

Lost In The City? 7 Ways To Navigate Without GPS

A GPS is nice, however it can make you lazy about finding your way around the city. In a time of crisis that can easily be your undoing because you will not have a viable means to find your way out of the city as quickly and efficiently as possible.

So you'll come to the conclusion that you are as helpless as a baby in the woods unless you know [how to use maps](#) and apply natural navigation methods to the city environment.

That's why you must have already developed and tested your escape plans for leaving the city before any crisis occurs. The plan should be developed and tested for traveling above ground as well as traveling underground.

To be prepared and ready for a major crisis you must make up two bug out bag kits. The first one to be carried in your brief or back pack that would get you safely home and or out of the city. The second one that would be kept at home and would have more detailed information on all routes out of the city to a place of safety.

Each Bug Out Bag should contain at least the following items.

- Maps, schematic of underground conduits, and directions for the trip that include above and underground travel with alternate routes. (Note – the maps and schematics in your bug out kit at home would contain maps of the entire city as opposed to simple routes to get home. Depending on where you are located in the city, you may need an extensive library of maps, hence the reason for storing them at home instead of trying to keep them all with you.)
- Compass for finding the heading.

- A spare watch to tell time with, preferably a wind up watch that does not rely on any type of integrated circuit.
- Paper, pens, and pencils to write with.
- Energy bars, dried trail mix, candy bars and bottled water to drink.
- A good utility pocket knife or a survival sheath knife.
- A coil of para cord about 50 feet long.
- Small compact flashlight with extra batteries.
- Fire starting kits to start fires when needed.

There are two basic ways to travel in a time of social unrest. The first way would be above ground in daylight or darkness. The second way is underground in daylight or darkness.

There are two main types of city street layouts. The grid and the organic layouts.



In the US, the grid system was widely used in most major cities and suburbs until the late 1960s. The grid layouts like New York City are pretty easy to navigate because all roads are built in one or two directions. In the grid layout,

streets run at right angles of each other.

There are two basic ways of naming these roads. Normally avenues run north and south and streets run east and west. One of the main advantages of a grid layout was it allowed the rapid subdivision and auction of a large parcel of land.

The organic road layouts occur when roads are built as the city needs them rather than with a long term structured plan. An organic city is one that grows over time from old designs focused around things that were relevant at the time.

This might include an original settlement, a resource, important community landmark, or something else. In some cities current roadways follow historical roads that trace long forgotten land borders or old traveling trails.

Seven Ways To Find Your Way in a City

Satellite Dishes

Look for satellite dishes on buildings or towers. Satellite dishes work by pointing the dish towards a geostationary satellite that stays over the same point. Because of this, most dishes in the city will be pointing in the same direction.

Compare many dishes that are pointing in the same direction and this will give you the best idea of the true direction the dishes are pointing to. Compare the satellite dish direction to compass readings in order to determine what direction they are pointing in and how that relates to the North. At night, you can also compare dish directions to constellations with known orientations in relation to the Earth.

Religious Buildings



In the larger older cities most churches were built to face east and can be used to get a rough estimate of which direction you are pointing. Sometimes this is not very accurate, but it can get you started until you find a better way in which to use as a navigation aid.

Christian churches are normally aligned east to west with the main altar at the eastern end to face the sunrise. In addition, many church grave yards have their gravestones aligned east to west.

To find the direction from a mosque, go inside and look for the prayer niche in one of the walls which indicates the direction for prayers. If the mosque is west of Mecca, then this niche will be pointing east. If the Mosque is east of Mecca, then the niche is pointing west.

Synagogues normally place the Torah Ark at the eastern end of the building. It is positioned this way so worshipers face Jerusalem. Synagogues in countries east of Israel will place the Torah Ark in the western end of the building to face Jerusalem.

Weathering

The prevailing winds carry rain and pollutants. These two substances then hit the building leaving patterns of discolorations on the buildings. If the wind comes from one direction more than the others, say the southwest, this leaves

asymmetrical weathering patterns on buildings similar to the erosion observed in nature.

Look up at the higher floors to see the natural stone or the weathered bricks. Notice how the building corners all show different weathering patterns. The contrast between the southwest and the northeast corners would be the greatest. With a little practice the shifts in colors where the rain and pollutants have left their mark can be read on all sides of the buildings.

Flow of Pedestrians

If you are trying to get from one point to another study the flow of pedestrian traffic. By following a crowd in the late afternoon, it will take you towards a station or other transportation hub. In the morning, walk against the flow of the crowd to locate these stations. At lunchtime on a nice sunny day, the crowds move from office buildings towards the open areas of parks.



Very few people realize when they are lost in a large city that roads do not spring up randomly. They grow to carry traffic. The bulk of the traffic is either heading into or out of the city. The biggest roads tend to be aligned in a particular way depending if you are in the center or the outskirts of the city.

In the north or south of a city the major roads will tend to be aligned north or south. In the northwest or southeast of a city there will be a bias towards northwest or southeast. This is why road maps of big cities show a radial pattern.

Flow of Rivers in the City

Know the direction a river flows through your city. Does it flow north, south, east, or west? Is the flow from higher ground to lower ground? Do these rivers flow to the sea or to other rivers?

After you find the answers, it makes it easier to decide if leaving the city by water is a feasible plan. If it is not then you must adjust your plans and use other means.

Direction of Bridges

Know which direction bridges go. Before a time of crisis your travel plans must be completed and you must decide if the use of bridges would help you to leave the city or would they put you at risk. In the early part of a crisis before road blocks are set up, they may be useful. After the road blocks are in place it could be almost impossible to get safely across them due to riots or others that will block your path.

The Use of Clouds Blowing Across the Sky

To keep from getting lost in a city, you need to develop a good sense of direction. You must [orientate yourself to the city](#). To do this is to use some of the clues above. Then note the direction the clouds are moving. The [wind pushing the clouds](#) will remain fairly constant, providing there are no dramatic weather changes.

This technique works when on subway trips in a new part of the city. Simply look up before entering the subway and remember the direction the clouds were blowing. When you leave the subway in a strange part of the city look up again and you will be able to work out which way is which from the clouds over head.

One of the nice things about traveling in a city is that at every intersection there are elevated road signs on poles to show the average person the name of the road, The block number, and the direction of the road is going. An example of

this is: 105 A ST. West.

This address is in the 100 block of A Street West building number 5. In most big cities when there is a long street that has been separated into East and West. There is a boundary crossroad that is the neutral. All street addresses that are East of this road will have the East locator added to the address. The same is true with the West portion of the street.

In a time before a crisis it is to your advantage to know how to travel around a city both on the surface and underground without the aid of a GPS or a smart phone. During a crisis the odds are all electronic navigation systems will be down or be greatly reduced to the general public.

Using the older navigation methods will be the only way to travel around a new part of the city. If you have done your homework and practiced the odds are very good that you will reach your destination safely.

Interested in surviving blackouts? [CLICK HERE](#) to find out more!

*This article has been written by **Fred Tyrell** for [Survivopedia](#).*