



## Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom

By Ken Ilgunas

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### Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom By Ken Ilgunas

In this frank and witty memoir, Ken Ilgunas lays bare the existential terror of graduating from the University of Buffalo with \$32,000 of student debt. Ilgunas set himself an ambitious mission: get out of debt as quickly as possible. Inspired by the frugality and philosophy of Henry David Thoreau, Ilgunas undertook a 3-year transcontinental journey, working in Alaska as a tour guide, garbage picker, and night cook to pay off his student loans before hitchhiking home to New York.

Debt-free, Ilgunas then enrolled in a master's program at Duke University, determined not to borrow against his future again. He used the last of his savings to buy himself a used Econoline van and outfitted it as his new dorm. The van, stationed in a campus parking lot, would be more than an adventure—it would be his very own “Walden on Wheels.”

Freezing winters, near-discovery by campus police, and the constant challenge of living in a confined space would test Ilgunas's limits and resolve in the two years that followed. What had begun as a simple mission would become an enlightening and life-changing social experiment. *Walden on Wheels* offers a spirited and pointed perspective on the dilemma faced by those who seek an education but who also want to, as Thoreau wrote, “live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.”

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## Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom By Ken Ilgunas Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

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*\*Starred Review\** Most college students these days take burdensome, long-term loans for granted as the obligatory cost of earning their degrees. For recent University of Buffalo liberal-arts graduate Ilgunas, however, the sight of \$32,000 printed in black and white on a Sallie Mae loan statement yielded a life-changing epiphany. Instead of remaining shackled to his low-wage job at a Niagara Falls Home Depot and rooming with his parents to better whittle away his debt, Ilgunas struck off to remote Coldfoot, Alaska, to get a taste of wilderness living while working as a cook and sometime nature guide. Many years, odd jobs, and escapades later, including hitchhiking across the U.S., paddling a canoe as a “voyageur” across Northern Canada, and joining a cleanup crew in Katrina-ravaged rural Mississippi, Ilgunas was finally debt-free. Yet a new epiphany led him back to college for a master’s degree. Inspired by Thoreau’s example of low-impact living, and determined to minimize housing expenses to avoid another mountain of debt, Ilgunas spent the last of his savings on a used vehicle he variously dubs the titular “Walden on wheels” or “a creepy red van.” Replete with colorful anecdotes and disarming wit, Ilgunas’ account is both a goad for chronic debtors and an irresistibly engrossing true-life adventure tale. --Carl Hays

### Review

"*Walden on Wheels* [is] a remarkable memoir that manages to stay light on its feet while saying a great deal about the state of modern American society. Ilgunas is a rare and wonderful travel companion. Along the way, he describes natural phenomena so skillfully that you might be compelled to flee your desk and head for the hills, walking stick in hand." —*Washington Post*

"Ilgunas penned the most readable of the tomes on education this year. Ilgunas lives [the educational crisis] and tells quite the adventure tale. His education – flawed and expensive as it was – pays off." —*The Globe and Mail*

"[*Walden on Wheels* is] searching and ambitious—one of the best books I've read this year." —*LA Review of Books*

"*Walden on Wheels* is a funny and poetic tale of personal growth, suburban angst, and beef jerky." —A.J. Jacobs, author of *Drop Dead Healthy* and *The Year of Living Biblically*

"A thoroughly endearing account." —*The Wall Street Journal*

"Replete with colorful anecdotes and disarming wit, Ilgunas’ account is both a goad for chronic debtors and an irresistibly engrossing true-life adventure tale." —*Booklist*, Starred Review

"*Walden on Wheels* should be required reading for every student, not to mention every elected official and candidate for office." —*BizPac Review*

"[Ilgunas] tells a good, refreshingly honest story about one young man’s quest for freedom, a story that has something to say to Americans, whatever their age." —*Greensboro News and Record*

"*Walden on Wheels* is essential reading for liberal arts majors because it will inspire you to follow your dreams." —*LiberalArtsSurvival.com*

"*Walden on Wheels*, a remarkable memoir that manages to stay light on its feet while saying a great deal about the state of modern American society. Ilgunas is a rare and wonderful travel companion" —*Tampa Tribune*

"Ilgunas' radical approach to life and unique sense of humor is what makes *Walden on Wheels* a great read." —*Metro*

"A funny and poignant take on debt in America, education, and making the most out of life." —*Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine*

"This enthralling account ...is richly layered with both humor and deep circumspection. Thoughtful and well-crafted, [and] inspiring to read, *Walden on Wheels*, reminds one that life is made up of the little things, the experiences gained, the adventures survived, rather than the consumables acquired." —*Summit Daily*

"Ilgunas heroically (and often comically) maps out a life beholden to no one. Standing against the madness of conformity, Ilgunas offers what could be the Walden of our age." —Andrew Steele, former head writer of *Saturday Night Live* and creative director of *Funny or Die*

"Wrapped in a powerfully told, often self-deprecating travel memoir, *Walden on Wheels* delivers important, even life-changing, insights into navigating your way to a saner life in a sometimes insane, debt-driven, consumer culture." —Jeff Yeager, author of *The Ultimate Cheapskate's Road Map to True Riches*

"*Walden on Wheels* is a powerful narrative that puts a human face on the problem facing too many college graduates these days as tuition prices and student debt continue to climb. Ken Ilgunas' humorous coming of age story should be a warning to any student who doesn't worry about how taking on excessive debt might impact them." —Jeffrey J. Selingo, author of *College (Un)bound*

"Give him anger or give him tears, but nothing's going to hem in the energy force that is Ken Ilgunas." —Daniel Asa Rose, author of *Larry's Kidney*

"Loved this book — and was both entertained and encouraged — from page one to the very end." —*Backwoods Home Magazine*

"Among many other delights, Ken Ilgunas offers a fresh, provocative perspective on the student debt debate in his rollicking coming-of-age memoir—a funny and inspirational debut." —Robert Twigger, author of *Angry White Pyjamas*

#### About the Author

KEN ILGUNAS was born in Hamilton, Ontario, and raised in Wheatfield—a small rural-suburban town in Western New York where his family lives. At the moment, he's either tending a friend's garden in Stokes County, North Carolina, or traveling cross-country in his van.

#### Users Review

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##### Mary Sims:

What do you about book? It is not important to you? Or just adding material when you require something to explain what you problem? How about your free time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have free time? What did you do?

Every person has many questions above. They must answer that question due to the fact just their can do in which. It said that about book. Book is familiar in each person. Yes, it is right. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom to read.

**Lauren Joseph:**

Here thing why this particular Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom are different and dependable to be yours. First of all studying a book is good however it depends in the content than it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom giving you information deeper as different ways, you can find any e-book out there but there is no reserve that similar with Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing which happened in the world which is perhaps can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in park, café, or even in your means home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the branded book maybe the form of Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom in e-book can be your alternate.

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**Sidney Robertson:**

What is your hobby? Have you heard this question when you got pupils? We believe that that query was given by teacher for their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every person has different hobby. And also you know that little person similar to reading or as studying become their hobby. You need to understand that reading is very important and also book as to be the matter. Book is important thing to add you knowledge, except your own personal teacher or lecturer. You see good news or update concerning something by book. Many kinds of books that can you go onto be your object. One of them is this Walden on Wheels: On the Open Road from Debt to Freedom.

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