotten... that the key was in your own inside pocket the whole time.

Bergloper Quote

"Sometimes the answer isn't further away. Sometimes you just need to dare to listen again to what you already know deep inside." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As I felt my keys in my coat pocket, one question stayed with me: which answer are you searching for outside yourself, when deep down you might already know what's true?

Listen along the way

Roxette – "Listen to Your Heart." A song that fits perfectly with the quiet compass inside you that often already knows which direction is right for you.

Walk 19 – The Lantern

It was already late in the afternoon when I decided to take one more short walk. Not far. Just a loop through the old part of the village. The sun was nearly down. The sky slowly colored from soft blue to orange and finally to that deep purple that only lasts a moment. It was as if the day were quietly withdrawing without asking for much attention.

I love that moment. Not quite day. Not quite evening yet. It's as if the world catches its breath. The shops were closed. Here and there I heard the ring of a bicycle bell. A couple sat on a terrace, still talking. Otherwise it was quiet.

When I turned into a narrow street, my eye fell on an old lantern. One of those cast-iron lampposts you almost only see in old village centers anymore. During the day it barely stands out. You walk past it without a thought. But now it slowly began to glow. Not brightly.

Not showily. Just calmly. As if it said, without words: "It's growing dark. I'm here." I stopped for a moment. At that same moment an older man with a small grocery bag came walking my way. He saw me looking at the lantern. "Beautiful things, aren't they," he said.

"Yes," I answered. "You barely notice them in daylight." He smiled. "That's actually just like people." That remark surprised me. "What do you mean?" He set his bag down for a moment. "A lantern barely stands out during the day. Only once it grows dark do you discover how much light it actually gives."

He looked up. "It's often no different with people." His words hung there for a moment. I thought of people I'd met in my life. Not the loudest people. Not the ones who were always in the spotlight. But that one colleague who always stayed calm.

That neighbor who asked every week how my mother was doing. That friend who didn't try to fix anything, but just came and sat beside me when words didn't help for a while. They were the lanterns. Not spotlights. Lanterns. They didn't ask for attention. They gave light.

The man picked up his bag again. "We live in a time when everyone wants to be seen." He smiled kindly. "But do you know who I admire most?" I shook my head. "People who help others without anyone noticing." He pointed at the lantern.

"That post never asks for applause." "And yet almost everyone walks home more safely thanks to its light." I looked again at the warm glow slowly falling over the street. The light wasn't strong enough to illuminate the whole village. But it was exactly enough to make the next few meters visible.

Maybe that's how life works. You don't need to see the whole way. Just the next step. The man wished me a good evening and walked on calmly. I stayed a moment longer. More and more lanterns switched on, one by one.

Not all at once. Each at its own moment. And yet together they lit the whole street. I smiled. Maybe people don't all need to do the same thing either. Maybe it's enough if each of us simply lets our own small piece of light shine. I walked on slowly.

The street grew a little darker with every step. Behind various windows lamps came on. Here and there I heard cutlery tapping against plates. The smell of fresh cooking drifted out from an open kitchen. It was a completely ordinary evening. Maybe beautiful precisely because of that.

As I kept walking, I kept thinking about the old man's words. "A lantern never asks for applause." That stayed with me. We live in a time when almost everything has to be visible. We share our best moments. Our successes. Our travels. Our milestones.

Of course there's nothing wrong with that. But sometimes I wonder how many beautiful things happen every day that no one will ever see. The neighbor who quietly puts his older neighbor's bin out at the curb. The volunteer who pours coffee every week at the care home.

The teacher who stays half an hour after school to help one student. The nurse who holds someone's hand for a moment while no one is watching. No one takes a picture of it. And yet it's exactly those moments that make the world a little lighter. I turned a corner and saw a young woman standing further ahead.

She looked a little uncertain, glancing around. In her hand she held her phone. A moment later she approached an older couple. "May I ask something?" The man smiled immediately. "Of course." "I'm looking for Market Street." He calmly pointed the way. Explained where she needed to go left and right.

The woman thanked him profusely and walked on, visibly relieved. The whole conversation lasted maybe a minute. Nothing more. And yet I stood there watching for a moment. How often are we that kind of lantern for someone else? Not by doing grand things. But simply by pointing the way.

By listening. By encouraging someone. By being present. Maybe we too often think we need to change the world. While helping one person is sometimes already enough. I thought of my own life. Of the people who were a small light for me at important moments.

Some of them probably don't even remember anymore that they said anything. A teacher. A colleague. A friend. A stranger during a walk. One sentence. One conversation. And suddenly I saw something I hadn't seen before. Not a single lantern tries to shine brighter than the next.

They simply do what they were made for. Maybe that's true of people too. You don't have to be the smartest. Not the richest. Not the most famous. Maybe it's enough if, wherever you are, you bring a little light. For one person at a time. When I was almost home, I looked back once more.

The street lay quiet. The lanterns were still burning. No one was looking at them. No one was applauding. And yet they were doing exactly what they were meant to do. Since that evening I look at lanterns differently. They remind me that the greatest influence is often quiet. That kindness needs no spotlight.

And that the world changes not only through people who lead the way. But also through people who, without many words, make the path a little brighter for someone else. Maybe that's enough. Maybe it's even more than enough.

Bergloper Quote

"You don't have to be a spotlight to make a difference. For someone, your small light might be exactly enough to see the next step." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As the lanterns kept burning behind me, one question stayed with me: for whom could you be a small light today, without anyone needing to see it?

Listen along the way

The Rolling Stones – "Shine a Light." A warm song about bringing light for someone else, especially when life feels a little darker.

Walk 20 – The Rainbow

Sometimes you receive the most beautiful gifts at moments when you're not looking for anything at all. That afternoon, rain had been forecast. Not one of those heavy summer downpours that flood the streets, but the soft kind of rain that begins almost unnoticed. First a few drops. Then just enough to make people zip up their coats.

I was almost home when the first drops fell. A woman ahead of me quickened her pace. A cyclist ducked under an awning. Two children ran laughing toward their father, who held his coat over their heads as if he could hold back the whole sky that way.

I smiled. It stayed remarkable how differently people could look at the same rain. One saw a disruption. Another an adventure. I decided not to walk faster. Within a few minutes my coat was wet. And honestly, I didn't mind at all.

Rain has something honest about it. It doesn't ask if it's convenient. It simply falls. For everyone. As I walked on, the sky slowly broke open. The sun showed itself carefully between the clouds. And then it happened. On the horizon a rainbow appeared. Very faint at first.

As if someone had carefully brushed a few colors into the sky. But with every minute the colors grew clearer. Red. Orange. Yellow. Green. Blue. Indigo. Violet. I automatically stopped in my tracks. Not just me. Across the street a young mother stopped her bike.

An older man took his phone out of his coat pocket. Two children pointed enthusiastically at the sky. "Look, Mom!" Everyone looked up. No one knew each other. And yet for a brief moment we shared the same moment. I found that

maybe even more beautiful than the rainbow itself. A few minutes earlier everyone had been hurrying their own way. Now strangers stood silently side by side. Connected by something none of us had any control over. Next to me stood a girl of about ten. She looked up at the sky without blinking. "Beautiful, isn't it?" I asked. She nodded. "Why do rainbows always disappear so fast?"

I had to laugh. "I don't actually know." She thought for a moment. "Maybe so that people don't forget how special they are." I looked at her, surprised. Children sometimes say things adults write whole books about. We kept looking together. Slowly the colors began to fade again.

No one said anything. As if we all understood that some moments become more beautiful when you don't try to hold onto them. I looked up once more. And suddenly I wondered how many rainbows I had missed in my life. Not because they weren't there.

But because I was looking at my phone. Or too busy. Or thought I had somewhere else to be. Maybe that doesn't just happen with rainbows. Maybe it happens with many more beautiful things. The rainbow slowly grew lighter. Not all at once. Not as if someone flipped a switch.

The colors dissolved very gently into the sky, until only a soft glow remained. The girl was still looking up. "Too bad," she said quietly. "Yes," I answered. "But maybe that's exactly the point." She looked at me questioningly. "If a rainbow stayed forever, we'd eventually forget how special it is."

She thought about that for a moment. "Like a birthday?" I smiled. "Yes... actually exactly like a birthday." She laughed, satisfied. "I'm going to tell mom that." A little later her mother called that they needed to move on. She waved at me once more. "Bye!"

"Bye." I watched her until she cycled around the corner. Where the rainbow had stood, only a few light clouds now drifted. And yet it felt as if something had stayed behind. Not in the sky. In me. I walked on.

Slowly. Without hurry. Along the way I thought about how many people are constantly waiting for a big moment. Once I have that job... Once I'm retired... Once the kids are older... Once I have more time... Then I'll enjoy life. Then life will get better.

Maybe that's the biggest mistake we can make. Because life rarely consists of big moments. It consists of thousands of small rainbows. An unexpected smile. A cup of coffee in the morning sun. A hand on your shoulder. A good conversation. The smell of freshly cut grass.

A child who just says hello to you. A walk without a destination. All moments that disappear if you try to grasp them. But that you carry with you forever if you truly experience them. I thought back to my own life. If someone had asked me years ago which days I'd never forget, I probably would have named the big events.

And yet I notice it's the small memories that keep coming back more and more. The walk with my father. An evening when we did nothing special. A laugh from my daughters. A conversation that lasted only ten minutes. Those are life's rainbows. They appear unexpectedly.

They never stay long. But once you've seen them, they sometimes color your memories for years. When I was almost home, I looked back once more. The sky was ordinary blue again. As if nothing had happened. But that wasn't true.

Something had happened. I had paused for a moment. And sometimes that's all it takes to make an ordinary day special. Since that afternoon I look at rainbows differently. Not because I hope to see them more often. But because they remind me that the most beautiful things in life usually can't be planned.

They appear. Just for a moment. Exactly long enough to remind you... that wonder still exists. And maybe that's the greatest gift life gives us now and then.

Bergloper Quote

"Wonder sometimes lasts only a moment. But whoever truly looks can carry that moment for years." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

As the colors faded from the sky, one question stayed with me: which small rainbow in your ordinary day would you almost walk past today if you didn't pause for a moment?

Listen along the way

Israel Kamakawiwo'ole – "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." A gentle, hopeful song that invites you to keep looking for beauty, dreams, and the small wonders that appear unexpectedly.

Walk 21 – The Bridge

Some walks begin before you're even out the front door. That's how it felt that morning. On the kitchen table lay an open notebook. It held a few ideas I'd been carrying around for weeks. A new chapter for a book. A phone call I'd meant to make for far too long. A plan that excited me, but that I kept putting off, day after day.

Not because I had no time. But because I still didn't know exactly how to move forward with it. I closed the front door behind me and decided to give my head a rest. That usually works best for me during a walk. The air was fresh. It had rained that night and the leaves still glistened with the last drops. In the distance I heard a woodpecker tapping against a tree. Otherwise it was quiet. Only my footsteps crunched softly over the shell path.

After about half an hour of walking I came to an old wooden bridge I'd known for years. Really, it was just a simple bridge. No impressive structure. No tourist attraction. Just a bridge over a narrow river connecting two stretches of forest.

I leaned my arms on the wooden railing and looked at the water. It flowed calmly beneath me, as if it had all the time in the world. Water has neither hurry nor doubt, I thought. It simply flows. As I stood there, I heard the soft ring of a bicycle bell behind me.

An older man got off his bike, leaned it against the railing, and came to stand beside me. "Good morning," he said kindly. "Good morning." He too looked silently at the water for a while. After a minute or two he pointed at the bridge. "Funny, really," he said. "What do you mean?"

"Almost everyone who passes here looks toward the other side." I automatically looked the same way. "While no one gets there without first taking a step onto this bridge." I smiled. "May I ask you something?" he said. "Of course." "What are you thinking about?" I had to laugh.

"Is it that obvious?" "A little." I told him I was wrestling with a few choices. That I had all kinds of plans, but kept searching for certainty. As if I only wanted to leave once I knew exactly how the journey would end. He nodded, understanding. "I recognize that."

He looked at the bridge again. "Do you know what's special about a bridge?" I shook my head. "A bridge is built for people who can't yet reach the other side." That sentence landed. Because that's true of so much more in life.

You start a business without any guarantee of success. You write a book without knowing if anyone will ever read it. Almost everything worthwhile begins with a step you have no proof will turn out well. The man smiled.

"When I was young," he said, "I always thought courage meant being afraid of nothing." He looked at his hands for a moment. "Now I know better." I waited. "Courage isn't being afraid of nothing," he continued. "Courage is deciding to walk while you're still afraid."

Those words landed harder than I'd expected. The man looked at the water flowing undisturbed beneath the bridge. "Do you see that river?" he asked. I nodded. "It doesn't wonder either whether it will ever reach the sea. It just flows. Bend after bend. Meter after meter."

We both kept looking in silence. I wondered how much energy I had wasted in my life trying to see the whole route. While the

next step had often already been visible for a long time. "May I ask you something too?" I said. "Of course." "Have you ever regretted a choice?"

He smiled. "Certainly." He glanced toward the other end of the bridge. "But I regret far more the choices I never made." That answer stayed with me. Fortunately I also thought of the moments when I had followed my heart.

I hadn't been able to fully foresee any of those decisions. And yet they had shaped my life. Maybe that's the special thing about a bridge. You see the other side. But only halfway across do you discover a new view. The man picked up his bike. "One more thing," he said.

"When you walk on, don't only look ahead." I looked at him questioningly. "Halfway across, look back too." He got on his bike, raised his hand, and rode slowly down the path. I stood there a while longer. Then I took my first step onto the bridge.

The wood creaked softly under my shoes. Halfway across I stopped, exactly as he'd said. I turned around. The spot where I'd just been standing suddenly seemed surprisingly far away. Not because the bridge was so long. But because one step had unnoticeably led to the next.

And before I knew it, I was halfway, through hundreds of small steps you only see looking back. On the other side I looked back once more. The bridge looked exactly the same as fifteen minutes earlier. Only I didn't. And yet everything felt different.

I no longer needed to know the whole way. Just the next step. While trust maybe begins exactly at the moment we decide to take that first step. Sometimes a bridge isn't only meant to carry you to the other side. Sometimes a bridge is there mainly to let you discover that you were stronger, the whole time, than you thought.

Bergloper Quote

"Trust doesn't begin when you know the whole way, but when you dare to take the first step."
— Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which next step do you actually already know, even if you can't yet see the rest of the route?

Listen along the way

Johnny Nash – "I Can See Clearly Now." Sometimes the way doesn't become clear before you walk, but precisely because you start moving.

Walk 22 – The Backpack

The walk began with a smile. Not because anything remarkable happened, but because I had once again overestimated myself. "Ah," I'd thought at home. "A small bottle of water, an apple, a raincoat... that's all I need today." Yet after fifteen minutes of walking, my backpack felt as if I'd set off on an expedition to the Himalayas.

I set it down for a moment. "It gets heavier every year too," I muttered aloud. "Or you get older every year." I turned around, laughing. A woman of about sixty was walking my way with two trekking poles. She'd clearly heard what I said.

"That's also a possibility," I answered. She burst out laughing. "Don't worry. I've been having this conversation with my own backpack for twenty years." We walked on together for a while. The path wound through an old beech forest. The sun broke through the canopy now and then, leaving golden patches on the ground. In the distance I heard a woodpecker. Otherwise it was quiet.

The kind of silence that naturally slows your steps. After a few minutes the woman pointed at my backpack. "What's in there?" "Not much." "That's what most people say." She looked at me knowingly. "Until they open it up." I found that a nice observation. Because it's true not just for a backpack.

For people too. From the outside it sometimes looks as if someone moves lightly through life. Until you discover how much they're actually carrying. We came to a wooden bench overlooking an open field. Without discussing it, we both sat down.

She set her backpack down beside her. "May I ask you something?" "Of course." "What are you worrying about most right now?" I had to think for a moment. Actually, I knew the answer right away. About plans. About the future. About everything I still wanted to do.

About whether I was making the right choices. She nodded. "And can you change any of that today?" I looked out over the field. A few geese walked calmly through the tall grass. They had no idea what day it was. No idea how much money was in their account.

No idea what would happen next week. And yet they seemed remarkably relaxed. "Probably not," I answered. "Then why are you already carrying it today?" That question hung between us for a moment. She picked up her backpack and set it on her lap.

"You know," she said, "most people think their backpack is heavy because of what's in it." She unzipped it. "But it often becomes heavy because of everything that could have come out long ago." She pulled out an old hiking map. "I haven't used this in years."

Then a small flashlight. "Doesn't even work anymore." Then a folded plastic rain poncho. "I've bought three new ones since." She had to laugh at herself. "Funny, really." I watched as she laid the items out on the bench one by one. "Apparently I've been dragging things around for years that I don't need at all anymore."

She looked at me. "And I think you're doing the same." I said nothing. Because I felt she might be right. She began calmly putting the things back. Not everything. The old hiking map stayed on the bench. So did the broken flashlight.

"Those can go," she said, smiling. "They've done their job." That last sentence struck me. They've done their job. How often do we hold onto

things that have already done their job long ago? A belief that was once needed to protect yourself. A disappointment that made you cautious.

A guilt that was once understandable, but by now mostly keeps you small. An expectation from someone else that you've been trying to live up to for years. We often carry it because it once belonged to us. Not because it's still needed today. I looked at my own backpack. Literally there wasn't much in it. But in my head I could suddenly point to a whole collection of old items that had never appeared on any packing list.

The need to do everything right. The tendency to think ahead. A few disappointments I had neatly tucked away, but apparently was still dragging along. The woman looked at the small pile on the bench. "You don't have to throw everything away," she said. "Some things you just don't need to carry every day anymore."

I found that maybe even more beautiful. Letting go doesn't mean something was never important. Sometimes it simply means it has done its job. We stood up. She left the broken flashlight and the old map by the bin at the start of the path. Then she put her backpack back on.

"And?" I asked. She moved her shoulders a few times. "Funny. It's barely lighter." She smiled. "But it does feel lighter." We walked a bit further together. At a fork in the path we said goodbye. She left, I right. After a few hundred meters I set my own backpack down for a moment. I didn't take anything out.

And yet I thought about the things I no longer had to carry every day. Maybe a person doesn't become free because nothing heavy ever happens again. Maybe they become free once they learn to choose what still needs to come along today, and what may finally be left behind. I put the backpack on again and walked on. The path hadn't changed.

But my shoulders felt different.

Bergloper Quote

"Some things have done their job. You're allowed to thank them, and then leave them behind."
— Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

What are you still carrying with you, even though it might have done its job in your life long ago?

Listen along the way

The Band – "The Weight." A song that fits beautifully with the question of how much weight we sometimes carry that no longer needs to be ours.

Walk 23 – The View

There are walks you take to clear your head. You put on your walking shoes, close the door behind you, and trust that nature will do the rest. You don't think about the route. You just walk. Often those are exactly the walks that give you the most.

This morning began that way too. After a few hundred meters the path slowly began to climb. Barely noticeable at first. Then a little steeper. I smiled. Hills have a special talent. From below they always seem friendly. Halfway up they suddenly change their mind. I felt my breathing quicken slightly. Not dramatically, but just enough to remind me that I wasn't thirty anymore. And yet there was something beautiful in that too. Every step upward felt like something I'd earned.

I walked on. The climb grew a little steeper. My legs slowly began to warm up. My thoughts, meanwhile, grew quieter. That remains a curious phenomenon. The harder your body has to work, the quieter it often becomes in your head. After a few more minutes I saw a wooden bench. An older man sat there. His backpack stood beside him. On his lap lay a lunchbox that had clearly been up many mountains before. He calmly ate a sandwich while looking out over the valley.

I sat down next to him. Not only to catch my breath, though that helped too, of course. Sometimes a bench simply invites you to not have to do anything for a moment. "Special, isn't it," the man said eventually. "Yes," I answered. "That's what you climb for, really." I nodded.

"The view makes up for a lot." He smiled. "Most people think that." I looked at him questioningly. "What do you mean by that?" He closed his lunchbox and set it beside him. "Most hikers think the best view is at the top of the hill." "And isn't it?"

He shook his head slowly. "Not always." He stood up, took his walking stick, and walked a few steps to the edge of the path. "Come here for a moment." I followed him. He pointed behind us. "Tell me," he said calmly. "What do you see?" "And?" he asked.

"I see the path." He smiled. "Look more closely." Slowly I began to see more and more details. "Incredible," I said quietly. "I hadn't realized I was already this high up." The man nodded. "That's exactly what I mean." He paused for a moment before continuing.

"We almost always look at what still lies ahead of us." He pointed at the top of the hill. "That's where we want to go." Then he turned back around. "But because of that we often forget how far we've already come." His words stayed with me. I looked down again.

Suddenly I saw not just the landscape. I saw my own walk. Every meter I had unknowingly already covered. I'd spent the whole time thinking I still had a long way to go. But really, I'd already covered an enormous distance. Maybe we do that in everyday life too.

We constantly focus our attention on what's still missing. We look upward so often toward the next peak that we forget to look back at all the mountains we've already climbed. But now that I looked back on it, I realized how much strength those periods had ultimately given me.

The man seemed to read my thoughts. "You know," he said. "Most people celebrate their final destination." He smiled. "But almost no one celebrates the road that got them there." The man picked up his backpack. "I'll walk on." I looked at him. "May I ask you something?"

"Of course." "How do you know all this?" He smiled broadly. "Because for years I only looked upward." He swung his backpack on. "And because of that I forgot to enjoy everything that already lay behind me." Then he walked on calmly. His walking stick tapped the same steady rhythm on the path as his words still walked through my head.

But because for the first time I truly saw how much beauty lay behind me. Not only in the landscape. In my own life too. Until one day you look back... and suddenly discover how far you've actually come. I stood up. The summit still lay a few hundred meters ahead.

Remarkably, the climb suddenly felt much lighter. Not because the hill had become less steep. But because I finally realized I was no longer standing at the bottom. When I finally reached the top, I looked out over forests, rivers, meadows, and small villages. The view was truly breathtaking.

And yet I had to smile. Because deep down I now knew that the most beautiful view hadn't been created at the top of the hill. It had begun the moment someone invited me... to turn around. In life too. When I think I'm still far from where I want to be, I deliberately look back for a moment.

At the dreams that have since become reality. And every time I discover the same thing again. I may not yet be at my final destination. But I've already come much further than I ever dared to hope. And that realization... might just be the most beautiful view a person could wish for.

Bergloper Quote

"Don't forget to only look up along the way. Turn around now and then and admire the road you've already traveled." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When did you last deliberately pause to consider everything you've already achieved, instead of only looking at what's still missing?

Listen along the way

Miley Cyrus – "The Climb." It's not only the destination that counts. It's the road, the effort, and everything you learn along the way that make the climb worthwhile.

Walk 24 – The Mirror

I was walking through an old village I normally only cycle through. Narrow streets, crooked facades, a bakery on the corner, and those little shops you can never quite tell are open. That morning I was in no hurry. That helps. Things you'd otherwise walk right past suddenly get the chance to catch your eye.

In front of a small antique shop stood a large mirror leaning against the wall. A wooden frame, dark brown, damaged here and there. At the top there was a small crack in the glass. Not big enough to make the mirror unusable. But big enough to see it had already lived a life.

I stopped. Not because I urgently needed to check my hair. That stage, thankfully, I've mostly left behind me. Though it helps that there's less and less hair left to argue with. I looked at myself. Walking shoes. Coat half open. A few grey hairs that could no longer be denied. Wrinkles around my eyes. Some I'd earned by laughing. Others probably by worrying about things that, in hindsight, turned out not to matter much at all.

"It's honest with everyone," a voice said behind me. I turned around. In the doorway stood an older woman. She wore a dark apron and had glasses hanging from a cord around her neck. "The mirror?" I asked. She nodded. "People look into it and usually see, first, what they don't like about themselves."

I looked at my reflection again. "That sounds familiar." "A shame, really," she said. "A mirror has no opinion about that at all." I found that a beautiful sentence. A mirror has no opinion. It doesn't say you're too old. Not successful enough. Too heavy, too thin, too tired, too insecure, or too late. We add that story ourselves.

The woman came and stood beside me. "Do you know how old this mirror is?" I shook my head. "Almost a hundred years. It's seen thousands of people. Brides. Children. Soldiers. People in love. People grieving. People who thought they had it all figured out, and people who had no idea how to move forward."

She ran her hand over the wooden frame. "And do you know what's funny?" "Tell me." "No one stayed the same." I looked at her. "The person looking in the mirror today won't exist in exactly the same way in ten years. And yet we sometimes act as if one moment defines who we are."

That landed. How often do we stick a label on ourselves based on one difficult period? I'm insecure. I've failed. I'm not good enough. As if one chapter is suddenly the whole book. I thought of versions of myself I had left behind along the way. The young Rob who thought he had to keep everyone happy. The entrepreneur who thought success mainly meant you always had to keep going. The man who was sometimes harder on himself than he'd ever be on anyone else.

They had all been real. But none of them was the whole story. "Look again," the woman said. I looked. "What do you see now?" I wanted to say something funny. But I stayed quiet. I still saw the same coat. The same wrinkles. The same eyes. I just looked differently.

"Someone who's on their way," I said finally. She smiled. "That seems like a fine answer to me." At that moment a girl walked by with her father. She stopped in front of the mirror too. She made a silly face, stuck out her tongue, and started laughing. Her father did the same. Within three seconds two people were standing in the middle of the street making faces at themselves.

I had to laugh. "Children understand mirrors better," the woman said. "How do you mean?" "They look to recognize themselves. Not to judge themselves." I had little to argue with that. I thanked her and walked on. A few streets later I glanced briefly at my reflection again in a shop window. Normally I would have barely looked. Now I thought of her words.

Maybe getting to know yourself isn't the same as constantly analyzing yourself. Maybe it begins with daring to look kindly at whoever is standing in front of you today. With everything that went well. With everything that still feels rough. With the scars, the humor, the lessons, and the parts still in progress. Because a person isn't a photograph. A person is a story that keeps moving. And maybe the question, then, doesn't need to be: am I satisfied with what I see in the mirror? Maybe a far more beautiful question is: can I look with love at the person I've become along the way?

Bergloper Quote

"A mirror shows you what you look like. Only you can learn to see who you've become along the way." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

If you looked at yourself today without judgment, which part of the person you've become might you give a little more appreciation?

Listen along the way

Michael Jackson – "Man in the Mirror." A powerful song about change that doesn't begin outside yourself, but with the person you meet in the mirror every day.

Walk 25 – The Sun

Some people love the sun because it brings warmth. Others because everything looks more beautiful when the light shines. I myself have come to appreciate her mostly because she teaches me something I never understood before. That every day is allowed to begin again. That morning, the alarm didn't go off.

It didn't need to. I woke up on my own. When I opened the curtains, the sky was still dark blue. On the horizon a thin orange stripe appeared. It was one of those moments when the night slowly realizes its shift is over. I made a cup of coffee, put on my walking shoes, and stepped outside.

Slowly I walked along a narrow forest path toward an open heath. I knew that spot. From there you could watch the sunrise beautifully. When I reached the open field, I saw I wasn't the only one. A man stood with a camera on a tripod. His backpack lay beside him in the sand. He wasn't looking through his lens. He was looking at the horizon. "Good morning," I said. He turned and smiled. "Good morning." "Beautiful spot." "I thought so too." I stopped a few meters away. We said nothing more. We didn't need to. Some moments are too beautiful to fill with talk.

Slowly the first edge of the sun appeared above the horizon. As if it first asked permission to begin the new day. Within a few minutes the whole world changed color. I heard the man softly operating his camera. Click. Once more. And then no more.

He took the camera off the tripod. "That's enough now." I looked at him, surprised. "But the sun's still rising." He laughed. "That's true." "Why do you stop, then?" He calmly packed up his camera. "Because I don't need to capture everything."

"We're so busy taking photos these days," he continued, "that we sometimes forget to actually look." How often do we grab our phones the moment something is beautiful? While some memories become stronger exactly when you don't try to hold onto them. The man sat down on a large piece of log.

"Sit down." I sat beside him. Ahead of us the sun slowly rose further above the horizon. "May I ask you something?" "Of course." "Why do you come to watch the sunrise so often?" He thought for a moment. "I used to come to take photos." He smiled. "Nowadays I come mostly to listen."

I looked at him, surprised. "To what?" He looked at the slowly rising sun. "To what the new day wants to tell me." I had to laugh. "And does the sun tell you something?" He nodded slowly. "Every morning." I looked at the horizon again. "Really?" He pointed at the first warm light that was beginning to fill the whole landscape.

"See that?" "Yes." He paused for a moment. "For the sun, every new day is a new chance." Those words landed unexpectedly deep. I looked silently at the landscape growing warmer and warmer. Maybe that was indeed the special thing about every sunrise. Not that the sun rises. It does that every day, after all. But that it begins again every day...

without carrying yesterday along. I looked at the horizon, where the last bit of morning mist slowly dissolved into the warm light. Birds flew back and forth, as if they too felt the day had officially begun. The grass still glistened with dew, but I knew the sun would make those drops disappear within an hour.

"May I ask you something personal?" I asked. He nodded kindly. "Of course." "Do you really come here every week?" He smiled. "Almost." "Why?" He looked at his hands for a moment before answering. "Because for years I lived as if every day were the same." I looked at him questioningly.

"Get up. Work. Rush. Solve problems. Go home again. Sleep. And again." He shook his head slowly. "I almost never saw the sun rise." "Until my wife became seriously ill." He spoke calmly. Without drama. As if he'd learned by now how to carry the story. "During her illness, we often sat together by the window."

He looked at the horizon again. "One morning she said to me: 'Look how special it actually is that the sun comes back every single day. Why do we humans so often think we don't deserve a second chance?'" How harsh can we sometimes be with ourselves?

As if yesterday matters more than today. The man slowly stood up. "My wife has since passed away." He said it with love. Not with bitterness. "But every time I stand here..." He looked at the rising sun. "...she reminds me that a new day never asks what went wrong yesterday."

I looked silently ahead of me. Maybe that's the greatest power of nature. The man picked up his backpack. "I'll move on." "Thank you," I said. He smiled. "No." He glanced upward for a moment. "Thank the sun." I had to laugh. He raised his hand and walked calmly down the heath path.

His silhouette grew smaller and smaller, until he finally disappeared among the trees. Not because the world had changed. But because the light had changed. And suddenly I understood something. Maybe that happens in our lives too. Sometimes our circumstances don't need to change right away. Sometimes a different way of looking is already enough.

A little more hope. A little more trust. A little more light. I continued my walk. Since that morning I try to begin every new day the way the sun does. Not by denying yesterday. But by no longer letting yesterday be the boss of today.

Because every morning, when the first rays of sunlight touch the earth, nature seems to softly whisper the same thing: you're allowed to begin again. Not because you did everything right. But because life gives you that chance again. And maybe... that's the most beautiful gift every sunrise gives us.

Bergloper Quote

"The sun doesn't ask who you were yesterday. Every morning, it invites you to begin again." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

If you could truly begin again today, without carrying the weight of yesterday, what first step would you take?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "Here Comes the Sun." Sometimes one ray of light is enough to discover that a new morning is always waiting for you.

Walk 26 – The Detour

There are days when everything goes according to plan. You know where you're going, which route you're taking, and roughly what time you'll be home again. That gives peace of mind. At least, that's what we think. But life has a curious habit. Precisely on the days when you think you have everything under control, it decides to chart a different route for you.

That morning I wanted to take a walk through a nature reserve I'd visited dozens of times. I knew almost every bend, every bench, and every old oak. It was the kind of route where you barely needed to look at the signs anymore. My legs knew the way almost on their own.

The sky was bright blue. A gentle breeze rustled the leaves softly. It smelled of pine needles, warm sand, and freshly cut grass. In the distance I heard a woodpecker tirelessly tapping against a tree. It felt as if nature was showing me its friendliest side.

I walked relaxed. Without hurry. Without a goal, except to enjoy myself. After about forty-five minutes I arrived at a crossing of forest paths. To my surprise, a large wooden sign hung there. PATH CLOSED. Due to maintenance work. I looked again. No, no mistake. The path I always walked was really closed.

"You can't be serious," I muttered. I checked the map. An alternative route was marked. Two kilometers longer. And honestly, it looked a lot less appealing. For a moment I felt a flicker of irritation. Why today of all days? Why this path? I had to laugh at myself.

How quickly can we get worked up over something that's barely even a problem? After a brief hesitation I took the alternative path anyway. It felt strange. As if I'd had a meeting with an old friend and someone had decided, at the last moment, to change the meeting place.

The first few hundred meters were, frankly, nothing special. A wide sandy path. Few trees. No beautiful views. I started wondering why I was even taking this route. Maybe I should have just turned back. Just as I thought that, I heard the soft ripple of water somewhere to my right.

Curious, I turned down a small side path. Before I'd gone even a hundred meters, I suddenly stood at the edge of a beautiful little lake. I'd never stood here before. The water lay hidden among tall birches and old willows. White water lilies floated calmly on the surface. A family of ducks traced small V-shapes through the mirror-smooth water. Dragonflies shot across the lake like blue arrows.

I stopped. How was it possible I'd never discovered this place before? I'd lived nearby for years. I'd walked this area dozens of times. And yet... I had completely missed this spot. As I looked around, I saw a man sitting on a small wooden jetty.

A simple bamboo fishing rod rested relaxed in his hands. Beside him stood an old thermos. He seemed to be in no hurry at all. "Good morning," I called out. He looked up and smiled. "Good morning." "Beautiful spot." He looked around. "I think so too." "Do you come here often?"

"For more than twenty years now." I looked at him, surprised. "Twenty years?" He nodded. "Almost no one knows about this place." I told him I'd walked here dozens of times without ever seeing this little lake. He started laughing. "That doesn't surprise me at all." "Why not?" "Because most people always walk the same route."

He had a point there. We like to choose certainty. Familiar roads. Fixed patterns. That feels safe. But because of it we sometimes miss exactly what lies outside our familiar route. I sat down beside him on the jetty. He pulled two small cups out of his bag.

"Coffee?" "Please." He poured two cups calmly. We looked out over the water in silence. After a few minutes he said, "Do you know what's special about detours?" I shook my head. He smiled. "They almost never take you where you thought you'd end up."

He took a sip of coffee. "But often exactly where you needed to be." I looked out over the still lake. His words felt simple. And at the same time... as if there was much more behind them than just a walk. I let his words slowly sink in. "They almost never take you where you thought you'd end up. But often exactly where you needed to be."

Ahead of us a swan glided silently across the water. Behind her followed five young swans in a neat row. The water closed behind them again, as if their presence was only meant to be visible for a brief moment. "Do you really believe that?" I asked. He nodded. "More than ever."

He set his cup down beside him and looked at the horizon. "When I was young, I had my whole life mapped out." I smiled. "Sounds familiar." "Me too," he continued. "A good job, a nice house, a healthy family. Everything went according to plan." He paused for a moment.

"Until nothing went according to plan anymore." I said nothing. Some stories deserve silence before they're told. "My business went bankrupt." He breathed calmly. "A year later my brother died. And shortly after that my marriage fell apart." He didn't look sad. He looked grateful. "At the time I thought my life was one big failure."

He smiled softly. "Now I know it was a detour." I looked at him questioningly. "What do you mean by that?" He pointed at the little lake. "If none of that had happened, I would never have ended up here." He told me that after his divorce he'd moved to a smaller place, closer to nature. He'd started volunteering, met new people, and eventually even found love again.

"Not despite that detour," he said. "But thanks to that detour." Those words struck me. Because how often do we judge an event while we're still in the middle of the story? We call something a setback. A failure. A loss. While we have no idea where that event will ultimately lead us.

I thought back to my own life. There were jobs I badly wanted and didn't get. Relationships I thought would last forever. Plans that completely fell apart. At the time it felt like a door was closing forever. But looking back now...

many of those closed doors led me to the most beautiful chapters of my life. Not right away. Sometimes only years later. The fisherman smiled. "Do you know the difference between getting lost and discovering?" I shook my head. "Getting lost feels unpleasant." He looked around.

"Discovering feels special." He laughed. "Often it's exactly the same situation." I had to laugh out loud. How true that was. How often don't we say: "I went the wrong way." While along the way we might discover the most beautiful village, the coziest restaurant, or the most impressive view.

Maybe the name we give something matters more than the event itself. He slowly stood up. "I'm going to pack up my rod." "Catch anything?" I asked. He looked into his empty bucket. "No." He smiled broadly. "But I did have a wonderful morning."

I burst out laughing. That answer was maybe even more beautiful than a full bucket of fish. Not everything has to yield something. Some moments are their own reward. Before he left, he turned around once more. "Remember one thing." I looked at him.

"When life changes your route..." He pointed at the narrow path that had brought me here. "...don't walk straight back grumbling." He smiled. "Maybe something is waiting further along that you don't even know exists yet." Then he walked away calmly.

I stayed sitting on the jetty for a while. The wind stroked softly over the water. A kingfisher shot past the bank like a blue flash. In the distance I heard a woodpecker drumming. I realized I would never have seen all that beauty if the familiar path hadn't been closed.

That thought stayed with me for the rest of the walk. How many opportunities do we actually miss because we stubbornly stick to our original route? How many encounters never happen because we're afraid of something new? How many dreams do we give up because they don't unfold the way we planned?

Maybe a detour isn't a mistake at all. Maybe it's an invitation. An invitation to discover something outside our familiar world. When I finally got back to my car, I looked back once more. The closed path was still there.

But I no longer felt any irritation at all. Quite the opposite. I was even grateful for it. Because precisely because my plan didn't go through... this walk got a destination I could never have thought up myself. Since then I try to look differently at unexpected turns. Not right away with resistance.

But with curiosity. Because every time life closes a door or changes a route, I ask myself the same question: what special place is this detour actually trying to let me discover?

Bergloper Quote

"A detour is rarely a mistake. Often it's the route where life has hidden your greatest lessons."
— Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which detour in your life once seemed like a disappointment, but turned out, in hindsight, to be an unexpected gift?

Listen along the way

Rascal Flatts – "Bless the Broken Road." Sometimes it's precisely the road you never would have chosen that leads you to the destination your heart was searching for all along.

Walk 27 – The Backpack That Was Too Heavy

Every hiker knows the feeling. You pack your backpack at home wanting to be well prepared. A bottle of water, a sandwich, a raincoat just in case, an extra sweater, a first-aid kit, maybe a flashlight and a power bank. Before you know it, that backpack has grown heavier than you'd actually planned.

And yet you bring it all along. You never know, after all. On a crisp autumn morning I stood at the start of a walk through a vast nature reserve. The trees were slowly beginning to change color. Green leaves were making way for shades of yellow, orange, and deep red. The ground was scattered with chestnuts and beechnuts. Every step on the forest path came with the soft crunch of fallen leaves.

There was a smell of damp earth, moss, and pine needles. It was the kind of morning that naturally slows your walk. I swung my backpack on. It felt remarkably heavy. "What did I put in there?" I muttered, laughing. Curious, I opened it. Two bottles of water.

A raincoat. A thick sweater. Gloves. A thermos of coffee. Two sandwiches. A bag of nuts. A book. My notebook. A charger. A first-aid kit. And even an umbrella. I shook my head, smiling. Apparently I was expecting a three-day expedition, while I'd be walking a few hours at most.

I walked on. After about half an hour I began to feel the backpack more and more clearly. Not painfully. But present. With every incline it tugged lightly at my shoulders. I set it down on a bench for a moment. How unnecessarily can a person burden themselves.

As I took off my coat, I heard someone whistling. From the opposite direction came a young woman. She wore light hiking shoes. No backpack. Just a small water bottle in her hand. "Good morning." "Good morning." She looked at my backpack, laughing. "Going far away?" I burst out laughing.

"Seems that way." "How heavy is it?" "No idea." She lifted it carefully. "Ooh." She looked at me, laughing. "I think you're prepared for a vacation." "Maybe a little excessive." "A little?" We both had to laugh. "Why do you bring so much?" she asked.

I thought for a moment. "Honestly..." "...just in case." She nodded. "Most people do that." She glanced at her own water bottle. "I used to too." "And now?" "Now I only bring what I actually need today." That sounded simpler than it probably was.

We decided to walk together for a while. She told me she walked almost every weekend. Not to rack up kilometers. But to clear her head. "I used to always think ahead." "What do you mean?" "I carried worries everywhere with me." She smiled. "Not just in my backpack."

"In my head too." That sentence stayed with me for a moment. Because as we walked on, I realized my backpack might not be the heaviest thing people carry every day at all. We carry conversations with us that took place years ago. Regret. Disappointments. Words left unsaid. Guilt. Fear of tomorrow.

Yesterday's grief. And meanwhile we wonder why life sometimes feels so heavy. After a while we came to a small wooden bridge over a narrow stream. The water flowed clear between the stones. She stopped in the middle of the bridge. "May I show you something?"

"Of course." She picked up a small stone from the railing. "What does this weigh?" "Almost nothing." She held the stone on her outstretched hand. "How long do you think I can hold this without effort?" "A few minutes, easily." She nodded. "And an hour?" "Then it gets annoying."

"A whole day?" I smiled. "Then it gets heavy." She set the stone back down. "Exactly." She looked at me. "Not because the stone gets heavier." "...but because you keep holding onto it too long." I looked silently at the rippling water beneath us. Slowly I began to understand that this conversation wasn't about my backpack at all.

I let my gaze follow the flowing water. The stream had no trouble letting go. It held onto nothing. No leaves. No branches. No rain from yesterday. Everything that had had its time was allowed to keep flowing on. Maybe that was exactly why the water stayed so clear.

We walked on slowly. My backpack suddenly felt heavier than it had a few minutes before. Not because anything had been added. But because I had become aware of everything I was actually carrying. "A few years ago," the young woman told me, "I became incredibly angry at someone close to me."

She looked ahead as we walked along the forest path. "I carried that anger for years." "Was it ever spoken about?" I asked. She shook her head. "No." "Why not?" "Because I felt the other person should apologize first." She smiled faintly. "Eventually I discovered that mostly I was keeping myself imprisoned."

Those words landed. How often don't we wait for apologies? For recognition. For justice. While the person we're waiting for has sometimes already moved on long ago. And we... we keep carrying the burden. We came past

an open spot where a large oak stood. Beneath the tree lay an old tree stump.

We sat down on it. I set my backpack beside me. How good that felt. My shoulders relaxed immediately. The woman looked at my backpack, smiling. "Do you feel the difference?" I nodded. "And yet," she said, "you've only set it down for a moment." That got me thinking.

Maybe we don't need to be rid of some burdens forever right away. Maybe it already helps when we set them down now and then. Just breathe for a moment. Take some distance for a moment. Not have to carry everything for a moment. I thought back to the difficult periods in my own life. To worries that kept me awake at night.

To conversations I replayed a hundred times in my head. To mistakes I blamed myself for much longer than necessary. Remarkably, most of those worries had disappeared by now. Not because I had solved them. But because time had taught me that not everything needs to be carried forever.

The woman bent down and picked up a yellowed autumn leaf. She held it between her fingers. "Look at this." A small gust of wind swept past us. The leaf let itself be carried along without resistance. "That leaf trusts that the wind knows where it's going."

She looked at me. "Why do we trust life so little?" I smiled. Good question. Maybe because we want to control everything. We plan. We predict. We prepare. And meanwhile we forget that some things only become visible once we dare to let go. We stood up again.

I put my backpack back on. This time it still felt heavy. But lighter too. Not because its weight had changed. But because my

thoughts had changed. At the edge of the forest stood a bin. I opened my backpack. To my own surprise I took a few things out. The second bottle of water. The thick sweater. The umbrella. A few items I knew I wouldn't need today. I put them in the car, which was parked near the exit of the nature reserve. As I walked on, I noticed the difference immediately.

My shoulders moved more freely. My step grew lighter. I had to laugh. How remarkable, really. A few kilos less... and the whole walk felt different. Maybe that's true of life too. Not every burden needs to be carried today. Not every worry deserves a place in our backpack.

Not every old story needs to be told again tomorrow. Sometimes freedom doesn't begin with receiving more. But with carrying less. When we said goodbye, the young woman gave me a kind smile. "Don't forget to look in your backpack now and then." "I will."

"Not just the one on your back." She tapped gently against her heart. "This one too." Then she walked on calmly. I watched her go for a moment. That afternoon I walked on through the forest. The autumn sun broke through the canopy now and then. Golden leaves drifted slowly to the ground.

As if the trees were showing me, one by one, what letting go looks like. No struggle. No fear. No regret. Just trust that after every season a new spring comes again. Since that walk I pack my backpack differently. Not only before I go for a walk. Also before I begin a new day.

Because every morning I ask myself the same simple question: what do I consciously bring with me today... and what may finally be left behind?

Bergloper Quote

"Life doesn't always grow lighter because you become stronger. Sometimes it grows lighter because you finally decide to stop carrying something." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which thought, disappointment, or worry have you been carrying with you for far too long, when you could set it down today?

Listen along the way

Maria Mena – "Just Hold Me." Sometimes real freedom doesn't begin with holding on, but with learning to let go with love.

Walk 28 – The Man on the Bridge

There are bridges that connect rivers. Bridges that bring villages closer together. And bridges you walk over thoughtlessly without ever really looking at them. But sometimes you meet a bridge that stops you in your tracks. Not because of its beauty. But because of what it makes you realize.

It was a quiet late-summer morning when I decided to take a walk along an old river that had been carving its way through the landscape for centuries. The sun still hung low, casting long shadows over the grasslands. A thin mist hung over the water, making the world briefly soft and mysterious.

The path followed the river for miles. To my left the water rippled calmly by. To my right lay meadows where cows grazed lazily. Now and then I heard the soft ring of a cowbell. A blue heron rose from the reeds and disappeared silently downstream.

It was one of those mornings when nature seemed to know no hurry. And because of that, I too began to walk more slowly. After about an hour of walking I saw an old wooden bridge appear in the distance. It wasn't large. Not impressive. No architectural masterpiece.

Quite the opposite. The wooden planks were weathered by wind and rain. Here and there a crack showed in the wood. The railing had visibly been repaired. And yet the bridge radiated something that spoke to me immediately. For years it had faithfully done what it was built for. Carrying people safely to the other side.

I stepped onto the bridge. Halfway across I stopped. Below me the water flowed on undisturbed. Never the same. Always in motion. I leaned against the wooden railing and looked down. Suddenly I heard a friendly voice behind me. "Beautiful, isn't it?" I turned around.

An older man was walking slowly up, pushing a bike. His grey hair stuck out from under a weathered cap. On his rear rack lay a fishing rod and a small picnic basket. "Good morning." "Good morning." He stood beside me and, like me, looked at the water. "I've been coming here for more than forty years." I looked at him, surprised. "Then you must know this bridge very well." He smiled. "Better than my own living room."

We both had to laugh. "Why this bridge in particular?" I asked. He thought for a moment. "Because I always stop here for a while." "Always?" He nodded. "Yes." "Why?" He placed his hand on the old wooden railing. "Because a bridge reminds me that sometimes you have to cross something in order to move forward." Those words hung between us for a moment. I looked at the water again. Really, a bridge didn't do anything remarkable.

It simply lay there. Day after day. Year after year. And yet it changed lives. Everyone who used it ended up somewhere different from where they started. The man looked toward the other side. "Do you know what's special?" I shook my head. "Almost no one stays living on a bridge."

I smiled. "Thankfully not." He laughed. "No." "A bridge is meant to be crossed." He looked at me for a moment. "Not to stay standing halfway." I felt right away that he wasn't only talking about wood and water. How often do we get stuck between past and future?

Between an old job and a new challenge. Between grief and recovery. Between fear and trust. We've taken the first step. But we don't yet dare take the second. We stay standing in the middle of the bridge. No longer on one side. But not yet on the other either.

The man pointed at the river. "Look closely." I followed his gaze. The water never collided with the bridge. It simply flowed underneath it. "See that?" he asked. I nodded. "The river doesn't hold onto what lies behind it." He smiled.

"Maybe that's why it always eventually reaches the sea." I looked silently at the flowing water. And slowly I began to suspect that this old bridge would do much more to me today... than just carry me to the other side. I kept looking at the water over the railing for a while.

The river seemed to worry about nothing. It didn't flow faster because a bend was coming. It didn't look back at the kilometers it had already covered. It simply did what a river has done for thousands of years. Flow. The older man seemed to guess my thoughts.

"Nature doubts far less than we do." I looked at him. "What do you mean by that?" He smiled. "A seed doesn't wonder whether it can become a tree." "Spring doesn't ask itself whether it will begin this year." He pointed at the river.

"And water never asks permission to keep flowing." I had to laugh. "That actually sounds very logical." "It is." He looked at me kindly. "Only people tend to make it complicated." His words kept ringing in my head. How much energy do we spend on doubting?

Should I take that new job? Should I have that conversation? Am I good enough? What if it fails? What will others think? And meanwhile... we stay standing. Not because the bridge is unsafe. But because we're afraid of the other side. We walked on together to the end of the bridge.

There the man stopped again. "See this difference?" I looked back. On one side lay the path I'd come from. On the other side ran a narrow winding path between old pollard willows and blooming flower fields. It looked as if almost no one used this route.

"Which side do you normally choose?" he asked. "Probably the familiar one." He nodded. "Most people do." He smiled. "And yet the most beautiful discoveries often lie on the other side." We decided to follow the unknown path together. It was narrower than I'd expected.

Now and then I had to duck under low-hanging branches. Here and there blackberry bushes grew across the path. And yet it felt as if every bend revealed something new. An old watermill. A field full of poppies. A kingfisher that shot across the water like a blue flash.

I suddenly understood why the man liked coming here so much. After a while we reached a small wooden bench overlooking the river. He sat down. "May I tell you something?" "Of course." He looked out over the water. "Years ago, after my wife passed away, I could barely bring myself to look ahead."

His voice grew softer. "I really just stayed standing in the same spot." He smiled sadly. "Like someone who stays waiting in the middle of a bridge." I listened attentively. "Until my granddaughter took me for a walk one day." He glanced upward for a moment. "Then she said something I've never forgotten."

He laughed. "She was only seven." "What did she say?" He looked at me. "'Grandpa, Grandma wouldn't want you to always stay standing on the bridge, would she?'" He fell silent. His eyes grew moist. "That one little sentence changed my life." I felt my throat tighten for a moment.

What wisdom. From the mouth of a child. Maybe love isn't holding on to someone. Maybe love is also giving the other person permission to keep living. We sat side by side in silence for a while. The sun was now high in the sky. A gentle wind moved through the poplars.

Across the river a young family cycled past. Life went on. As it always does. The man slowly stood up. "I need to head home." He picked up his bike. "May I give you one more thing?" "Please." He put his hand on my shoulder for a moment.

"Never stay standing on a bridge longer than necessary." I looked at him questioningly. "Say goodbye to what lies behind you." He pointed at the path ahead of us. "And trust what's still to come." Then he got on his bike and rode off calmly.

I stayed behind alone. Once more I walked back to the middle of the bridge. I looked toward the side I'd come from. There lay memories. Experiences. Beautiful moments. But also grief. Disappointments. Missed opportunities. Then I looked toward the other side. I didn't know exactly what was waiting for me there.

And maybe I didn't need to know that at all. Because every new step begins with the same simple decision. Not staying standing. But moving on. Since that walk I look at bridges differently. They connect not only two banks. They connect past and future too.

They remind me that every change requires courage. But also that no one grows by staying eternally on the same side. Sometimes the hardest step... is exactly the step that sets you free.

Bergloper Quote

"A bridge isn't built to stay standing on. It's built to give you the courage to reach the other side." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

On which bridge in your life have you perhaps been standing still too long, when it's time to take the next step to the other side?

Listen along the way

Simon & Garfunkel – "Bridge Over Troubled Water." Sometimes a bridge doesn't just carry you to another place, but to a new version of yourself.

Walk 29 – The Wind

The wind is a special traveling companion. You can't see her. You can't hold her. And yet you feel her everywhere. Sometimes she strokes gently across your face. Sometimes she pushes you forward. Sometimes she tries to hold you back instead. But however hard she blows, there's one thing she never does.

She never stays still. That morning I decided to walk along the dunes. It was one of my favorite spots. Not just because of the sea, but mainly because of the endless space. As soon as I walked there, my mind seemed to naturally grow bigger. Problems grew smaller. Thoughts got air.

Before I even reached the first dune top, I felt the strong westerly wind. My coat billowed. My hair went every which way. And every step took just a little more effort than usual. "This is going to be work today," I said aloud to myself. As if the wind heard me, she blew a little harder still.

I had to laugh. Sometimes nature has a remarkable sense of humor. At the top of the first dune I stopped. Ahead of me lay the North Sea. Grey-blue. Restless. Waves rolled continuously toward the beach. Seagulls let themselves be carried effortlessly by the wind. They barely seemed to move their wings. While I had to struggle to move forward, they made use of that very same wind.

That fascinated me. How could something working against me help them instead? I continued my walk along the narrow dune path. Now and then I had to hold onto my cap. Sand blew across the path and pricked softly against my legs. And yet it felt wonderful. As if the wind was slowly blowing away everything unnecessary.

After a while I saw a brightly colored kite dancing high above the beach. A little further along stood a boy of about twelve with a large stunt kite. His father watched, smiling. The kite shot high into the air. Made a sharp turn. Dove down.

And then rose effortlessly dozens of meters again. I stopped, curious, and watched. "Beautiful, isn't it?" the father said. "Impressive." "Lots of wind today." He laughed. "That's exactly why it flies so beautifully." Those words struck me right away. "Most people complain about the wind." He nodded. "That's true." He looked at his son. "But without wind, a kite stays on the ground." I looked up. The kite seemed almost to be dancing. Every gust made it stronger. "May I ask you something?" the man said. "Of course." "What do you do when you get headwind in your life?"

I had to think for a moment. "Usually work harder." He smiled. "I used to do that too." He looked at his son again. "Until I discovered that headwind doesn't always mean you're going the wrong way." That sentence stayed with me. How often do we experience resistance as something negative?

A rejection. A difficult period. An unexpected setback. We quickly think we need to turn back. While headwind sometimes shows exactly that we're on our way to something worth the effort. The boy pulled the kite down for a moment. "Dad!" "Yes?" "Can he hold it for a bit?"

The father looked at me. "Have you ever done this?" I shook my head, laughing. "Not since I was a kid, I think." He carefully handed me the handles. "Don't pull." "Feel it." I nodded. The kite immediately shot a few meters upward. I tried to get it under control.

But the harder I pulled... the more restless it became. "Easy," the father said. "Work with the wind." Not against it. I relaxed my shoulders. Almost immediately the kite stabilized. It hovered

high above me. Free. Powerful. Almost effortless. The father smiled. "See?" "The wind isn't your enemy."

He looked up. "She's only trying to teach you something." I looked at the kite dancing high above the dunes. And slowly I began to suspect... that this walk wasn't about the wind at all. I held the handles relaxed. The kite still moved through the sky, but no longer wildly. It seemed as if it and the wind understood each other. They worked together. One gave power, the other direction.

"Feel the difference?" the father asked. I nodded. "Yes." "I actually have to do a lot less." He smiled. "Exactly." "Most people think they need to solve everything themselves." He looked up. "But sometimes you only need to move along." I handed the handles back to his son, who steered the kite back up high with a big smile. The boy seemed afraid of nothing. Every gust of wind he saw as a new chance to fly higher.

As I walked on, that image stayed in my head. How differently we adults often react to headwind. We resist. We get frustrated. We wonder why this is happening to us of all people. While a child simply learns how to use the wind.

The path continued along the dune tops. The wind still blew steadily in my face. And yet it felt different. Not softer. But friendlier. Maybe because my view had changed. A little further along I saw an older woman sitting on a bench. Her grey hair danced cheerfully in the wind. She had her eyes closed and her face turned toward the sun.

She seemed to be consciously enjoying the wind. "May I ask something?" I asked. She opened her eyes and smiled. "Of course." "Don't you find this strong wind bothersome?" She laughed heartily. "I used to." "And now?" "Now I know the wind carries my thoughts away."

I looked at her, curious. "When my head is full," she continued, "I go outside on purpose." She spread her arms for a moment. "Then I imagine that every gust of wind carries away a worry of mine." She smiled. "Maybe that doesn't really happen." "But I always come home lighter."

I had to laugh. What a beautiful image. And as I stood there, I decided to try the same thing. I closed my eyes. I thought of everything that had been on my mind lately. Of questions I didn't yet have answers to. Of worries. Of expectations. Of things I had no control over.

With every deep breath I imagined the wind carrying something away with it. Slowly I felt my body relax. Not because my problems had disappeared. But because I was no longer holding onto them so tightly. When I opened my eyes again, I saw how the marram grass bent deeply with every gust.

Not a single blade fought the wind. They moved with it. And as soon as the wind died down... they naturally stood upright again. Maybe there's an important life lesson hidden there. Being strong doesn't mean you never bend. Being strong means you stand back up after every storm.

I continued my walk toward the beach. The sea roared on tirelessly. Waves came. Waves went. Not a single wave tried to hold back the previous one. There too, nature seemed to want to teach me something again. Life is always moving. Change isn't the exception. Change is life.

At the end of the beach I turned around once more. The wind still blew powerfully over the dunes. In the distance I could still see the kite dancing high in the sky. It wasn't flying despite the wind. It was flying thanks to the wind.

And suddenly I understood why some people radiate so much calm precisely after their hardest years. Not because they never knew a storm. But because they learned how to move with it.

Since that walk I try to look at headwind differently. When something becomes difficult, I no longer ask myself right away: "Why is this happening?"

I prefer to ask a different question. "What is this headwind trying to teach me?" Because maybe resistance isn't always meant to hold you back. Maybe it's meant precisely to make you stronger, wiser, and more resilient. Just as a kite can only truly rise once the wind begins to blow.

Bergloper Quote

"Headwind isn't always a sign you're going the wrong way. Sometimes it's exactly the force that helps you fly higher." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which form of headwind in your life might, in hindsight, turn out to be the very strength that helps you grow?

Listen along the way

Bob Dylan – "Blowin' in the Wind." Some answers aren't found by searching harder, but by growing quiet enough to hear the wind whisper.

Walk 30 – The Bench

There are benches you sit on for a moment because you're tired. There are benches where you wait. And there are benches you never forget, without being able to explain exactly why. Maybe because some encounters don't need to be planned. They simply happen.

At exactly the right moment. That morning I decided to take a walk through an old country estate. It was late autumn. The trees were mostly bare, but here and there an oak stubbornly held onto a few golden-brown leaves. The air was clear and crisp. It had frosted lightly that night. In the shadier spots a thin layer of frost still lay, glistening as if someone had scattered silver dust over the grass.

My breath was visible. Every exhale slowly disappeared into the cold morning air. The path wound past old avenues, small ponds, and stately beeches that had probably stood on the same spot for more than a century. I loved trees like that. They radiated calm. As if they'd already heard thousands of stories and had long since learned that everything eventually passes.

After about an hour of walking I began to feel my legs. Not from tiredness. More like a friendly reminder that a short break wasn't a bad idea at all. A little further along I saw a wooden bench. It stood exactly where the sun fell through an opening between the trees. As if the bench had been placed there specially to give people a gift of warmth.

I sat down. My hands slowly warmed in the sunlight. Ahead of me lay a small pond. The water was almost mirror-smooth. Only a few ducks traced calm circles across the surface. In the distance I heard a woodpecker drumming, and somewhere high above me a buzzard called.

It was quiet. Not empty. But filled with the sounds you only hear once you grow quiet yourself. After a few minutes I heard soft footsteps. An older lady came walking slowly with a walking stick. Her grey coat was neatly buttoned, and around her neck she wore a bright red scarf that stood out beautifully against the wintry landscape.

"Is there room?" she asked kindly. "Of course." She sat down carefully beside me. We both looked silently at the pond. It didn't feel awkward at all. Quite the opposite. As if silence can sometimes be far more pleasant than conversation. After a while she smiled. "I've been coming here for years."

"Lovely spot." She nodded. "My husband and I used to come here every Sunday." I looked at her. "Do you come alone now?" She smiled softly. "For seven years now." She said it without sadness. More with love. As if memories don't have to be heavy. "Why this bench in particular?" I asked.

She looked at the pond. "Because I still meet him here a little." I let her words settle quietly. She continued: "Not literally, of course." "But memories sometimes have a favorite place." I looked around. Maybe places really did have a memory. Maybe trees keep conversations.

Maybe benches remember laughter. Maybe paths carry the footsteps of people who moved on long ago. The woman pulled a small tin out of her bag. Inside were two cookies. She offered me one. "Thank you." "My husband always said coffee without a cookie isn't a real break."

I had to laugh. "A wise man." "I thought so too." We ate our cookies in silence. After a while I asked, "Do you come here mostly to look back?" She

shook her head slowly. "I used to." She looked at the sun playing between the trees. "These days I come mostly to be grateful." That answer surprised me. "What's the difference?" I asked. She smiled. "I'll tell you." She smiled as she wrapped her hands around a small thermos cup.

"I used to come here because I mostly missed him." She looked out over the pond. "I thought about everything that was gone." She paused for a moment. "The conversations." "The walks." "His laugh." "His hand in mine." She breathed calmly. "And every time I went home sadder than when I'd come." I listened attentively. "Until my granddaughter asked me a question."

I looked at her. "What question?" She smiled. "She asked: 'Grandma... if Grandpa could see you sitting here now, would he want you to only feel sad?'" She laughed softly. "Children sometimes ask the hardest questions." I nodded. "What did you answer?" "Honestly?" "I didn't know."

She looked at the water. "But that question stayed in my head for weeks." She took a sip of coffee. "And slowly I began to understand something." She turned a little toward me. "Love doesn't ask for grief." "Love asks for remembrance." Those words landed deep.

How often do we think that holding onto grief is a form of loyalty? As if we're doing someone an injustice when we dare to laugh again. As if happiness means forgetting. While maybe the opposite is true. Once someone has found a beautiful place in our heart...

that place doesn't disappear because we learn to enjoy life again. I looked at the pond. A group of ducks swam calmly closer. As if they too had grown curious about our conversation. The woman smiled. "Do you know what I do these days?" I shook my head. "I tell him about what I experienced that week."

I had to laugh. "Really?" "Yes." "I tell him about the grandchildren." "About the flowers in the garden." "About a good book." "About a walk like today." She glanced up for a moment. "And then I go home again." "With a smile." Not because she had forgotten her husband.

But because love doesn't stop when someone is no longer here. It just changes shape. I thought of all the people who have left a mark on my own life. Some I still see regularly. Others have gone a different way. And some live on only in memory.

And yet I notice they've all left something behind. A wise lesson. A smile. A habit. A way of looking at things. Maybe people never fully leave us. Maybe they stay visible in everything they've taught us. A robin landed on the back of the bench.

For a moment it looked at us curiously. Then it flew on. The woman smiled. "My husband always said robins are curious visitors." I watched the little bird go. "Then he came to say hello today." She laughed. "He would have loved that." We sat side by side in silence for a while longer.

The sun had risen a little higher by now. The frost on the grass had disappeared. The world looked warmer than it had when I'd first sat down. Maybe that was true of my own heart too. After a while the woman carefully stood up. She picked up her walking stick.

"I'll walk on." I helped her up. "Thank you for the conversation." "No," she said kindly. "Thank this bench." I looked at her questioningly. "Here I learned that memories don't have to be anchors." She smiled. "They're allowed to become wings too." Then she walked on calmly down the winding path.

I stayed sitting a while longer. The bench suddenly felt different. No longer just a place to rest. But a place where stories keep living. When I finally stood up and continued my walk, I looked back once more. The bench sat there just as calmly as when I'd arrived.

Tomorrow someone else might sit there. With different worries. Different memories. A different story. And maybe that simple wooden bench would once again do what it had been good at for years. Letting people pause for a moment. So they could move on again afterward. Since that walk I look at benches differently.

I no longer walk past them without a thought. Sometimes I deliberately sit down for a moment. Not because I'm tired. But because I've discovered that a few minutes of stillness can be enough to feel again what truly matters. Because some benches don't give you answers.

They give you something far more valuable. The space... to find the answers yourself.

Bergloper Quote

"Some benches are built to rest on. Others to remind you that love and memory always keep walking with you." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which memory from your life might change today from a source of grief into a source of gratitude?

Listen along the way

Bette Midler – "Wind Beneath My Wings." Some people no longer walk beside you, but their love still carries you forward every day.

Walk 31 – The Child

I was walking through a park I'd visited dozens of times before. I barely even noticed it anymore. The gravel crunched under my shoes. The trees stood there as they always did. I was on my way to nowhere in particular, and in my head I was mostly preoccupied with everything that still needed to happen that afternoon.

Just ahead of me walked a young family. Their little son, about five years old, turned a ten-minute walk into a half-hour expedition of discovery. Every few meters he stopped. "Dad... look!" He pointed at a snail crawling slowly across the path.

A few steps further he bent down to pick up a small feather. "Do you think that's from a blackbird?" A little later he looked up. "That cloud looks like an elephant!" His parents smiled patiently. I smiled too. Not because of the boy. But because I suddenly realized he could do something I had lost along the way.

He looked. Really looked. Not to get somewhere. Not because it was useful. Not because someone expected it of him. He looked because the world, to him, was still full of wonder. I wondered when I had last looked that way. When had I last paused for a feather?

When had I last watched a cloud turn into an animal? Or simply listened to the wind, without thinking about my emails at the same time? Maybe we don't lose our sense of wonder in a single day. Maybe it happens very slowly. A little through busyness. A little through responsibility.

A little because we think growing up means we've already seen everything. While life, really, begins again every day. The boy bent down once more. He held up a small stone as if he'd found a diamond. "Look!" He said nothing more.

And oddly enough, he needed nothing more to make clear what he meant. I looked at that little stone. Then I looked around. The sun played among the leaves. A robin landed on a fence. Two people who didn't know each other wished each other a good day.

All things that had been there five minutes earlier too. Only I hadn't seen them yet. When the family left the park, the little boy waved once more, at a duck. As if saying goodbye to an old friend. I stayed a moment longer. Not because anything special was happening. But because I realized the special had probably never disappeared. Only my attention had gone to live somewhere else. Maybe we don't grow unhappier because life changes. Maybe we grow unhappier because we stop wondering.

While wonder is exactly what gives color to ordinary days. On the way back I decided to leave my phone in my pocket a little longer. Not because I had to. But because I was curious what else I might otherwise miss. And suddenly the same route felt different. Not longer.

Not shorter. Just... richer.

Bergloper Quote

"Children remind us how we once looked at the world ourselves: curious, open, and without hurry." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When did you last look at something ordinary as if you were seeing it for the first time?

Listen along the way

Louis Armstrong – "A Kiss to Build a Dream On." A warm song that fits the art of looking at ordinary moments with wonder.

Walk 32 – The Old Man on the Bench

I was in no hurry that morning. At least, that's what I told myself. Yet I noticed I was walking briskly. As if some invisible finish line lay waiting for me somewhere. At the edge of the park stood an old wooden bench. A man sat there.

Grey hair. A worn cap. His walking stick lay beside him. He looked straight ahead. Not at his phone. Not into a newspaper. He simply looked. As I walked past him, he nodded kindly. "Beautiful, isn't it," he said. I looked around. "Yes," I answered.

Honestly, I didn't quite know what he meant. The trees? The sun? The birds? He smiled. "That's exactly what I mean." I had to laugh. "What do you mean?" He made a small gesture with his hand. "Everything." For a moment it stayed quiet. Then he said something I haven't quickly forgotten.

"When I was young, I always thought happiness would come later." He looked at his hands. "Later, when I had more money." "Later, when I had more time." "Later, when the kids were grown." "Later, when I was retired." He shrugged.

"And suddenly I was eighty." I sat down beside him. Not because I had time to spare. But because I felt this was the kind of conversation you shouldn't rush. "Did you find it?" I asked. He smiled. "No." That answer surprised me. But before I could say anything, he continued: "Fortunately I discovered something much more beautiful."

I looked at him questioningly. "Happiness isn't a destination." "It doesn't wait at the end of the road." He pointed at a dog chasing a ball.

At an older couple walking hand in hand. At a girl laughing, chasing butterflies.

"I didn't used to see any of that." "I was always on my way to something bigger." He looked at me. "I was so busy building a life..." "...that I forgot to live it." Those words stayed with me. We talked a while longer. About growing older. About children.

About regret. About gratitude. And especially about the art of not needing anything, now and then. Then we both stood up. He picked up his walking stick. Looked over the park once more. "May I give you one more thing?" he asked. "Of course." He smiled. "When I was forty, I thought I was running short on time."

"When I was sixty, I thought I'd run short on opportunities." He paused for a moment. "Now that I'm old..." "...I know that I mostly fell short on moments." I looked at him questioningly. He continued softly: "Life has given me thousands of ordinary days." He looked up at the leaves moving gently in the wind.

"I was only too busy to see how special they were." Then it stayed quiet. Neither of us said anything more. We didn't need to. He raised his hand and walked slowly out of the park. I stayed a moment longer. The sun shone between the trees.

A blackbird sang. Someone greeted me. A young couple laughed about something I couldn't hear. All things that had probably been there an hour earlier too. Only I hadn't seen them yet. I walked on. Slower than I'd arrived. Not because I was tired.

But because I was afraid I'd miss something.

Bergloper Quote

"Life gives us thousands of ordinary days. The art is seeing how special they truly are." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which ordinary day or small ritual in your life would you like to appreciate more, while it's still here?

Listen along the way

The Kinks – "Days." A grateful song about the days and people that often only reveal their true value in hindsight.

Walk 33 – The Two Backpacks

I turned onto a narrow forest path when I came across two hikers walking toward me. They were about the same age and both wore backpacks. And yet there was a world of difference between them. The first walked hunched over. His steps were small and he mostly looked at the ground. Every few minutes he set his backpack down for a moment. The second walked a few meters behind him. Straight back, calm pace, glancing at the trees now and then. From a distance you might almost think one of them was simply poorly prepared and the other knew what he was doing.

I noticed I'd immediately formed a judgment. Too heavy a backpack, I thought. Brought too much. Maybe not trained enough. The human brain is quick at that. We see ten seconds of someone's walk and then think we know the whole story. As I got closer, they both greeted me kindly. The man who walked hunched over smiled tiredly. "Beautiful route," he said. "It is," I answered. "Heavy backpack?"

He glanced at the bag on his back and then at me. "Actually, not too bad." The other man stopped. "He lost his wife yesterday," he said quietly. Not accusingly. Just as an explanation. I felt my quick conclusion vanish in a single second. The man with the hunched shoulders looked at the path. "I wanted to stay home today," he said. "But my brother said walking might be better than just sitting on the couch."

The other hiker nodded. "So we're walking." For a moment I didn't quite know what to say. All the explanations I'd invented in my head turned out to be about nothing at all. His backpack wasn't too heavy. His day was heavy. We walked together for a while. Not fast. That wasn't needed either. The two brothers spoke little. Sometimes one pointed at a bird or a beautiful spot. Sometimes

the other simply stopped for a moment. Neither tried to fix the grief. Room was simply made for it.

After a while we came to a bench. The man set down his backpack and sat. His brother pulled out a thermos and poured coffee into three cups. "My wife didn't like walking," the man said suddenly. "She thought it was mostly a complicated way of getting back home."

The three of us had to laugh. For a moment his face grew lighter. Then the tears came. That was allowed to be there too. I looked at the two backpacks standing side by side on the ground. From the outside they looked almost the same. You couldn't tell which hiker was carrying the heavier load that morning. And maybe that's exactly what we so often forget in everyday life.

We see someone being curt in the supermarket. A colleague who's quieter than usual. Someone who cancels an appointment. A driver going too slowly. A friend who's been in touch less. And before we know it, we fill in the story for that other person ourselves.

While we almost never know what's really in their invisible backpack. Grief. Worry about a child. A divorce. A sick parent. Fear of the future. A sleepless night. Or simply a day when everything is briefly too much. That doesn't mean we have to excuse everything. But it does mean we could judge a little less quickly.

The brothers stood up again. One swung his backpack on. The other calmly helped him with the straps. "Are you okay?" he asked. The man took a deep breath. "For today, yes." They said

goodbye and walked on. Slowly. Side by side. I stayed by the bench a little longer. Two backpacks. Two men. One story I could never have guessed if I'd only looked at the outside.

Since that walk I sometimes try to ask myself one simple question before forming a judgment: do I actually know what this person is carrying today? Almost always the answer is: no. And maybe that's exactly the moment when judgment can make way for something more human. For understanding. For patience. For compassion.

Bergloper Quote

"You see someone's backpack. But almost never everything that person is truly carrying." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

With whom could you judge a little less quickly today, and make a little more room for the story you don't know yet?

Listen along the way

Bill Withers – "Lean on Me." A simple, warm song about carrying each other in moments when life feels a little heavier.

Walk 34 – The Unread Letter

At a flea market my eye caught on an old wooden chest. Among yellowed books, a broken clock, and a porcelain vase lay a small stack of letters. Bound together with a weathered blue ribbon. On the top envelope, in elegant lettering: "Never sent." I asked the seller what the story was.

He shrugged. "They were in a house that was being cleared out." "No one wanted them." I held the stack for a moment. Somewhere it felt strange. As if I held a piece of someone's life in my hands. I set the letters back down. Some words aren't meant for strangers' eyes.

But the thought stayed with me. How many words actually go unspoken? How many people never say: "I'm proud of you." "I'm sorry." "I miss you." "I love you." Not because they don't feel it. But because they think there's still enough time.

Later. Next week. After the vacation. Once things calm down a bit. Until later suddenly no longer exists. That evening I found an old box of cards at home. Birthday cards. Christmas cards. A letter from my mother. A card from a friend who is no longer here.

I reread his last sentence. "Let's get together again soon." That get-together never happened. Not because we didn't want it to. But because we both thought it could still wait. Sometimes life does nothing but remind us how fragile time really is.

The next morning I picked up my phone. Not to check my calendar. But to call someone. Just because. Not because anything needed arranging.

Not because I needed anything. But because some words are too valuable to postpone. The call lasted less than ten minutes. When we hung up she said, "How nice that you called." That was all. But maybe that was exactly enough. Since then I try to live a little differently. If I want to thank someone... I do it today. If I'm proud of someone... I say it today.

If I want to forgive someone... I begin today. Because tomorrow is a beautiful promise. But today is the only day we truly own.

Bergloper Quote

"Words you save out of love sometimes never reach their destination at all." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which words would you rather speak today than have them arrive too late, ever?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "In My Life." A song about people, memories, and words that often only truly gain their value once they're shared.

Walk 35 – The Signpost

I'd already been walking through the hills for almost three hours. The route was beautiful. At least... that's what I thought. Until I reached a three-way split. A wooden signpost stood there. All three arrows pointed in different directions. I pulled out my hiking map. It didn't help. The map was old.

One path no longer existed. A second had been rerouted. And of the third I wasn't sure I was even supposed to be there. As I stood there hesitating, an older hiker came walking up. He carried a small backpack. His shoes were worn.

He walked as if he'd been coming here his whole life. "Doubting?" he asked. I smiled. "A little." He looked at the signpost. "Funny." "People used to trust signposts." "Now they doubt them." I laughed. "And what do you do, then?" He looked at the sky. At the trees.

At the path. "I look." He said nothing more. He calmly took one of the three paths. After a few meters he turned around. "Coming?" I walked after him. After a while I asked, "How did you know this was the right way?"

He smiled. "I didn't." I looked at him, surprised. "But..." He interrupted me. "That's exactly the problem." "We always think we need certainty first." "And only then do we dare to walk." He paused for a moment. "While life works exactly the other way around."

"Only once you start walking..." "...do you discover whether you're on the right track." Those words hit harder than I'd expected. How often had I waited? For the perfect moment. For more certainty. For more money. For more experience. For a sign. Maybe because of that I'd let opportunities slip by too.

Not because I made the wrong choice. But because I made no choice at all. We walked on. After half an hour we came out at an open spot. The view was breathtaking. I looked around. "What if we'd chosen the wrong path?"

He smiled. "Then we'd have had a different view." Nothing more. He looked at me. "Most choices aren't right or wrong." "They only ask whether you're willing to walk for them." Then we said goodbye. I watched him go a moment longer. He walked on calmly.

As if he had nowhere to be. And maybe that was true. Maybe he knew something I hadn't known yet that morning. That direction doesn't come from standing still. But from having the courage to take the first step.

Bergloper Quote

"You don't discover the right path by waiting endlessly, but by being willing to walk the first few meters." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which choice are you postponing because you want certainty first, when maybe the first step is exactly what would give you clarity?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "The Long and Winding Road." A song that fits beautifully with the realization that direction often only unfolds while you're already on your way.

Walk 36 – The Bridge Between Two Brothers

A narrow wooden bridge crossed a rippling stream. Not particularly large. Not spectacular. In fact, most hikers walked over it without really paying it any attention. I stopped for a moment. Not because of the bridge. But because of an older man standing in the middle of it.

He was looking at the flowing water. As if he had nowhere else to be. When I came to stand beside him, he smiled. "Beautiful spot, isn't it?" I nodded. "Special, really," he said. "A bridge only does one thing." I looked at him questioningly. "Connects." He said nothing more.

After a while I asked, "Do you come here often?" He laughed. "For almost forty years now." "Why?" "Because I once learned something important here." That made me curious. He leaned his hands on the railing. "I used to think strong people went their own way."

He looked at the water. "That you shouldn't need anyone." He smiled. "How wrong I was." I said nothing. Some stories need silence. He continued. "After a difficult period, I cut off contact with my brother." "Not because we hated each other." "But because we both felt the other should make the first move."

He sighed. "That lasted twelve years." "Twelve years in which no one called." "Twelve years in which we both waited." I felt how heavy those words were. "And then?" He smiled. "Then our mother died." For a moment he looked ahead of him. "After the funeral we stood facing each other."

"Both older." "Both sadder." "And both still convinced we were right." He shook his head slowly. "Until my granddaughter took my hand." She pulled me toward my brother. And said: "Grandpa... you two belong together, don't you?" He smiled. "A child sometimes sees in one second what takes adults years."

I felt a lump in my throat. "We embraced each other that day." "Not because everything was suddenly resolved." "But because we discovered that being right mattered far less than finding each other again." He looked at the bridge. "That's why I still come here sometimes." "Because a bridge reminds me that connection always begins with someone taking the first step."

We stood in silence a while longer. Then he walked on slowly. Halfway across he turned around once more. "Never forget..." "...pride builds walls." "...love builds bridges." I watched him go. Then I looked at the water beneath the bridge. It kept flowing. Indifferent. Calm.

As if it wanted to tell me that life always goes on. The only question is: do you keep walking together... or each on a different side?

Bergloper Quote

"Pride builds walls. Love builds bridges." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

With whom could you take a small first step toward connection, without first waiting to see who's right?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "We Can Work It Out." A song about disagreement, stubbornness, and the possibility of finding each other again anyway.

Walk 37 – The Bench in the Rain

That morning began with rain. Not a heavy summer downpour. More an endless drizzle that turns everything grey. The kind of weather that makes you wonder why you went for a walk in the first place. After half an hour I saw a wooden bench. A woman sat there. She had no umbrella.

No raincoat. Just an old wool coat and a thermos on her lap. To my surprise she smiled. "Come sit down." I looked at the wet bench. "That'll leave me soaked." She laughed. "That's true." "But some conversations are worth it." I sat down. The wood was cold.

My pants immediately wet. "Do you come here often?" "Every Thursday." "Even when it rains?" "Especially when it rains." That answer surprised me. "Why?" She unscrewed the cap of her thermos. "My husband and I used to come here every Thursday." "After he passed, I kept coming."

She poured two cups of coffee. As if she already knew I would come. "Do you still miss him?" I asked carefully. She smiled. "Every day." She looked at the rain making small circles in the pond. "But grief is strange." "It doesn't get smaller."

"Your heart just gets bigger." That sentence landed unexpectedly. She continued. "I used to think letting go meant you had to forget someone." She shook her head. "Now I know better." "Love doesn't disappear." "It just changes address." I looked at her questioningly. "He used to walk beside me."

She placed her hand on her chest. "Now he walks here." For a moment neither of us said anything. The rain tapped softly on the leaves. In the distance a blackbird sang. She smiled.

"Do you know what I miss most?" I expected a big answer. Our vacations. His voice.

His laugh. But she said, "That I can no longer point out the first snowdrops to him." I felt a lump in my throat. It was exactly that small detail that made her story so large. After a while she stood up. She picked up her empty thermos. "Thank you for staying a while."

"I didn't do anything at all," I said. "Oh, but you did." She smiled. "You listened." Sometimes that's the most beautiful gift you can give someone. She walked slowly down the path. I stayed sitting a little longer. The rain hadn't stopped. But somehow it felt less cold.

Maybe because grief grows lighter when someone briefly carries it with you.

Bergloper Quote

"Grief doesn't always get smaller. Sometimes your heart just grows big enough to carry it." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

For whom could you simply be present today, without needing to fix anything?

Listen along the way

James Taylor – "You've Got a Friend." A warm song about being there for someone, precisely when words or solutions aren't needed.

Walk 38 – The Man With the Binoculars

It was still early. The sun crept slowly above the hills and the path lay quiet. In the distance I saw someone standing. An older man. He had binoculars hanging around his neck. Now and then he stopped. Then he'd look upward in silence for a few minutes.

Curious, I walked toward him. "Seen anything special?" He smiled. "Not yet." I looked at him, surprised. "But you've been standing here a while." He nodded. "That's true." "And that doesn't bother you?" He shook his head. "No." "The most beautiful things can't be rushed."

I found that a remarkable statement. He pointed at a treetop. "See that branch?" I nodded. "A kingfisher lands there almost every morning." I looked up immediately. "Nothing." He laughed. "That's exactly why most people never see him." I looked at him questioningly.

"Because they look..." "...but don't wait." We stood beside each other in silence. First a minute. Then two. I felt restless. My thoughts were already drifting back to the walk. To my schedule. To everything I still wanted to do that day. He seemed entirely unbothered.

As if waiting wasn't wasted time for him at all. After a few minutes he said quietly, "Listen." I heard the wind. A woodpecker. Rustling leaves. Nothing else. "See," he said. "Even silence tells a story." Then it happened. A brilliant blue flash shot across the water.

Barely two seconds. And gone again. "Was that..." He nodded. "Yes." I smiled. "How beautiful." He looked at me. "I'd already been waiting twenty minutes for that." I had to laugh. "For two seconds?" He

smiled. "The most beautiful things rarely last long." Those words stayed with me.

How often had I wanted everything to move faster? Faster results. Faster success. Faster answers. Faster tomorrow. Maybe that's exactly how I lost the most beautiful moments. Not because they weren't there. But because I didn't stay long enough. When we said goodbye, he said one more thing.

"Remember this." "Everything truly valuable..." "...needs time." I walked on. Not faster. But more attentively. And for the first time that morning it felt as if the walk wasn't about distance at all. But about everything you only see if you're willing to wait.

Bergloper Quote

"The most beautiful things don't always appear for those in a hurry, but often for those who can wait." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where could you push a little less and trust a little more in the right moment?

Listen along the way

Otis Redding – "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay." A song that almost naturally invites you to sit, watch, and let life come to you for a while.

Walk 39 – The Tree That Stayed Standing

The path ran along an open plain. At the edge stood one old oak. Large. Broad. Full of scars. The trunk had cracked open in several places. A few heavy branches had once broken off. And yet it still stood there. As if it had belonged in that same spot for centuries.

I stopped for a moment. A forest ranger was busy repairing a fence. "Remarkable tree," I said. He looked up. "Almost everyone thinks so." "How old is it?" "Over three hundred years." I looked again. Three hundred years. It had lived through wars. Storms. Drought. Winters. Summers. Generations of people.

"Why don't you take it away, then?" I asked. "It's full of cracks, after all." The ranger smiled. "That's exactly why not." He walked to the tree. Placed his hand on the rough bark. "Most people think strength looks like perfection." He shook his head.

"In nature it works exactly the other way around." He pointed at a deep crack in the trunk. "Lightning struck here thirty years ago." I looked closely. "And yet it's still alive." "Even more than that," the ranger said. "It was exactly after that lightning strike that it began to heal itself again."

He pointed at young branches high in the crown. "Look how much new life is up there." I looked up. He was right. Among the old, heavy branches, fresh green leaves were growing everywhere. "Funny, really," he said. "People are often ashamed of their scars." "While trees simply show them."

Those words stayed with me. How much effort do we make to hide our damage? Our mistakes. Our grief. Our failures.

Our insecurities. Maybe because we think others only want to see the perfect version. The ranger looked at the tree. "This oak isn't remarkable despite its scars."

He smiled. "It's remarkable because of its scars." We both fell silent. The wind played gently through the leaves. I placed my hand against the trunk. The bark felt rough. Warm. Alive. At that moment I realized this tree had never tried to become what it used to be again.

It had learned to keep growing. With everything that had happened to it. As I walked on, I looked back once more. The oak still stood there. Not proud. Not vulnerable. Just... itself. And maybe that's the greatest form of strength there is.

Bergloper Quote

"Your scars don't only show what you've been through. They also show that you kept growing." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which part of yourself are you still trying to hide, when that might be exactly where your strength has become visible?

Listen along the way

Leonard Cohen – "Anthem." A song about cracks, light, and the beauty of imperfection.

Walk 40 – The Game of Chess

The path wound through a small village. By an old water pump a man sat on a wooden bench. In front of him stood a chessboard. The pieces were already set up. But there was no opponent. As I walked past, he looked up. "Fancy a game?"

I checked my watch. Not really. But something in his smile made me sit down. He slid the white pieces toward me. "You go first." The opening moves went quickly. He played calmly. Unhurried. After a few minutes I lost a pawn.

A little later a bishop. Then my rook. I sighed. "I think I'm going to lose." He smiled. "Maybe." A few more moves later I resigned. "You're better." He shook his head. "No." "I've just been playing a bit longer." He began putting the pieces back in place.

"May I ask you something?" "Of course." "Why were you upset when you lost that pawn?" "Because I thought it meant I'd lose." He nodded. "We often think that in life too." I looked at him questioningly. "We lose a job." "A relationship." "A dream."

"Our health." And right away we think the whole game is over. He held up a pawn. "But a chess game is rarely decided by one wrong move." He smiled. "And a person's life isn't either." We played a second game. This time I lost again.

But less quickly. I began to see patterns. I thought longer. I sometimes dared to sacrifice a piece to win something back later. When the game

was over, he looked satisfied. "See?" "You're playing differently now." "Not because you've gotten smarter."

"But because you've learned that one mistake isn't the end of the game." Those words stayed with me. How often do we judge ourselves by one failure? By one wrong decision. By one rejection. While life doesn't ask at all whether we're flawless. It only asks whether we're willing to make the next move.

I stood up. He shook my hand. "One more thing." I looked at him. "Don't always try to be right." "Try instead to keep learning." He set the king back in the middle of the board. "Do you know who ultimately wins the most?" I shook my head.

"Those who dare to sit down again after a lost game." I walked on. And suddenly I realized life might not be a competition at all. Maybe it's simply a game in which no one stays undefeated. But everyone gets to begin again, every day.

Bergloper Quote

"Life doesn't ask whether you're flawless. It asks whether you have the courage to make the next move." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which mistake could you look at a little more kindly today, as part of your path?

Listen along the way

Frank Sinatra – "That's Life." A classic about falling, getting up, and starting again without writing yourself off.

Walk 41 – The Kite

It was a crisp spring day. The wind was strong. On a large grassy field I saw a father with his daughter. They were trying to fly a kite. The kite was beautiful. Red, yellow, and blue. But every time it nearly took off, it crashed back down.

The girl sighed. "It's not working." Her father smiled. "One more time." She ran again. The kite fell again. She looked sadly at the ground. "Maybe it's broken." Her father picked up the kite. He checked the lines. The sticks. The fabric. Everything was fine.

"No," he said. "The kite isn't broken." "Then why isn't it flying?" He looked up. "Because you keep stopping running." The girl frowned. "But there is wind, isn't there?" He nodded. "Yes." "But you have to give the wind a chance to do its work."

She looked at him questioningly. "Sometimes you have to trust first..." "...before you see the result." She started again. This time she ran a little longer. The kite still fell. She looked disappointed. "One more time." She took a deep breath. Ran. A few more steps.

A few more. Suddenly the wind caught the kite. It rose. Higher and higher. Until it hovered high above the field. The girl started laughing. Not just any smile. It was the laugh of someone who had just discovered that persistence is sometimes rewarded. I walked on.

But I kept watching a moment longer. The father said something I could just make out. "See..." "I didn't make the kite fly." "The wind did that." "You just had to not give up too soon." Those words stayed with me for the rest of the walk.

How often do we stop right before it begins? One more application. One more conversation. One more attempt. One more idea. Because we think nothing is happening. While the wind might already be on its way. As I neared the end of the path, I looked back once more.

The kite was barely visible anymore. Only the string still connected it to the girl. Maybe that's exactly what trust is. You don't always see what the wind is going to do. But you keep holding the string.

Bergloper Quote

"Don't give up just because you don't see results yet. The wind is often already on its way." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where might you keep trusting a little longer, even though you can't see the result yet?

Listen along the way

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers – "Learning to Fly." A song about continuing to move while you're still learning how the wind works.

Walk 42 – The Man With the Empty Bucket

It was a warm summer day. I was walking along a narrow path that led to an old water well. Beside the well stood a man. He held a wooden bucket in his hand. But the bucket was empty. I thought he'd just drawn water. Until I saw him lower the bucket again.

And pull it up again. Empty. Once more. Empty again. Curious, I walked over to him. "There's nothing in it." He smiled. "I know." "So why do you keep trying?" He looked into the well. "Come and see." I leaned forward. At the bottom I saw water.

Very deep down. "See it?" I nodded. "The bucket just isn't reaching deep enough." He let the rope out a bit further. Again he lowered the bucket. This time I heard a soft splash. A moment later he pulled the bucket up. Full of clear water.

He poured two cups. One for me. One for himself. The water was wonderfully cool. "Why didn't you do that right away?" I asked. He smiled. "Because most people do the same thing." I looked at him questioningly. "We stop just before we go deep enough."

Those words stayed with me. How often do we settle for superficial conversations? For fleeting contact? For quick answers? For half-formed dreams? Maybe because truly going deep takes courage. You can keep bobbing on the surface. That's safe. But you rarely find the clearest water there.

He looked into the well again. "I used to be a manager for years." "Always busy." "Always on the move." "I knew hundreds of people." He smiled.

"But almost no one knew me." I said nothing. "I always told people how things were going." "Never how they were really going." He looked at me. "That only changed once someone asked me a simple question."

"Which question?" He smiled. "How are you... really?" "Not out of politeness." "But because he was willing to wait for the answer." "That conversation changed my life." I looked into the well once more. Maybe people are a bit like wells.

At the surface you don't see much. But whoever takes the time to look deeper... often discovers something truly valuable. As I walked on, I turned around once more. The man stood at the well again. Not because he was thirsty. But because he knew...

that the finest water is never found near the top.

Bergloper Quote

"Whoever stays only at the surface never discovers how deep a person truly is." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which question could you ask someone if you truly want to know how they're doing?

Listen along the way

Billy Joel – "Honesty." A song about honesty and the need to go beyond the standard answers.

Walk 43 – The Stonemason

I was walking through an old mountain village when I heard a rhythmic sound. Tap. A little further along sat a man in front of a large block of natural stone. In his hand he held a small hammer and a chisel. He struck calmly. Not hard. Not hurried. As if he had all the time in the world.

I stopped to watch. After a few minutes he looked up. "Beautiful stone," I said. He smiled. "That's what most people say." "And what do you say?" He ran his hand over the rough surface. "I don't see a stone." I looked at him, surprised. "No?"

He shook his head. "I see what's hidden inside it." That made me curious. "And what do you see, then?" He smiled. "I don't know exactly yet." "The stone tells me that along the way." I found that a strange answer. He picked his chisel back up.

Tap. Only a small piece fell away each time. "How do you know where to strike?" He looked at me. "I don't always know." "Sometimes I strike wrong." "Sometimes more breaks off than I wanted." He shrugged. "Then I start again."

I looked at the figure slowly becoming visible. Far from finished. But you could already see something taking shape. "How long have you been working on this?" "Almost three months." "Three months?" He nodded. "The most beautiful things are never in a hurry." For a moment it stayed quiet. Then he said something I've never forgotten.

"People often want to improve themselves." He smiled. "I think they mostly get to discover themselves." I looked at him questioningly. He set

his chisel down. "This figure was already inside the stone." "I'm only removing what's in its way." Those words landed unexpectedly.

How often do we try to become someone else? More successful. Stronger. Smarter. More confident. Maybe that's not the point at all. Maybe we don't need to keep adding something. Maybe we're allowed to let go instead. Fear. Doubt. The need to keep others satisfied. The mask we've come to wear.

As the figure slowly became visible, I saw no hero. No king. No famous person. It was an ordinary hiker. With a backpack. His gaze fixed on the horizon. I smiled. "Why a hiker, of all things?" The stonemason looked at the figure. "Because no one is ever finished."

He picked his hammer back up. "Not even me." I said goodbye. As I walked on, I heard the calm rhythm behind me again. Tap. Not the sound of someone destroying a stone. But of someone making visible what had always been hidden there.

Bergloper Quote

"Personal growth isn't becoming who you're not. It's finding your way back to who you always were." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

What could you let go of to come closer to who you truly are?

Listen along the way

Billy Joel – "Vienna." A song that invites you to chase less and trust more in your own pace and identity.

Walk 44 – The Gardener

I was walking past an old monastery garden. Among the blooming flowers I saw a man working on his knees. He was pulling weeds. Very calmly. As if he had all the time in the world. I stopped for a moment. "Lots of work," I said. He looked up and smiled.

"Every day." "Don't you ever get tired of it?" He shook his head. "No." "Weeds simply grow faster than flowers." I had to laugh. "That's actually unfair." He nodded. "I used to think so too." He stood up. In his hand he held a small plant. "But then I discovered something."

He showed me the little plant. "Weeds don't ask for attention." "Flowers do." I found that a remarkable observation. He walked to a young rose. Carefully he loosened the soil. He gave it water. Snipped away a withered leaf. "Why do you go to so much trouble for one plant?"

He looked at me. "Because attention determines what grows." Those words stayed with me. He pointed at a corner of the garden. "No one came there for months." I looked. It was completely overgrown with weeds. "See?" "Nature chooses on its own." "If you don't choose anything..." "...something else chooses for you."

I felt that he wasn't talking about flowers anymore. He was talking about people. About thoughts. Habits. Relationships. I asked him, "Is that true in life too?" He smiled. "Every day." "If you don't pay attention to gratitude..." "...discontent grows on its own." "If you don't pay attention to love..." "...distance grows on its own." "And if you don't pay attention to yourself..." "...exhaustion grows on its own." We walked together slowly through the garden. Everywhere I saw

flowers. But suddenly I also saw how much work had gone into them beforehand. No one sees the hours. No one sees the watering. The pruning.

The waiting. People only see the bloom. The gardener stopped. "It's exactly the same with people." "We often admire someone's success." "But almost never the thousands of small choices that came before it." He looked at a rose just opening. "A flower doesn't decide to bloom in a single day."

"That happens a little bit every day." As I said goodbye, he handed me one seed. "For you." "What should I do with it?" He smiled. "Plant it." "And don't forget..." "You never harvest what you hope for." "...you harvest what you tend." I carefully tucked the seed into my coat pocket.

The whole way home I felt it there. So small. And yet full of promise. Maybe dreams are like that too. Not big. Not loud. But waiting for someone willing to tend to them a little every day.

Bergloper Quote

"Your life doesn't bloom because of what you wish for, but because of what you tend to every day." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

What are you giving attention to every day right now, and is that also what you want to grow?

Listen along the way

The Byrds – "Turn! Turn! Turn!" A song about seasons, time, and the trust that growth requires both attention and patience.

Walk 45 – The Light

It was already beginning to grow dark when I walked out of the forest. I'd walked longer than planned. That happens to me often. I set out for a quick loop and come home two hours later with mud on my shoes and the feeling that I've somewhere along the way missed an appointment with time.

"Trouble?" I asked. He looked up. "My light isn't working." "Maybe you should hit it again." He smiled. "That was indeed my technical plan." I stopped for a moment. He pulled a small light out of his coat pocket and shone it on the dynamo. The wire hung loose. Together we tried to fasten it again, but our fingers were cold and it kept growing darker.

"Ah well," he said eventually. "I'll just walk home." "Is it still far?" "About three kilometers." I looked at his dark coat and then at the narrow bike path. "Then I'll walk part of the way with you." "That's really not necessary." "That's what people always say when it might be exactly what's needed."

He looked at me for a moment. Then he nodded. "All right, then." We walked side by side. I held my phone's light so the path ahead of us stayed visible. It didn't give much light. A small white patch on the asphalt, nothing more. But it was enough to see tree roots, potholes, and loose branches.

"Funny," the man said after a while. "You actually need very little light to keep going." I looked at the small beam of light at our feet. "As long as you don't try to see the whole forest at once." He nodded. "Maybe that's exactly where people often go wrong."

"What do you mean?" "We want to know exactly, in advance, where a road leads. What lies a kilometer ahead. What happens next month. Whether a decision will turn out well." He pointed at the lit-up patch of path. "But usually you only get enough light for the next few steps."

We walked on. I thought of all the moments I myself had waited for complete clarity. Decisions I postponed because I wanted certainty first. Plans I never carried out because I didn't yet know exactly how everything would unfold. As if life ever hands out a complete set of directions.

Usually you don't get a lit highway. You get a vague path, a gut feeling, and sometimes someone who says: "I think you should go that way." "Are you always this philosophical when your bike light is broken?" I asked. He laughed. "Only when someone else is holding the light."

After a while we reached the edge of the village. In a small house across the way, a lamp burned behind the window. Warm yellow light fell onto the sidewalk. A woman stood in the doorway. As soon as she saw us, she raised her hand. "There's my wife," the man said. "She must have been waiting for you." "She's been doing that for forty-four years." The woman came outside. "Light broken again?" "How do you know that?" "Because otherwise you'd be on your bike." He looked at me. "That's exactly what I mean. I've been trying to stay mysterious for forty-four years, and she catches on immediately."

The woman smiled. "Would you like to come in for coffee?" I checked my phone. It was much later than I'd thought. "I'd love to," I said. "But just one cup." "An electrician without light," I said. "The shoemaker's children go barefoot too." "And the writer makes spelling mistakes."

"What is it you do, then?" I thought for a moment. "I try to help people find their own way." He poured coffee. "Then you're actually a kind of lamppost too." I had to laugh. "That's never been my official job title

before." "A lamppost doesn't push anyone in a direction," he said. "It only lights up a small stretch of road. The other person still has to walk it themselves." That sentence hung between us for a moment. Outside it was now completely dark. Through the window I saw the streetlamps standing one by one along the road. Not one of them lit the whole village. Each lamp only provided its own small circle of light.

And together they made the road visible. When I said goodbye, the man handed me the small flashlight he'd earlier pulled from his coat. "For the road." "But that's yours." "I have plenty of light at home." I wanted to protest, but he'd already placed it in my hand.

"Maybe along the way you'll meet someone who needs it more." I put it in my coat pocket and walked outside. After a few meters I looked back. The man and his wife stood together in the lit doorway. They waved. Then the door closed, but the light behind the window stayed on.

On the way home I thought about what he'd said. Maybe we don't always need to change someone's whole life. Maybe we don't need to have all the answers. Maybe it's sometimes already enough to make a small stretch of the road visible. With a conversation.

A kind word. A little attention. Or simply by walking beside someone for a while and holding the light. I put my hand in my coat pocket and felt the flashlight. Small, simple, and hardly remarkable. Until someone is standing in the dark.

Bergloper Quote

"You don't have to light the whole road. Sometimes light for one next step is already enough."
— Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

For whom could you be a small point of light today?

Listen along the way

Coldplay – "Fix You." Sometimes you can't take away someone's darkness. But you can be a light while that person finds their own way.

Walk 46 – The Ripples in the Water

That morning a light mist hung over the river. The water rippled calmly between the banks, as if it had nowhere to hurry to. I always loved mornings like this. They remind me that nature doesn't care in the slightest about our schedules. After a while I came to an old stone bridge. It had lain there for as long as I could remember. Thousands of people must have crossed it already. Some on their way to work. Others on their way home. Maybe also people saying goodbye, falling in love, or deciding to take a completely different direction.

Halfway across the bridge an older man stood leaning against the stone edge. He looked at the water in silence. "Beautiful, isn't it?" I said. He smiled. "I've been coming here for almost forty years." "Then you know this place better than I do." He shook his head. "No." "I know the bridge."

"But the river is different every day." That sentence surprised me. We stood side by side in silence for a while. After a few minutes I asked, "Why do you come here so often?" He looked at the flowing water. "To remind myself that nothing stays the same."

He picked up a small stone from the bridge and let it fall carefully into the water. The circles grew larger and larger. "See that?" "Yes." "That's how words work too." "And actions." "Sometimes you think something is very small." "A smile." "An apology." "A compliment."

"But you have no idea how far the circles eventually reach." I looked at the water. The circles had already disappeared. "So then you don't see them anymore?" He smiled. "No." "But they haven't disappeared." He told me he used to be a teacher. Years later people would regularly come up to him.

Not former students who still remembered which grades they'd gotten. But people who remembered one conversation. One remark. One moment when someone had believed in them. "Funny," he said. "I'd often already forgotten those conversations myself." "But for them, they'd apparently mattered." I thought of my own life.

How often had someone said something to me that I'd never forgotten. And how many words had I myself probably spoken without ever knowing what they'd set in motion. The man looked at the river once more. "We often think big changes begin with big deeds."

He shook his head slowly. "Usually they begin with something very small." "That keeps working on afterward." When he walked away, I stayed on the bridge a while longer. Below me the water kept flowing on, undisturbed. Every drop disappeared. And yet every drop eventually reached the sea.

Maybe it's the same with people. We don't need to know exactly where our kindness ends. It's enough to set it in motion.

Bergloper Quote

"You never know how far the ripples of one kind gesture will reach." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which small act of kindness could still be having an effect years from now?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "All You Need Is Love." A simple reminder of how something small and loving can reach much further than you yourself can see.

Walk 47 – The Compass Needle

It was one of those days when I honestly had no idea which way I wanted to walk. To the left a narrow forest path led upward. To the right a wide sandy path ran toward the heath. Both looked beautiful. And that was exactly why I stood still. As I hesitated at the crossing, an older hiker came walking up. His backpack looked as if it had seen half the world already.

"Doubting?" he asked, smiling. "A little." He looked at the two paths. "They're both good." "That's exactly what makes choosing hard." He nodded. "We often think that." He pulled a small compass out of his coat pocket. "See this needle?" I nodded. "It always knows where north is."

"But it doesn't tell me which way to go." I looked at the compass. "What's it good for, then?" He smiled. "For not losing myself." Those words hung there for a moment. He put the compass away again. "Do you know what people often do?"

"We're constantly searching for the perfect choice." "The perfect job." "The perfect relationship." "The perfect decision." He shook his head. "But life usually doesn't ask for the perfect choice." "It asks whether you stay true to yourself." We began walking together. Not left.

Not right. Just the path that felt most logical at that moment. After a while I asked, "And if you make the wrong choice anyway?" He laughed. "Then you learn something." "And then you choose again." He pointed at the trees. "Look at that." Some trees stood perfectly straight.

Others had curved around a large rock. And yet they all grew toward the light. "That might be the most beautiful thing about nature." "It wastes no energy on regret." "It just keeps growing." We walked in silence together for a while longer. At the next fork he stopped.

"Here I'm going left." "And you?" I looked at the path ahead of me. For the first time that morning I no longer felt any doubt. Not because I was certain this was the best route. But because it felt right. The man smiled. "Good." "You've found your direction."

I looked around. "Because of your compass?" He shook his head. "No." "Because of your own." He raised his hand and walked on calmly. I watched him until he disappeared among the trees. Only then did I realize he hadn't needed the compass at all anymore.

Maybe because he'd long known what really gives direction. Not the map. Not other people's opinions. But the quiet voice deep inside that usually speaks softly. And precisely because of that, is so easily drowned out.

Bergloper Quote

"Direction doesn't begin on the map, but in your heart." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When did you last truly listen to your own inner compass, instead of to other people's expectations?

Listen along the way

Cat Stevens – "The Wind." A small song about trusting a voice that doesn't shout, but does give direction.

Walk 48 – The Walking Stick

That morning my knee began protesting after a few kilometers. Not badly. More a friendly little signal from my body that I no longer need to prove everything. By a wooden bench sat a man who was surely ten years older than me. Beside him stood a simple walking stick.

"Trouble with your knee?" he asked. "It's not too bad," I said, in the tone people use when they mean it's actually not entirely fine. He smiled. "I know that sentence." He held up the walking stick. "I refused to use one of these for years. Thought it was for old people."

"And now?" "Now I mostly think it's for smart people." I had to laugh. We walked on together for a while. At a steep descent he handed me his stick. "Try it." My first instinct was to say it wasn't necessary. Still, I took it.

The difference was surprisingly large. Not just for my knee. For my pace too. I had to pay less attention to where I placed my weight, and because of that I looked around more again.

"Funny," I said. "With support I actually walk more freely." He nodded. "That's exactly what I learned too late."

He told me that he used to want to solve everything himself. Problems at work. Money matters. Worries at home. Even grief he preferred to keep to himself. "I thought being strong meant not needing anyone." He looked at the stick in my hand. "Until I discovered that using support is something different from being dependent."

That sentence stayed with me. How often do we make things harder on ourselves because we want to prove we can do it alone? We don't ask for help. We say we're managing fine. We carry groceries inside in one trip when two trips would clearly make more sense. Apparently independence sometimes hides in the strangest things.

At the next crossing I gave him back his stick. "Thank you." "You're welcome." He held out his hand. "And remember: a walking stick doesn't walk the road for you. It only helps you take your own steps more firmly." I walked on. My knee felt the same as before.

But my idea of strength didn't.

Bergloper Quote

"Being strong doesn't mean you have to carry everything alone. Sometimes strength is exactly knowing which support you're allowed to accept." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where could you allow yourself a little more support, without feeling like it makes you less independent?

Listen along the way

Ben E. King – "Stand by Me." A timeless song about support that doesn't make you smaller, but helps you stand firmer.

Walk 49 – The Cyclist on the Dike

That afternoon I was walking along a dike when a cyclist slowly passed me. Really slowly. So slowly that after a hundred meters I'd almost caught up with him again. The wind was blowing straight at him. His coat billowed and every pedal stroke seemed to cost him something.

He got off at a bench. "Nice cycling weather," I said. He looked at me and started laughing. "For someone who doesn't have to cycle, maybe." We looked out over the water together. The wind drew white streaks across the surface. "I actually wanted to turn back," he said. "But then I'll just have the same wind again later. Only in my head."

I looked at him questioningly. "If I give up now, I'll spend the rest of the day thinking I could have kept going." He took a sip of water. "Headwind is annoying. But it tells you something too." "What's that?" "Whether your destination is important enough to pedal a little harder for."

I found that a beautiful thought. We often talk about resistance as if it's proof we're on the wrong track. A difficult conversation. A project that's taking longer. A plan that doesn't work out right away. But not every headwind is a stop sign. Sometimes it's just wind.

The cyclist got back on. "How far are you going?" I asked. He pointed at a church tower in the distance. "There." "Still quite a stretch." "That's true." He put his foot on the pedal. "But I only have to get there one turn of the pedal at a time." I watched him go. Slowly at first. Then he found a rhythm.

The wind didn't lessen. It just became less important. A little later he disappeared behind a bend in the dike. I walked on and thought about my own

headwind. Maybe you don't always need to ask when it will stop. Maybe the better question is what you're willing to keep moving for anyway.

Bergloper Quote

"Headwind isn't always a sign you should stop. Sometimes it only shows how much your destination means to you." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where could you go one more turn of the pedal further, even though the wind isn't with you?

Listen along the way

Bob Seger – "Against the Wind." A song about continuing to move when life isn't blowing at your back on its own.

Walk 50 – The Empty Swing

On a quiet Sunday afternoon I walked through a small park I'd visited dozens of times. It was the kind of place where children play loudly on weekdays and where, on weekends, it can sometimes be remarkably quiet. That afternoon there was almost no one there. Just a light wind sweeping through the trees.

Then I saw the swing. It moved gently back and forth. Not high. Just a little. As if someone had only just stepped off it. I stopped for a moment. Funny, really... An empty swing can suddenly bring up a whole host of memories. I thought of my daughters.

Of the times I gave them a push. "One more time, Dad!" That usually meant at least ten more times. And honestly, I never minded at all. I can still see their laughter. Their hair blowing in the wind. Their trust that I was behind them.

They never looked back. They simply knew I was there. As I stood there, an older man came and stood beside me. He too looked at the swing. "Beautiful time, that was," he said quietly. I nodded. "A very beautiful time." He smiled.

"Funny, isn't it..." "When my kids were little, I sometimes thought those years would never end." He glanced at the clouds for a moment. "And now I wonder where they actually went." For a moment it stayed quiet. Not awkward. More a silence in which two fathers felt the same thing. After a while he said something that struck me. "Children really only get one childhood."

I looked at him. He shrugged. "And parents only get one chance to be part of it." He said nothing more. He didn't need to. We wished each other a good walk. He walked on slowly. I stayed a moment longer. The swing had almost stopped moving by then.

Only now and then did the wind give it a small push. On the way home that one sentence kept walking with me. How often do we think there'll be plenty of time later? Play later. Call later. Visit later. Take a walk later.

Say later that you love someone. But life turns out to be remarkably good at turning "later" into "earlier than you thought." Maybe that isn't sad at all. Maybe it's mostly an invitation. To be a little less hurried today. To be truly present a little more often.

Because in the end, most people don't remember how many hours we worked. They remember the moments we were truly there. Just before I walked out of the park, I looked back once more. The swing stood still. It waited patiently. Probably for the next child.

And for the next memory.

Bergloper Quote

"The most beautiful thing you can give someone isn't your time. It's your attention during that time." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

With whom would you like to consciously create a memory this week, instead of just spending time together?

Listen along the way

Cat Stevens – "Father and Son." A song that reminds us of generations, time, and how precious real attention for one another is.

Walk 51 – The Key in the Antique Shop

During a walk through a small fortified town, I passed a little antique shop. Normally I glance inside and keep walking. But this time my eye caught on a glass display case. There lay an old key. One of those heavy, iron keys you almost never see anymore.

I stepped inside. "Beautiful, isn't it?" said the owner. I nodded. "What would it have fit?" He smiled. "No one knows anymore." He carefully picked up the key. "Maybe a front door." "Maybe a church." "Maybe an old cabinet." He shrugged. "But honestly..."

"That's actually what makes it more beautiful." I looked at him questioningly. "Because everyone gets to invent their own story for it." I found that a remarkable answer. He set the key back down. "People used to make keys to open doors." He looked at me for a moment.

"Now we seem mostly busy keeping doors shut." He said nothing more. I walked back outside. That one sentence stayed with me. How many doors do we actually keep closed ourselves? The door to a new conversation. The door to forgiveness. The door to a new love.

The door to a different job. Or maybe... the door to our own heart. Not because we want to. But because we were once afraid. Afraid of being disappointed. Afraid of being hurt again. And somewhere along the way we unknowingly turn the key.

From the inside. I recognize that too. Some doors I only dared to open again myself much later. Not because the fear had suddenly disappeared. But because the wish to truly live eventually grew bigger than the fear. At the end of the street I looked back once more.

The little antique shop sat there quietly. Behind the window, the old key still lay waiting. Maybe not for someone who would buy it. But for someone who would suddenly ask themselves... which door in my life has been locked for far too long?

I smiled. Funny, really. Sometimes we don't find a new key along the way. We only discover... that we'd had it in our own pocket the whole time.

Bergloper Quote

"The most beautiful doors in life often don't open with force, but with courage." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which door in your life would you dare to open just a little today?

Listen along the way

Fleetwood Mac – "Don't Stop." A forward-looking song, a reminder that a new tomorrow can also lie behind a new door.

Walk 52 – The Vanished Chalk Drawing

I was walking through a quiet residential neighborhood I didn't often visit. It had rained heavily that night. The sidewalks still gleamed a little, and here and there small puddles reflected the sky. In front of a row of houses I naturally slowed my pace.

On the sidewalk I saw the remains of a colorful chalk drawing. A sun. A few flowers. A little house. And something that had probably once been meant to be a dog. The rain had almost washed the colors away. Only a few smudges of yellow, blue, and pink still hinted at what it must have been.

As I stood looking, a front door opened. A girl of about seven came outside. She looked at the sidewalk. "Oh..." she said quietly. "My drawing." I looked at her. "It must have been really beautiful?" She nodded. "I worked on it for a really long time yesterday."

For a moment she stood still. "And now it's gone." Her mother came and stood beside her. She put an arm around her shoulders. "Is it really gone?" The girl looked again, closely. "Well..." "Almost." Her mother smiled. "Do you remember how much fun you had yesterday while you made it?"

The girl slowly began to smile. "Yes." "Did that fun get rained away too?" She thought for a moment. Then she shook her head. "No." "Good." Her mother said nothing more. She went back inside. The girl stood there a moment longer. Then she picked up a box of sidewalk chalk.

She looked at the empty sidewalk. And started again. As if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. I walked on. With a smile. Along the way I kept thinking

about that chalk drawing. How often are we afraid that something was for nothing? A beautiful vacation that's over.

A wonderful encounter. A love. A conversation. A period when we were happy. As if something only has value once it continues to exist. But maybe the value lies exactly in the moment it was there. Just like a sunset. Or a rainbow. Or a child's drawing on the sidewalk.

Not everything has to last forever... to be unforgettable. At the end of the street I looked back once more. The girl was still drawing. The sun broke carefully through the clouds. And I thought... maybe she knew something many adults have forgotten along the way.

That you're always allowed to begin again.

Bergloper Quote

"Not everything that disappears is lost. Some beautiful moments simply continue to exist in a different place." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which beautiful moment from your life seems over, but do you actually still carry with you?

Listen along the way

Cyndi Lauper – "Time After Time." A warm song about what stays, even as time and circumstances change.

Walk 53 – The Fallen Tree

This morning I walked along a forest path I've loved for years. It was quieter than usual. Not because there were fewer birds. But because something was missing. Halfway down the path I saw why. An enormous beech lay across the route. It had fallen during the last storm.

Its roots stuck high into the air. The trunk lay like a bridge across the path. I stopped. For years I had walked past this tree. It had seemed indestructible. And now it lay there. Just like that. A few hikers stood in front of it. "A shame, isn't it?" a man said.

"Such a beautiful tree." A woman beside him nodded. "I always thought this one would outlast us." The three of us smiled. Not because it was funny. But because there was something familiar in it. After a while a forest ranger walked our way. "The path is temporarily closed," he said kindly.

"But there's a small path along the side." He pointed at a narrow track between the bushes. "That'll bring you naturally back onto the route." I looked at the tree once more. "Will it be removed?" The ranger shook his head. "No." "Why not?"

He placed his hand on the trunk. "To us it looks like it fell." "For the forest, something new is just beginning now." He pointed at the bark. "Look at that." I looked closer. Small beetles walked across the trunk. Mosses were already beginning to take hold. Between the roots young plants were growing.

"The tree doesn't live the way it used to," he said. "But it's still giving life." I found that a remarkable thought. I continued my walk via

the narrow path. Along the way I kept thinking about that tree. How often do we call something an ending... when it might be a new beginning?

A job that ends. A relationship that ends. Children leaving home. Retiring. A dream that changes. In the moment itself it sometimes feels as if something has fallen. And it has. But maybe we don't yet see... what's slowly beginning to grow.

I recognize that from my own life. Some periods I would have preferred to skip... turned out later to be the ground on which something new could grow. Not right away. That took time. Just like in the forest. Before I walked out of the forest, I looked back once more.

The large beech still lay there. No longer proudly upright. But still meaningful. Maybe even more than ever. I smiled. Funny, really. Sometimes life changes not because everything stays standing. But because something dares to fall.

Bergloper Quote

"Some endings aren't a loss. They make room for new life you couldn't yet see." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which ending in your life might, in hindsight, turn out to be the beginning of something new?

Listen along the way

George Harrison – "All Things Must Pass." A song that gently reminds us of impermanence, and the space that opens up afterward.

Walk 54 – The Keyring on the Bench

This morning I wanted to head out the door. Coat on. Shoes on. Phone in my pocket. Only my keys were nowhere to be found. I looked on the table. On the counter. In my coat pocket. I even checked the fridge. Why you do that when you've lost something, I still don't know.

After a few minutes I had to laugh at myself. The longer I searched, the less I seemed to see. I decided to make a cup of coffee first. As the water slowly began to boil, my eye fell on the windowsill. There lay my keyring. Right where I had consciously set it down the evening before.

I smiled. Apparently I shouldn't have searched harder. I should have looked more calmly. Later that morning I took a walk through the park. On a bench sat an older man. Beside him lay a large keyring with dozens of keys. "That's quite a few," I said.

He laughed. "More people say that." "All for different doors?" He shook his head. "No." He picked up one key. "This one is for my house." One more. "This one for my shed." Then he held up an old, worn key. "And this one doesn't fit anywhere anymore."

"Why do you still keep it, then?" He turned the key slowly between his fingers. "Because it reminds me of the house where our children grew up." For a moment it stayed quiet. "Funny, really," he said. "Some keys don't open doors anymore." "But they still open memories." That sentence stayed with me.

We often think a key is only meant to open something. A front door. A car. A cabinet. Maybe some keys open something else entirely. A smile. A memory. A story. As I walked on, I automatically felt in my coat pocket.

My keyring was still there. But I wasn't thinking about metal anymore. I was thinking about all the people who had once opened a door for me. A teacher. A friend. A colleague. My parents. Sometimes literally. More often figuratively. Maybe you don't have to open every door yourself.

Maybe along the way you meet people who now and then hold a key for you. And maybe, in your turn, you too get to be the key that lets someone else move forward.

Bergloper Quote

"Some keys open a door. The most beautiful ones open a person." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which person once opened a door for you that you might never have dared to open yourself?

Listen along the way

Dionne Warwick – "That's What Friends Are For." A song about people who, at the right moment, open something for you without taking over your path.

Walk 55 – The Lost Balloon

On a Sunday morning I walked through the park. It was one of those mornings when the sky is bright blue and the world doesn't seem entirely awake yet. Here and there I heard a blackbird singing. In the distance a dog played with a stick that, in his opinion, was probably the finest find of the day.

As I walked on calmly, I saw something red hanging among the branches of a tree. A balloon. One of those ordinary helium balloons you get at a birthday. It moved gently back and forth in the wind. I stopped for a moment. Strange, really. Someone had probably once held that balloon tightly. Maybe a child who proudly carried it down the street. Maybe it had accidentally slipped free. Maybe someone had cried as it slowly drifted up into the sky.

Now it hung here. Alone. As I stood looking, a little boy came walking up with his father. "Dad..." "Yes?" "How did that balloon get up there?" His father looked up. "Maybe it escaped." The boy thought for a moment. "Or maybe it wanted to see the world."

I had to smile. Children sometimes come up with the most beautiful explanations. The father laughed too. "That could well be." The boy kept looking at the balloon a while longer. "Is it sad now?" His father looked up again. "I don't know." "Maybe it misses whoever it belonged to."

For a moment it stayed quiet. Then the father said something that struck me too. "Or maybe it's grateful for everything it's gotten to see along the way." They walked on. I stayed a moment longer. The balloon still hung among the branches. It would probably never go back to whoever had let it go.

And yet... it had seen the sky along the way. The clouds. The birds. The sun. Maybe even a rainbow. I suddenly thought of our own lives. Sometimes we hold on so tightly to how something should have gone, that we forget to look at everything we received along the way.

Not every dream ends exactly the way we imagined it. Not every relationship lasts forever. Not every job stays. Not every plan succeeds. But that doesn't mean the journey was for nothing. Some experiences are valuable precisely because they were temporary. As I walked on, I looked back once more.

The balloon danced gently in the wind. It might have been lost. But it had made a beautiful journey along the way.

Bergloper Quote

"Not everything that comes loose is lost. Sometimes life takes you exactly to places you would never otherwise have seen." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Looking back on a dream that went differently than you'd hoped, what beautiful things did that journey still bring you?

Listen along the way

Natasha Bedingfield – "Unwritten." A song that fits the trust that an unexpected route can still hold plenty of new chapters.

Walk 56 – The Sailboat

Toward the end of the afternoon I walked along a small lake. There was enough wind to stir up the water. In the middle of the lake sailed a small sailboat. From the shore I watched how the boat wasn't heading straight for the other side. It sailed at an angle to the left, turned, and then went at an angle to the right.

An older man stood next to me, watching. "It's taking quite a detour," I said. "It's tacking," he answered. "Because the wind is wrong?" The man smiled. "The wind is never wrong. Just not always blowing in the direction you had in mind." I found that annoyingly wise for an ordinary Wednesday afternoon.

He turned out to have sailed a lot in the past. He explained that you can still move forward against the wind, as long as you're willing to keep adjusting your course a little. "Whoever only wants to go straight ahead," he said, "sometimes ends up nowhere at all." I looked at the sailboat again.

At first glance it seemed to be losing time. But every diagonal line brought it closer to the other shore. How often do we measure progress only in straight meters? We want to go from A to B. A career that follows a logical line. A relationship without detours. A recovery process that gets better every week. A plan that turns out exactly as it looked on paper.

But life rarely sails in a straight line. Sometimes you change jobs only to later discover why that experience was needed. Sometimes you need to take distance to come closer to yourself again. Sometimes you reach the other side precisely because you temporarily went a different way.

The boat turned once more. The sail flapped for a moment and then filled again. "Look," the man said. "There it goes." A few minutes later

the boat reached the jetty on the other side. Not via the shortest route. But via a route that worked.

As I walked on, I thought of all the turns I had once called unnecessary. Maybe they weren't the opposite of progress. Maybe they were progress in a form I hadn't yet recognized.

Bergloper Quote

"Progress doesn't always run in a straight line. Sometimes you reach the other side precisely because you learn to move with it." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where in your life might a small course correction take you further than stubbornly going straight ahead?

Listen along the way

Christopher Cross – "Sailing." A calm song about wind, movement, and the trust to adjust your course along the way.

Walk 57 – The Coffee Stain

This morning I decided to treat myself to a cup of coffee at a small café. The kind of café where the chairs don't all match, where the waitress knows the regulars by name, and where the clock on the wall has been running a few minutes slow for years.

I sat down by the window. Before I'd even taken my first sip, I knocked my cup over. The coffee slowly spread across the table. A brown stain crept dangerously close to my phone. "Oh no..." I jumped up and hastily grabbed napkins.

The waitress came right over. "Don't worry about it." "Sorry," I said. She smiled. "That's already the third one today." Together we cleaned the table. Within a minute everything looked as if nothing had happened. As I sat back down, I noticed the older man at the table next to me smiling kindly.

"Good thing it was only coffee." I nodded. "That's true." He calmly took a sip from his own cup. "You know..." "Most people think they get angry because coffee spilled." I looked at him, curious. "But usually they get angry because the day is no longer going the way they'd planned it."

Those words stayed with me for a moment. Because he was actually right. The coffee wasn't the problem. The stain disappeared within a minute. It was my expectation that had spilled. I'd pictured how the morning would look. Calm. Relaxed. With a warm cup of coffee.

And suddenly everything went differently. Maybe we do that more often. We make a plan in our heads. How a conversation should go. How a vacation

should look. How a relationship should be. How our life should turn out. And the moment reality deviates from that...

we think something's wrong. While life might simply be choosing a different route. The man stood up. He wished me a good day. At the door he turned around once more. "Don't forget..." "A coffee stain dries on its own." "Just don't spend the whole day staring at it."

I had to laugh. When I walked outside a little later, the sun was still shining. The birds sang as if nothing had happened. And honestly... nothing had happened. Just a cup of coffee that had decided to take a different direction for a moment.

Bergloper Quote

"Not everything that goes wrong is a problem. Sometimes it's just a story that begins differently than you expected." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When did you let a small incident grow unnecessarily large, when in hindsight it barely mattered at all?

Listen along the way

Billy Joel – "Just the Way You Are." A reminder that calm sometimes begins when not everything has to be perfect.

Walk 58 – The Old Photo

This week I was looking for a charger. At least, that's what I thought. Because, as often happens when you're looking for something, I found something else entirely. At the back of a drawer lay an old envelope. It held photographs. Real photographs.

Not on a phone. Not in the cloud. Just on paper. I sat down at the kitchen table. One by one I looked at them. A birthday. A vacation. My daughters when they were still small. My parents, years younger than I remember them. I smiled.

In one photo was my father. He wasn't even looking at the camera. He was laughing at something outside the frame. I tried to remember why. No idea. And suddenly I realized something. The most beautiful moments in our lives are often never made for a photo at all.

They happen in between. Just before the click. Or just after. That afternoon I decided to go for a short walk. The photos stayed on my mind. By a pond I saw a young woman with her little son. She was trying to take a photo of him as he fed bread to the ducks.

"Hold still for a second!" she called, laughing. But the boy clearly had other plans. He ran after a duck. Laughed. Jumped. Spun in a circle. The photo failed. At least... that's what his mother thought. An older woman sitting on a bench nearby had also seen the scene.

She smiled. "You know..." she said to the mother. "Maybe not everything needs to be a photo." "Maybe remembering is sometimes more beautiful." The mother glanced at her screen for a moment. Then she put her phone in her coat pocket. She walked over to her son. Together they threw a few more pieces of bread into the water.

They laughed. Without a phone. Without a camera. Just together. I walked on. And thought of all those moments that were never captured. The conversations. The hugs. The walks. The silences. The fits of laughter. They exist on no memory card. And yet... it's often exactly those memories that last the longest.

Maybe our heart is the most beautiful photo album we own. It doesn't keep everything. Only what truly mattered. When I got home, I carefully put the old photos back in the envelope. Not because I was done looking. But because I knew... that the most beautiful memories had long since stopped being on paper.

Bergloper Quote

"Not every memory needs a photo. Some live on forever in your heart." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which memory do you always carry with you, even though no photo of it exists?

Listen along the way

Jim Croce – "Time in a Bottle." A song about time, love, and the wish to preserve special moments.

Walk 59 – The Loose Knot

This morning I wanted to put on my walking shoes. At least... that was the plan. But one lace was tied in such a tight knot that there was no way I could get it loose. I pulled a little harder. That didn't help. Harder still. The knot only grew tighter. I sighed.

Strange, really. Sometimes we make a problem bigger by pulling harder on it. I sat down on the stairs. Took a deep breath. And calmly began loosening the knot, thread by thread. Within a minute it was done. As if it had never been stuck at all.

Later that morning I walked through the forest. It smelled of wet leaves. The sun broke through the trees now and then, drawing light patches on the path. By a bench I saw an older woman tying her shoelace. She looked up, smiling. "Laces, always something."

I had to laugh. "Mine didn't want to cooperate this morning either." She nodded. "My husband always used to say: a knot is never in a hurry." I looked at her questioning. "What do you mean by that?" She finished her bow and stood up calmly. "The harder you pull..."

"...the tighter it gets." "But if you take a moment..." "...it often shows you the way to the solution on its own." We walked on together for a while. After a while she told me her husband had passed away a few years back. "And yet I sometimes still hear him."

"Not really, of course." "But his words still walk with me." I smiled. Maybe people never fully disappear. Sometimes they keep living on... in the sentences they left us with. When we said goodbye,

I walked on alone. Along the way I thought about all the knots we encounter as people.

A misunderstanding. An argument. A difficult choice. Grief. We'd prefer to solve them as quickly as possible. We pull at them. Worrying. Pushing. Forcing. While some knots ask for something else entirely. Patience. Attention. Calm. Not every knot needs to come loose today. But almost every knot grows smaller the moment you stop pulling.

When I was almost home, I looked at my shoes. The lace was still tied firmly. Not because it was pulled tight. But because it had been tied calmly. Maybe that's true of life too. Not everything needs to be tight. As long as it's well connected.

Bergloper Quote

"Some problems don't get smaller by pulling harder. They get smaller when you learn to look more gently." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which knot in your life might loosen if you gave yourself a little more patience today?

Listen along the way

Billy Joel – "And So It Goes." A calm song that makes room for gentleness when pushing harder no longer solves anything.

Walk 60 – The Shadow

It was a warm summer afternoon. The kind of day when the sun stands high in the sky and every tree becomes a small island of shade. I was walking along an open path beside a meadow. Ahead of me I saw my own shadow. Long. Dark. It moved exactly along with me.

I quickened my pace. So did it. I stopped. It did the same. Funny, really. You're almost never aware of your shadow. Until the sun is at exactly the right angle. A little further along a girl crouched, looking at the ground. She was trying to step on her father's shadow with her foot.

He kept stepping aside. She burst out laughing. "I've almost got you!" she called. Her father laughed. "That'll never work." "Why not?" "Because my shadow always belongs to me." The girl thought for a moment. "Even when it's dark?" "Yes." "You just can't see it then."

Those words stayed with me. Maybe that's true of more than just shadows. We too all have sides of ourselves we'd rather not see. Our insecurity. Our grief. Our mistakes. Our fear. We often do our best to push them away. As if they're not allowed to be there.

But just like a shadow... they simply belong to us. Not to hold us back. But to remind us that we're human. During my walk I came to a large lake. The water lay almost completely still. My shadow fell across the bank.

I looked at it for a moment. Without a shadow... I also wouldn't have sunlight. They belong together. Maybe that's one of life's most beautiful lessons.

We don't grow despite our difficult periods. We often grow precisely because of them. Our scars. Our disappointments.

Our doubts. They don't make us less beautiful. They make us more whole. As I walked on, my shadow briefly disappeared under the trees. Not because it was gone. Only because I could no longer see it. I smiled. Some things you don't need to see...

to know they're there.

Bergloper Quote

"Without sunlight there is no shadow. And without difficult days we often don't discover how strong we truly are." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which difficult experience from your life turned out, in hindsight, to be an important part of who you are today?

Listen along the way

Cat Stevens – "Morning Has Broken." A song that recalls new light and the chance to look at each day anew.

Walk 61 – The Moon

It was already late when I decided to take one more short walk. During the day I prefer to walk through the woods. But in the evening the world has something special about it. It grows quieter. As if the day is slowly exhaling. The streets were almost empty. Here and there a lamp still burned behind a window.

In the distance a dog barked. Otherwise it was mostly still. When I looked up, I saw the moon. Not entirely round. Not half either. Simply exactly as it was that evening. Beside me I heard a small voice. "Mama..." "Yes?" "Why is the moon broken?"

I looked around. A little girl was walking hand in hand with her mother. Her mother smiled. "The moon isn't broken." "But a piece is missing." "It only looks that way." The girl looked again, carefully. "Will that piece come back?" "Yes." "Always?" "Always." She walked on, satisfied.

I kept looking at the moon a while longer. Remarkable, really. No one looks at a half moon and calls it a failure. We all know it will fill out again on its own. It's only with ourselves that we sometimes seem to forget that. We think we have to be complete.

Always strong. Always cheerful. Always certain. And the moment we feel a little sad, or tired, or unsure, we think something is missing. Maybe we're like the moon. We too have our phases. Days when everything works out. And days when we seem to lose ourselves a little.

That doesn't mean we've become less. Only that we're in a different phase. I walked on. The moonlight fell softly over the path. Not bright. Not conspicuous. But just enough to see the way. Maybe light doesn't need to be big at all.

Sometimes a little is already enough to take the next step. When I was almost home, I looked up once more. The moon still hung in the same place. Calm. Patient. As if it wanted to say, without words: "Trust me." "Even what feels incomplete now..." "...can become whole again." I smiled. And walked home.

Bergloper Quote

"You don't always have to be at your best. Even a half moon lights up the night." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

In which period of your life did you feel incomplete, only to discover afterward that you were actually growing?

Listen along the way

Neil Young – "Harvest Moon." A warm song about the beauty of every phase, even when you don't have to be completely full.

Walk 62 – The Echo

This morning I walked through a hilly nature area. It was remarkably quiet there. No traffic. No machines. Only the wind brushing softly through the trees. On an open spot stood a small lookout point. There was no one else around. I leaned against the wooden fence for a moment and looked out over the valley.

Suddenly I heard a boy calling in the distance. "Hellooo!" A few seconds later came the answer. "Hellooo..." His own voice. He started laughing. Once more. "Yoohoo!" "Yoohoo..." His father stood a few meters away, watching with a smile. The boy looked around, puzzled.

"Dad..." "Yes?" "Who's calling that?" His father pointed into the valley. "That's you." "No it isn't." "Yes it is." "The mountains only give back what you put into them." Those words stayed with me. The mountains only give back what you put into them. Maybe that's not only true for an echo.

In ordinary life, too, we often get back more than we think. A smile invites a smile. Kindness often calls forth kindness. Trust awakens trust. Not always, of course. But surprisingly often. A little later I walked on. I thought about all the people I'd met over the past years.

Some I don't remember for what they did. But for how I felt when I was with them. Seen. Welcome. At ease. Maybe that was their echo. Not their words. But their presence. Along the way I passed a bench. I sat down for a moment.

It was still quiet. No echo. No voices. And yet I heard, once again, the words of that father. "The mountains only give back what you put into them." I wondered: What do I actually give to the people I meet? Calm? Haste?

Attention? Or am I already somewhere else in my thoughts? When I stood up, I looked out over the valley one more time. I didn't need to call out anything anymore. The lesson had already arrived. Some words come back. But so do some deeds. Maybe life itself is one great echo.

Bergloper Quote

"What you send out into the world sometimes finds a surprising way back to you. Not always right away. But often it does." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

If your way of living today came back to you as an echo, what do you hope to hear again?

Listen along the way

The Hollies – "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother." A song about connection and how caring for one another keeps rippling outward.

Walk 63 – The Firefly

It was a warm summer evening. The kind of evening when the sky slowly darkens, but the warmth of the day still lingers among the trees. I was on holiday and decided to take a short walk after dinner. Not far. Just to let the day wind down.

The path ran along an open field. The birds had almost gone silent. Only somewhere in the distance I still heard an owl. As I walked on, I suddenly saw a small light. At first I thought someone was using a flashlight. But the light moved. Not fast.

Calmly. Then one more. And another. Within a few minutes it seemed as though dozens of tiny stars were floating among the tall grass. Fireflies. I stood still. How remarkable, really. I hadn't seen them during the day. They had probably been there the whole time. Only it hadn't been noticeable.

Only once it grew dark did they begin to give off light. At that moment an elderly couple came slowly walking up. Like me, they stopped to watch. The man smiled. "Beautiful, isn't it?" "Yes," I said. "I haven't seen this in years." His wife looked at the dancing lights.

"Do you know what I find so beautiful about it?" I shook my head. "They don't wait until all the darkness is gone." "They simply give their own light." Those words struck me. How often do we not wait? Until everything gets easier. Until we have more time.

Until we're more certain. Until the circumstances are perfect. But maybe that's not the point at all. Maybe light is meant precisely for dark moments. I walked on slowly. The fireflies disappeared again among the grass. They made no noise. They asked for no attention. They simply did what they were made for.

Giving light. Maybe we don't need to light up the whole world either. Maybe one smile is enough. One listening ear. One kind word. One arm around someone. For the person who needs it at that moment, that can make all the difference. When I was almost back, I looked around once more.

In the distance I saw a few small lights again. Not large. Not bright. But just enough to show that they were there. And suddenly I thought: maybe that's true courage. Not waiting until the darkness is over. But daring to shine while it's still dark.

Bergloper Quote

"A small light may not drive away all the darkness. But for someone nearby, it can make the way home visible." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When were you last a small light in someone else's life, without maybe even realizing how much difference it made?

Listen along the way

Coldplay – "Yellow." A warm song that fits the idea that one small point of light is sometimes already enough to let someone feel seen.

Walk 64 – The Lighthouse

During a holiday I once walked along the coast. It was early morning. The sea was still calm. Only the rhythmic sound of the waves broke the silence. In the distance stood an old lighthouse. Not large. Not impressive. Just sturdy. As if it had stood there its whole life.

I walked slowly toward it. Along the way I passed a fisherman packing up his nets. "Beautiful, isn't it?" he said, pointing at the lighthouse. "Yes," I answered. "I wonder how many people it's shown the way." The man smiled.

"Probably a lot more than it will ever know itself." That sentence stayed with me. We often think a lighthouse brings ships into harbor. But actually it does something much simpler. It just keeps standing. It doesn't run after the ships. It doesn't shout.

It convinces no one. It simply does what it was built for. Giving light. The rest is up to the ships themselves. I looked at the sea. There wasn't a single ship in sight. And yet the light was burning. Not because someone was watching. But because it was its task.

Maybe that's true for people too. We often want to see results. To know whether our words make a difference. Whether our kindness gets noticed. Whether our work is appreciated. But maybe we don't need to know that at all. Maybe it's enough to stay true to who we are.

A listening ear. An encouraging word. A smile. A helping hand. Sometimes you never know how much influence you've had. Just like a lighthouse never hears how many captains along the way thought, "Thank goodness... there's the light." I walked on along the coast. Now and then I looked back.

The lighthouse was still standing there. Calm. Unwavering. Not preoccupied with yesterday. Not worried about tomorrow. Simply present. And suddenly I understood why people feel so safe near a lighthouse. Not because it stops every storm. But because it shows that, even during a storm, a light keeps burning somewhere.

Bergloper Quote

"You don't have to save everyone. Sometimes it's enough that your light shows someone they're not alone." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Who was ever a lighthouse in your life: someone who didn't tell you which way to go, but gave light when you needed it?

Listen along the way

Lighthouse Family – "High." A hopeful song about carrying on and trusting that after hard stretches, space and light return.

Walk 65 – The Windmill

This morning I walked through the polder. The kind of landscape where you can see for miles. Green meadows, straight ditches, and a sky with so much room that you naturally start breathing more deeply. In the distance an old windmill slowly turned its sails. Not fast. Not slow.

Just at its own pace. I stood still for a moment. Remarkable, really. A windmill never complains about the wind. It uses it. As I walked on, I saw an older man standing by the mill with his bicycle. Like me, he was looking up. "Beautiful mill," I said.

He nodded. "Certainly." "Hundreds of years old." We both kept watching for a moment. "Funny, isn't it," he said. "Most people hope for a life without headwind." He pointed at the turning sails. "While this mill actually lives off the wind." Those words hung quietly between us for a moment.

I looked at the sails again. Not one of them tried to hold back the wind. They worked with it. Maybe we humans often do exactly the opposite. We resist change. Setbacks. Things that go differently than planned. As if we believe life is only good when everything goes our way.

But maybe headwind itself is sometimes the very force that sets us in motion. The man got back on his bicycle. Just before he rode off, he turned around once more. "You know..." "The wind never asks permission." "But you do get to choose what you do with it."

He raised his hand. And cycled off calmly. I stayed a while longer. The mill kept turning, undisturbed. The wind hadn't changed. Neither had the mill. Only my way of looking. On the way home I thought about the moments when I myself had felt headwind.

Difficult choices. Disappointments. Uncertainty. At the time I would rather not have had them. But afterward, those very periods turned out to have taught me something. Patience. Trust. Resilience. Maybe a good life isn't about waiting for the wind to die down. Maybe it's about learning to move, whichever direction the wind comes from.

When I looked back one last time, the sails were still turning calmly. Not because the wind was perfect. But because it was simply there.

Bergloper Quote

"You can't change the wind. But you can learn how to set your sails to it." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which kind of headwind in your life ultimately made you stronger, wiser, or gentler than you ever expected?

Listen along the way

Kansas – "Dust in the Wind." A song that recalls impermanence and the value of consciously moving along with life.

Walk 66 – The Butterfly

This morning I walked through a wildflower meadow. It was the kind of place where summer looks its best. Wildflowers bloomed everywhere. Bees hummed from flower to flower, and now and then a dragonfly landed on a long blade of grass. I walked on calmly. Not because I had somewhere to be.

But because it felt like a waste to hurry. Then I saw a butterfly. It fluttered from flower to flower. Never long. Just a few seconds each time. As if every flower was exactly enough for that moment. A few meters further stood a little girl with her grandmother.

The girl pointed excitedly. "Look, Grandma!" "A butterfly!" She ran after it. The butterfly immediately flew off. Once more she tried to get closer. And again the butterfly took to the air. The girl looked disappointed. "Why won't it stay?" Her grandmother smiled. "Because some beautiful things won't let themselves be caught."

The girl thought for a moment. "So how should I look at it, then?" Her grandmother crouched down. "By staying still yourself." The girl stood still. Very still. After a few seconds something remarkable happened. The butterfly made a small loop. And landed very gently on a flower right beside her.

She almost held her breath. "Look..." she whispered. "Now it's staying." I smiled. How often do we chase after happiness? After success. After love. After peace. As if we think we have to grab it. Maybe it works the other way around. Maybe the most beautiful things come closer when we ourselves grow a little quieter.

I walked on. The butterfly slowly disappeared among the flowers. It let itself be carried by the wind. Not hurried. Not worried. Simply light. Along the way I thought about my own life. About moments when I very much wanted to hold on to something. A beautiful day. A special encounter.

A holiday. A conversation. The harder I tried to hold on to such a moment, the faster it seemed to slip away. Now I try more often just to be present. Because maybe that's the secret. Not wanting to keep everything. But truly living all of it. When I looked back once more at the end of the path, I saw the butterfly again.

Just for a moment. Then it disappeared among the flowers. And that was exactly right.

Bergloper Quote

"Happiness is sometimes just like a butterfly. The harder you chase it, the further it flies away. Whoever dares to grow still often discovers it comes closer on its own." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When were you last so present in a moment that you completely forgot what time it was?

Listen along the way

Norah Jones – "Come Away with Me." A hushed song that invites you to let go of the rush and truly be in the moment.

Walk 67 – The Picnic Table

Halfway through my walk I passed a wooden picnic table. No one was sitting there. Still, I stopped. Not because I was tired. At least, that's what I told myself. My legs had a slightly different opinion on the matter. I sat down and looked out over the field ahead of me. A few cows stood doing absolutely nothing, so convincingly that I almost felt guilty about my own to-do list.

After a few minutes a woman with a small backpack came walking up. She sat down on the other side of the table. "Break?" she asked. "Just for a bit." She smiled. "That's what busy people always say." I had to laugh. She took a mandarin orange out of her bag and began peeling it slowly.

"I used to think rest was something you earned after everything was done," she said. "And?" "Then I discovered everything is never done." That answer felt uncomfortably familiar. There's always another email. A phone call. A chore. An idea. Even on a day off, a person can be surprisingly diligent about feeling guilty for what they aren't doing.

The woman laid a segment of the mandarin on the napkin in front of her. "Rest isn't a reward," she said. "It's maintenance." I looked at the field. A bird landed on a post. Sat for a moment. Flew on again. Maybe nature does that better than we do.

Move. Land. Move again. Not constantly having to prove that you're on your way somewhere. After a while the woman stood up. "Well," she said. "Now I can go on again." "How long were you sitting here?" She glanced at her watch. "No idea. That was rather the point." She waved and walked off.

I stayed a few minutes longer. Not because I had to. But because I was beginning to understand that standing still isn't the same as falling behind. Sometimes a pause is exactly the stretch of the route that lets you walk the rest with attention again.

Bergloper Quote

"Rest isn't a reward once everything is finished. Rest is part of the road." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When do you allow yourself a real break, without first demanding that everything be done?

Listen along the way

Eva Cassidy – "Fields of Gold." A warm, quiet song that fits perfectly with simply landing, looking around, and having nowhere to be.

Walk 68 – The Loose Shoelace

This morning I walked through the woods. It was still early. So early that the dew hadn't yet left the grass and the first rays of sun were only just peeking between the trees. After a few minutes I felt something odd. My shoe was loose. My shoelace, that is.

I looked around. There was no one there. Still, I walked on a few more steps. I'll deal with it in a minute, I thought. That "in a minute" lasted exactly ten seconds. My foot caught on the loose lace. Not a dramatic fall. More the kind of clumsy stumble where you just manage to save yourself in time.

I had to laugh out loud. "Smooth move, Rob." I sat down on a tree stump and started retying my lace. At that moment an older walker came by. He smiled. "Loose lace?" "Apparently." He nodded. "Most people don't trip over big problems." I looked up.

"No?" "No." He pointed at my shoe. "Usually it's the small things we keep walking on with, for too long." He wished me a pleasant walk and continued on calmly. He didn't say anything more. He didn't need to. I looked at my shoe once more.

Funny, really... We put off a difficult conversation. We ignore a feeling of exhaustion. We think that small irritation will go away on its own. We just keep going. Not because we don't know what needs to happen. But because it seems so small. Until we finally trip over it anyway.

I stood up again. My shoe was tied firmly. The walk suddenly felt a lot more pleasant. Not because the path had changed. Only because I had taken a moment for something small. Along the way I thought about how much peace might arise if we didn't wait until something becomes a big problem.

Maybe a better life doesn't start with big changes at all. Maybe it starts simply... with tying a loose lace.

Bergloper Quote

"Whoever pays attention to the small things often prevents the big stumbles." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which loose lace in your life do you already know deserves your attention?

Listen along the way

James Taylor – "Handy Man." A light song that fits nicely with the idea that small repairs sometimes arrive exactly on time.

Walk 69 – The Old Bicycle

This morning I walked through a small village where time sometimes seems to move just a little slower. The baker still knew most people by name, and in front of the café a few bicycles stood as if they'd belonged in that exact spot for years. Against a lamppost stood an old men's bicycle.

It clearly wasn't new. The paint had worn away in places. A few rust spots dotted the handlebars, and the saddle had seen better days. Still, it looked well cared for. As I looked at it, an older man came outside. He put a bag of groceries on the rear rack.

"Nice bike," I said. He smiled. "I don't hear that often." "How old is it?" He thought for a moment. "Over fifty years." I whistled softly. "Then it's covered quite a few kilometers." "Just like its owner." We both laughed. I asked why he'd never bought a new one.

He ran his hand over the handlebars. "Because this one still takes me where I want to be." That answer was surprisingly simple. He got on, waved kindly, and cycled off calmly. I watched him go. Funny, really... We live in a time when almost everything gets replaced.

A phone that's three years old already feels old. A kitchen has to be more modern. A car bigger. A sofa nicer. As if new is automatically better. But maybe the value of some things lies precisely in the traces time has left behind. An old leather jacket that's shaped itself exactly to your body.

A favorite coffee mug with a small chipped rim. A book whose pages have already been turned a hundred times. Or a friendship that's lasted for decades. Not despite the scratches. But because of the scratches. Maybe that's true for people too. We sometimes try to hide our scars.

Our mistakes. Our difficult periods. While it's precisely those experiences that have made us who we are today. I walked on and looked back once more. The man had almost disappeared from sight by then. His old bicycle still rode surprisingly smoothly. And suddenly I thought...

Maybe the most beautiful thing about growing older isn't that you become more perfect. Maybe it's that you dare to be more and more yourself.

Bergloper Quote

"Not everything that's old has had its best days. Sometimes real value only begins with the years." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which scratch in your life turned out, in hindsight, to actually be part of your strength?

Listen along the way

Rod Stewart – "Forever Young." A warm song reminding us that staying young mostly has to do with your attitude toward life.

Walk 70 – The Doorbell

In a quiet street I heard a doorbell ring somewhere. A moment later a front door opened and an older woman appeared. In front of her stood a boy holding a small package. "For number 18," he said. "They're not home. Would you take it?"

"Of course." He handed her the box and was about to move on. "Wait a moment," she said. "Would you like some water? It's warm today." The boy hesitated. Then he nodded. She came back with a glass of water. He drank it in a few gulps. "Thank you."

"You're welcome. And take it easy. The world will manage fine if you're five minutes later." He laughed and walked on. I passed her garden and said, "That was kind." She shrugged. "A glass of water costs almost nothing." Then she looked at the doorbell.

"Funny thing, really." "The doorbell?" "Yes. People press it because they need something. But you never know what's really standing at your door." That sentence stayed with me. A delivery driver who's thirsty. A neighbor who needs a chat. A child asking for her ball back.

Someone who's finally gathered the courage to ring. We can't see behind every door. But we can choose how we open it. The woman picked up the package. "I used to find unexpected visitors difficult," she said. "Now I think: if someone's standing at my door, that's apparently the moment we get to meet, however briefly."

I walked on. A few houses further I heard another bell. The same simple sound. Ding-dong. And suddenly it sounded different. Not like an interruption. More like an invitation. Maybe there are small moments every day when life rings our doorbell. Not always literally.

A glance. A question. A message. Someone who stays quiet just a bit longer than usual. The question isn't only whether we hear it. But whether we're willing to open the door.

Bergloper Quote

"You never know what's really standing at your door. Sometimes attention just asks that you open it." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

For whom or what could you open the door a bit more consciously today, instead of seeing it as an interruption?

Listen along the way

Bill Withers – "Lovely Day." A warm song about how an ordinary moment can suddenly feel lighter through human attention.

Walk 71 – The Paper Boat

This morning I walked along a narrow ditch that wound through the park. It had rained that night. The water flowed slowly between the reeds, and here and there a few leaves drifted along. On a small footbridge stood a boy of about eight.

In his hands he held a paper boat. Very carefully he set it on the water. The little boat lay still at first. As if it, too, needed to get used to it. Then it slowly began to drift along. I stood and watched. So did the boy. After a few meters the boat got stuck among some twigs.

The boy was about to climb down to free it. His mother gently laid her hand on his shoulder. "Wait a moment." He looked at her questioningly. "Maybe it'll work out on its own." For a few seconds nothing happened. Then a small gust of wind came along.

The water moved just enough. The boat came loose and calmly continued on its way. The boy began to smile. "See," his mother said. She said nothing more. She didn't need to. I walked on. Funny, really... How often don't we try to fix something right away?

A silence in a conversation. A disagreement. A difficult period. As if everything has to be repaired immediately. While some things maybe just need a little time. A little space. And sometimes... a small gust of wind. I thought about moments when I myself so badly wanted to force something.

An answer. A decision. A change. Afterward I often discovered that life had already been working it out. Not at my pace. But at the right moment. When I looked back once more, I saw the little boat sailing on in the distance.

Small. Vulnerable. And yet exactly where it needed to be. Maybe we're sometimes just like paper boats. We think we're stuck. While life is simply still waiting for a gentle breeze.

Bergloper Quote

"Not everything that's standing still has stopped. Sometimes it's just gathering the strength to move on." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where might you be trying to force something right now, when it just needs a bit more time?

Listen along the way

Bobby McFerrin – "Don't Worry, Be Happy." A light reminder that not every stuck moment needs to be solved immediately.

Walk 72 – The Rain Puddle

After a heavy rain shower I walked through the park. The path was full of puddles. I did what most adults do: step neatly around them. Ahead of me walked a girl in red boots. She did exactly the opposite. Every puddle was an invitation. Splash. Another one.

Splash. Her father walked beside her with an expression clearly caught between parenting and enjoying the show. "Watch your coat," he finally said. The girl looked at her mud splatters. "But Dad, my coat can be washed, can't it?" He paused for a moment. "You've got a point there."

At the next puddle he jumped in himself. The splash was more impressive than he'd probably intended. The girl howled with laughter. I had to laugh too. A few minutes later I walked beside them. "Good walk?" the father asked. "Getting better all the time." He looked at his wet trousers. "Mine too, apparently."

We talked briefly about how careful adults sometimes become. Not only with clothing. With plans. With feelings. With fun. We don't want to get dirty, don't want to look foolish, don't want to laugh too loudly, don't want to do something that has no clear purpose. The girl was already jumping into the next puddle.

She asked no questions about the return on investment. She simply lived it. At the exit of the park our paths went separate ways. The girl waved. "Bye, sir! There's a really big puddle up there!" She pointed toward my route. "Thanks for the warning." When I reached it, I stopped.

I looked left. I looked right. There was no one around. Then I stepped right into the middle of it. Not spectacular. Just one firm step. My shoe got wet. My day didn't get any worse. If anything, better. Maybe fun doesn't always have to grow up. Maybe every now and then we're allowed to be a little bit of a child again.

Bergloper Quote

"Fun doesn't always have to be useful. Sometimes one jump in a puddle is already enough to wake back up." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where could you be a little less sensible and a little more playful today?

Listen along the way

Katrina and the Waves – "Walking on Sunshine." A cheerful song that fits perfectly with a wet shoe and an unexpectedly light day.

Walk 73 – The Last Train

I had caught the last train of the evening. The kind of train where it's quieter than during the day. People speak more softly. Some stare out the window. Others look at their phones, though no one seems to find anything truly interesting there anymore. I sat by the window. Outside, the lights of the city slid slowly past. Inside I heard only the soft sound of the rails.

Two benches further sat an older man. He wore a worn backpack and held a small notebook on his lap. Now and then he wrote down a few words. Then he looked outside again for a while. I grew curious. At the next stop nearly all the passengers got off. Only he and I remained in the carriage.

Then he looked up. "Nice time of day," he said. I smiled. "You don't hear that often about the last train." He laughed. "Exactly why." For a moment it was quiet. "You know," he said, "during the day everyone's mostly busy with where they still need to go. On the last train, it's as if people finally get to just be where they already are."

That sentence stayed with me. I looked around. A young woman slept with her head against the window. Further along someone sat listening to music with their eyes closed. A conductor walked calmly through the aisle, wishing everyone a pleasant evening. No one seemed to be in a hurry.

Funny, really... The train wasn't going any slower than during the day. Only we were. "Do you write often?" I asked, looking at his notebook. He nodded. "No big stories." "What then?" "Small things I don't want to forget." He flipped back a few pages. "Today I wrote down that a stranger smiled at me when I dropped my wallet."

He smiled again. "That person probably doesn't even remember it happened anymore." I thought about how many small moments we experience every day without pausing to notice them. A friendly cashier. Someone who waits a moment. A child who waves at you. A bird that starts singing at exactly the right moment.

Maybe it's precisely those small moments that make an ordinary day special. Not because they're big. But because we notice them. My station was approaching. I stood up. "Have a good evening," I said. "You too," he answered. "And don't forget to write down today."

I looked at him questioningly. "What, then?" He smiled. "That you met an old man on the last train." The doors opened. I stepped out. As the train pulled away slowly, I thought about his notebook. Maybe we don't remember the most beautiful days because something big happened.

Maybe we remember them because we saw the small things.

Bergloper Quote

"A beautiful life rarely consists of big moments. Usually of small moments someone found worth remembering." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which small moment from today is actually much too beautiful to forget already?

Listen along the way

Green Day – "Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)." A song about time, memories, and the moments that, in hindsight, turn out to have shaped a life.

Walk 74 – The Key That No Longer Fit Anything

During a walk through a small village I passed a thrift store. I actually hadn't planned on going in. I say that fairly often, by the way. And remarkably enough, I always end up among old books, yellowed photographs, and things I'll very convincingly tell everyone at home I really don't need.

By a wooden display case I stopped. There lay an old key. Not a shiny designer key. Just a heavy, iron key with an ornate head. The kind of key where you immediately think it must once have been important for something. I picked it up carefully. An employee saw me looking.

"Special, isn't it?" I nodded. "Do you know what it fit?" He smiled. "No idea." "And yet you keep it." He shrugged. "Maybe because someone once thought it was too valuable to throw away." I put the key back down. That one sentence stayed with me.

How many keys do we actually still carry around ourselves? Not made of iron. But memories. Words. Experiences. Some still open a door. Others no longer fit anything at all. Along the way I thought of an old remark someone had made to me years ago. I had carried that sentence around for far longer than the person who said it had probably ever intended.

Funny, really... Sometimes we hold on to a hurtful remark for years. But we've forgotten a compliment within a week. Why is that, really? A key is only valuable if it opens a door. Maybe the same is true for our memories. The memories that help us grow, we're allowed to cherish.

But the memories that only keep a door shut... maybe we don't need to carry those with us our whole lives. Before I walked away, I looked back once more. The old key lay quietly in the display case again. Waiting. Maybe for someone who saw a beautiful story in it.

Maybe for no one. And suddenly it occurred to me that not every key is meant to be kept. Some are only there to remind you... that it's sometimes time to open a new door.

Bergloper Quote

"Your past has taught you a great deal. But it doesn't have to remain the key to your future." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which old memory are you still carrying with you, when it might be time to open a new door?

Listen along the way

David Bowie – "Changes." A song about changing without denying where you came from.

Walk 75 – The Empty Flowerpot

During a walk through the residential neighborhood, my eye fell on a large terracotta flowerpot by a front door. It was empty. No flowers. No plant. Only some dry soil and a few stray leaves the wind had blown into it. Still, I stopped for a moment. Not because that flowerpot was so special.

Precisely because it wasn't. At that moment the front door opened. An older woman stepped outside with a watering can in her hand. She saw me looking and started laughing. "Yes," she said. "I even water an empty flowerpot." I looked at her, surprised.

"Why?" She set the watering can down. "Because next week I'm planting new flowers." She smiled. "And I like the idea that the soil already knows something new is coming." I had to laugh. "I don't think plants have any idea about that." "Probably not," she said.

"But I do." She said nothing more. She picked the watering can back up and went inside. I continued my walk. That empty flowerpot stayed on my mind. Funny, really... We often wait until everything is certain. Until we have a new job. Until we fall in love.

Until we feel better. Until the circumstances are perfect. Only then do we think about a new beginning. But maybe a new beginning starts much earlier than that. Maybe it starts the moment you make space. That you clear things out. That you take a first step.

That you already believe something beautiful can grow again. Along the way I thought about a gardener. He puts a seed in the ground. Not because he already sees flowers today. But because he trusts they will come. Maybe life sometimes asks the same of us.

Not that we know everything for certain. But that we're willing to give a little trust in advance to what isn't yet visible. When I was almost home, I looked back one more time. The flowerpot still stood there, empty. And yet... I suddenly saw flowers in it already.

Bergloper Quote

"Hope often begins long before there's anything to see. It begins the moment you make room for something new." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

For which new beginning could you make a little room today, even though you can't see the flowers yet?

Listen along the way

Nina Simone – "Feeling Good." A song that feels like making room for a new beginning, even before you know exactly what it will look like.

Walk 76 – The Little Feather in the Wind

On the path ahead of me a small feather drifted through the air. White, small, and almost weightless. The wind lifted it, let it sink, picked it up again, and pushed it a few meters further. I kept watching it. The feather didn't seem to mind anything about it.

An older woman walking behind me had apparently seen the same thing. "That thing has more trust than the two of us combined," she said. I laughed. "Or fewer plans." "That helps too." We walked on together for a bit. She told me she'd just retired. For forty years she'd worked with agendas, deadlines, and annual plans.

"And now?" I asked. "Now I'm trying to learn that not every day needs a goal." She pointed at the feather, which had by then landed in the grass. "Look. Even that is lying still for a moment now." A gust of wind came by and lifted it again. "And now it moves on again."

I thought about my own need to pin things down. Where am I heading? What's the next step? When does it need to be finished? Direction is nice. But control can also become a heavy kind of baggage. The woman stopped at a crossing. "I'm going this way," she said.

"Do you know where that path leads?" "No idea." She smiled. "That's exactly the plan today." We said goodbye. I saw the feather appear above the grass once more, then disappear. Maybe you don't always need to know where the wind takes you in order to keep moving with trust.

Not everything in life asks to be let go of. But some things only become light when you open your hand a little. I walked on without checking my phone to see how many kilometers I still had left. For once, the walk itself was allowed to decide where it ended.

Bergloper Quote

"Not everything needs to be fixed in place to be able to carry you. Sometimes the road becomes lighter when you open your hand a little." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Where could you hold on to a little less control and allow a little more trust?

Listen along the way

Tom Petty – "Free Fallin'." A song that fits beautifully with the feeling of letting go and discovering that not everything needs to be controlled.

Walk 77 – The Sunrise

Sometimes I wake up earlier than necessary. Not because the alarm goes off. Simply because my body decides the day has begun. Normally I roll over once more. But not that morning. I put on a jacket and walked outside. It was quiet.

So quiet you seemed to hear your own footsteps thinking. At the edge of the nature area stood a bench. I sat down. The sky was still dark blue. Very slowly a thin orange line appeared on the horizon. Beside me I heard someone say softly, "There it is again."

An older man was sitting a few meters away. I hadn't even seen him arrive. "Do you come here often?" I asked. He smiled. "Almost every week." "Doesn't it ever get boring?" He looked at me for a moment. "No." Then he looked back at the horizon. "A sunrise is never the same."

I looked again. He was right, actually. The colors changed every few seconds. Pink. Gold. Orange. As if the sky decided every morning to paint a different picture. More people slowly came walking up. No one said much. There was no need to. Sometimes words just get in the way.

When the sun finally rose above the horizon, something remarkable happened. Not with the sun. With the people. Everyone smiled. No one had arranged for applause. No one gave a speech. And yet it felt as if we were all experiencing exactly the same thing for a moment. I thought about how often a day begins without our really seeing it begin.

We jump out of bed. Check our phones. Rush to the next appointment. As if every new day were a given. Funny, really... Every sunrise is a new beginning. Not only for nature. For us too. Maybe we don't need to carry everything over from yesterday.

Not every worry. Not every disappointment. Not every mistake. The sun doesn't ask the night whether it may stay a little longer, either. It simply rises. Every day again. When I stood up to walk home, the world didn't feel different. But I did.

Maybe that's what hope actually is. The quiet trust that, however dark the night was, a new morning always comes again.

Bergloper Quote

"Every sunrise whispers the same thing: today you get the chance to begin again." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

If today could truly be a new beginning, what would you want to leave behind in yesterday?

Listen along the way

The Beatles – "Good Day Sunshine." A light and optimistic closing song for a book that ends with a new morning.

The Map of the Mountain

77 walks. 77 moments in which you could look at life just a little differently. Behind every story lies a small signpost. Not as a truth you must follow, but as a reminder of something you perhaps already knew somewhere inside.

So don't see this map as a summary of the book. See it as a lookout point. You glance back for a moment at the route you've covered and discover which themes kept walking beside you along the way.

"Direction doesn't begin on the map, but in your heart." — Bergloper Rob

Stage 1 – Coming home to yourself

#	Walk	Direction for the road
1	The Supermarket	Allowing yourself something
2	The Empty Chair	Love stays close
3	The Wrong Turn	Trusting the detour
4	The Bus Driver	Truly seeing the person
5	The Dog Without a Leash	Coming home to yourself
6	The Raincoat	Accepting what you can't change
7	The Cappuccino	Passing happiness on

Stage 2 – Attention and slowing down

#	Walk	Direction for the road
8	The Old Oak	Not comparing yourself
9	The Old Watch	Attention is more precious than time
10	The Bench	Allowing yourself rest
11	The Apple	Giving makes you richer
12	The Feather	Giving space and letting go
13	The Zebra Crossing	Kindness starts close by
14	The Tree That Was In No Hurry	Growing at your own pace

Bergloper Quote

"Slowing down isn't standing still. It's the shortest way to what truly matters." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

When did you last consciously slow down for a moment — and what did you notice?

Listen along the way

Bob Marley – "Sun Is Shining" (Super Duper Remix, 2020). A song that brings an instant smile. Exactly the energy for needing nothing for a moment, while still staying in motion.

Stage 3 – Direction and trust

#	Walk	Direction for the road
15	The Unknown Path	Daring to leave the familiar
16	The Reflection in the Water	First growing still, then choosing
17	The Old Bridge	Seeing where you already stand
18	The Key	Listening to your inner knowing
19	The Lantern	Being a small light for someone else
20	The Rainbow	Keeping a sense of wonder
21	The Bridge	Daring to take the first step

Stage 4 – Letting go and growing

#	Walk	Direction for the road
22	The Backpack	Leaving behind what has done its work
23	The View	Recognizing how far you've already come
24	The Mirror	Looking at yourself with appreciation
25	The Sun	Beginning again
26	The Detour	Seeing the detour as a gift
27	The Backpack That Was Too Heavy	Not carrying everything forever
28	The Man on the Bridge	Daring to choose

Bergloper Quote

"What you dare to let go of makes room for what still needs to grow." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

What are you still carrying with you that has actually long since done its work?

Listen along the way

Faithless – "We Come 1." A song about connection, about moving forward together without it meaning less of yourself.

Stage 5 – Resilience and connection

#	Walk	Direction for the road
29	The Wind	Using headwind
30	The Bench	Letting grief turn into gratitude
31	The Child	Looking through a child's eyes
32	The Old Man on the Bench	Appreciating ordinary days
33	The Two Backpacks	Not judging invisible baggage
34	The Unread Letter	Not postponing the words that matter
35	The Signpost	Daring to choose without full certainty

Stage 6 – Humanity and patience

#	Walk	Direction for the road
36	The Bridge Between Two Brothers	Choosing connection over being right
37	The Bench in the Rain	Being present without needing to fix
38	The Man With the Binoculars	Having patience with what needs time
39	The Tree That Stayed Standing	Seeing your scars as strength
40	The Game of Chess	Making the next move after a mistake

#	Walk	Direction for the road
41	The Kite	Persevering before you see the result
42	The Man With the Empty Bucket	Truly asking how someone is doing

Bergloper Quote

"Patience isn't waiting. It's trusting while you simply keep walking." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

With whom — or what — could you show a little more patience this week, perhaps even with yourself?

Listen along the way

Survivor – "Eye of the Tiger." Sometimes you just need a shot of determination. This song delivers it in three minutes.

Stage 7 – Direction, support, and perseverance

#	Walk	Direction for the road
43	The Stonemason	Finding your way back to who you truly are
44	The Gardener	Feeding what you want to help grow
45	The Light	Lighting only the next step
46	The Ripples in the Water	The power of small kindness
47	The Compass Needle	Following your inner compass
48	The Walking Stick	Daring to accept support
49	The Cyclist on the Dike	Keeping pace against headwind

Stage 8 – Memories and new doors

#	Walk	Direction for the road
50	The Empty Swing	Giving attention to those you love
51	The Key in the Antique Shop	Daring to open a new door
52	The Vanished Chalk Drawing	Beautiful moments keep existing
53	The Fallen Tree	Seeing space in an ending
54	The Keyring on the Bench	People can open doors
55	The Lost Balloon	A different outcome can also be valuable
56	The Sailboat	Moving with the wind without losing your destination

Bergloper Quote

"A closed door isn't the end of the route. Often it's exactly where a new path begins." — Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Question

Which memory could you look at today with gentleness, instead of with pain?

Listen along the way

Avicii – "The Days." A reminder that the days behind you have shaped who you are now — and that plenty more still lie ahead.

Stage 9 – Learning to live more gently

#	Walk	Direction for the road
57	The Coffee Stain	Keeping a small setback small
58	The Old Photo	Memories don't only live in photographs
59	The Loose Knot	Looking more gently at a knot
60	The Shadow	Difficult days shape you
61	The Moon	You don't always have to be whole
62	The Echo	Being aware of what you send out
63	The Firefly	A small light can be enough

Stage 10 – Light, rest, and attention

Stage 11 – Letting go and beginning again

#	Walk	Direction for the road
71	The Paper Boat	Not forcing what needs time
72	The Rain Puddle	Letting playfulness in
73	The Last Train	Remembering the small moments
74	The Key That No Longer Fit Anything	Daring to let go of an old memory
75	The Empty Flowerpot	Making room for a new beginning
76	The Little Feather in the Wind	Letting go of a little more control
77	The Sunrise	Beginning again today

And if, after Walk 77, you take only one thing with you, let it be this:

The mountain was never meant to be climbed as fast as possible. Life doesn't only sit at the summit; it's all around you. It's precisely during the journey upward that you learn, live, and enjoy.

Take a conscious look around you along the way. See the beauty of the flowers growing between the rocks and listen to the rustling of the leaves in the wind.

Too often we're so focused on the destination that we completely overlook the small wonders along our path.

But in those unexpected, everyday moments of rest and connection lies the real value of the journey.

Trust that every breath and every step, however heavy, contributes to your personal growth and inner strength.

You don't have to run to prove that you're here. You are exactly where you need to be, at exactly the right moment, to learn, to feel, and to experience — to truly live. We'll all get there. Have trust. You are never alone. Enjoy the journey. Take a small step every day.

Then you'll get there too...

Afterword – From Here, You can Walk On

And here we are. 77 walks behind us. We've walked together through the rain and sat together in the sun. We've gotten lost, rested on benches, crossed bridges, let things go, and sometimes just looked up at the sky together.

Maybe you recognized something along the way. Maybe one walk touched you while ten others have already faded. That's not a problem at all. A good walk doesn't need every meter of it to be special. Sometimes one view is enough to remember the whole journey by.

This book didn't set out to tell you how to live, or anything like that. Mostly, it wanted to invite you to slow down every now and then and look closely. A little slower. A little softer. With a bit more attention for what's already there.

I hope you haven't answered all the questions in this book. Some questions are too beautiful to solve right away. They're allowed to walk alongside you for a while.

And maybe one day you'll pass an old tree, an empty bench, or an unexpected detour, and think for a moment of one of these stories. Not because my words are so important, but because you, in that moment, discover your own meaning in them.

That's the beautiful thing about walking. In the end, everyone walks their own route. Thank you for letting me walk a stretch beside you. I've enjoyed it.

From here, you walk on alone.

And should you ever doubt which way to go: just take one step first. And then another, and another. The rest of the path often only reveals itself once you're moving.

Until we meet again, somewhere along the way. All the best to you.

Bergloper Rob

About Bergloper Rob

Bergloper Rob is the name under which Rob Lucassen writes about conscious living, personal growth, connection, and the small moments in which life sometimes unexpectedly reveals something.

For him, the mountain is a simple image for life, a beautiful metaphor. We're all on our way. Sometimes we walk lightly, sometimes we carry a heavy backpack. Sometimes we know the route, and sometimes we have no idea where the next path leads.

Rob doesn't see himself as a guru standing at the top of the mountain, shouting down how others should climb. He'd rather walk alongside as a fellow traveler.

With curiosity, humor, questions, and the trust that every person has their own wisdom, their own pace, and also their own free choice.

One idea sits at the center of his work: life is here to be learned from, and to be lived. Growth matters, but enjoying the journey matters just as much.

77 Walks is an invitation to pause and notice that, every now and then. Not by searching harder for answers, but by looking more closely at what ordinary life already shows you every day.

Bergloper Rob

Live. Walk. Discover.

Top 56

The musical mountain walk — the closing ...

Three stages. Three peaks. One journey by feel.

THREE MUSICAL JOURNEYS. THREE TIMES TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN. YIPPEE!

Why does this list exist?

This Top 56 isn't just a list of nice songs. It's a little extra for along the way: for a lovely nature walk, a morning when you could use some sunshine, or an evening when you just want to "land."

Music does something words sometimes can't. It brings back memories, gives energy, makes you feel lighter, and sometimes even helps you come home to yourself.

And yes: this is pure numerology, with sacred numbers. The 56 comes from eight basic human emotions, times seven. The theory of the 8 basic emotions comes from the well-known work of Professor Robert Plutchik. He developed the Wheel of Emotions, in which he mapped the 8 primary basic emotions as opposites of one another. So now you know that too.

Seven and three are sacred numbers in the Bible. That's why there are three musical journeys, each with its own musical "peak." Yet together they form one complete journey. We start with the heavenly track by Robert Miles – "One and One." *One and one is still one. When we cry, when we laugh, I am half, you are half... Look how far we have come...*

Further along in the list, Faithless – "We Come 1." Both artists invite us to think a little more deeply — we all carry a similar energy inside us, and that's your soul. Beautiful, isn't it.

So these aren't just random tracks placed one after another. Each journey begins calmly, gradually builds more movement and tempo, and rises to a musical peak. After that always comes a landing: a chance to breathe, feel, and begin again. Not strictly according to rules or tempo alone, but mostly by feel. Because the most beautiful transition isn't always technically logical — it has to feel right in your gut.

See it as a surprise and as inspiration. Put it on, let it walk along with you, and see which tracks move you. If it's not for you, just switch back to your own playlist right away.

More is coming soon: we're working on a music app that can make this kind of personal musical journey even more beautiful and easier to enjoy. But for now: shoes on, earbuds in, and go. Enjoy the walk!

Stage 1 — From the valley to the first lookout point

Warming up, connecting, and building rhythm. Then: the first real peak, followed by a grand, cinematic landing.

1. Robert Miles – "One and One"
2. Champaign – "How 'Bout Us"
3. Bee Gees – "How Deep Is Your Love"
4. Ruth Jacott – "Leun Op Mij"
5. The Bellamy Brothers – "Let Your Love Flow"
6. Bob Marley & The Wailers – "One Love"
7. Bob Marley & The Wailers – "Three Little Birds"
8. Wesly Bronkhorst – "Trots op Jou"
9. Goombay Dance Band – "Sun of Jamaica"
10. Miriam Makeba – "Pata Pata"
11. Master KG feat. Nomcebo Zikode – "Jerusalema"
12. Marshmello & Farruko – "Esta Vida"
13. Yves Larock – "Rise Up" (Raul Rincon Vox Mix)
14. Bellagio – "Voyage Voyage" (House Relax version)
15. Tiësto – "Traffic"
16. Avicii – "Fade Into Darkness" (Vocal Radio Mix)
17. Mauro Picotto – "Lizard" • **MUSICAL PEAK**
18. Joe Cocker & Jennifer Warnes – "Up Where We Belong" • *landing*

Stage 2 — Through the landscape: sun, celebration, memory, and the second peak

Beginning light again, then growing looser and more danceable. A moment of floating in the middle; two final surges near the end and a conscious landing back into humanity.

19. Nana Mouskouri – "Guten Morgen Sonnenschein"
20. Alan Jackson – "Chattahoochee"
21. Jan Smit – "Tranquilo"
22. René Schuurmans – "Laat De Zon In Je Hart"

23. Rudy de Wit – "Ga Met Me Mee"
24. Eddy Grant – "Gimme Hope Jo'anna"
25. Michael Jackson – "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)"
26. Elton John, Dua Lipa & PNAU – "Cold Heart"
27. Tinlicker & Helsloot – "Because You Move Me"
28. Céline Dion – "I'm Alive"
29. 2 Brothers on the 4th Floor – "Dreams (Will Come Alive)"
30. Alice DeeJay – "Back in My Life"
31. Regard – "Ride It"
32. Jimmy Sax – "No Man No Cry"
33. Elderbrook & Emmit Fenn – "I'll Find My Way to You"
34. Carl Cox & Josh Butler – "I Want You (Forever)"
35. Lawstylez, M-T3CK & TECHNO KING – "L'Amour Toujours"
36. DJ Quicksilver – "Bellissima" (Original 12-inch Cut) • **MUSICAL PEAK**
37. Marvin Gaye – "What's Going On" • *landing*

Stage 3 – The final climb and the summit

From humor and zest for life to faith, depth, trance, and the light at the end. The last peak is grand; the finale feels like coming home.

38. Jannes – "De Hele Wereld Mag Het Weten"
39. Mart Hoogkamer – "In de Naam van..."
40. Elton John – "Circle of Life"
41. Julio Iglesias – "Quiero"
42. Jan Smit – "Als Je Lacht"
43. Yves Berendse – "Terug In De Tijd"
44. Marco Schuitmaker – "Engelbewaarder"
45. Jan Biggel – "Ons Moeder Zeej Nog"
46. Corry Konings – "Druk Je Lijf Tegen Dat Van Mij"
47. Man 2 Man Meet Man Parrish – "Male Stripper"

- 48. Bee Gees – "More Than a Woman"
- 49. Depeche Mode – "Enjoy the Silence"
- 50. Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark – "(Forever) Live and Die"
- 51. Above & Beyond feat. Richard Bedford – "Sun & Moon"
- 52. Damien N-Drix & STV – "Let It Ring"
- 53. Faithless – "We Come 1"
- 54. René et Gaston & Chocolate Puma – "Vallée De L'Armes"
- 55. Artena – "Opus" (Radio Edit) • **MUSICAL PEAK**
- 56. Yusuf / Cat Stevens – "Morning Has Broken" • *landing*

Listen to the full musical journey

Search for the playlist "Top 56 Bergloper Rob" on Spotify, or scan the QR code below.

open.spotify.com/playlist/3JB3jyO5GFxf2u1fQqNY6g