

How To Survive Without Your Bugout Bag

- Carry a core layer of survival/self-recovery gear in your pockets and on your person.
- Shedding a pack can increase mobility and get you where you need to be using fewer calories.
- Cache supplies so you can get by without a heavy pack.

A backpack full of carefully selected gear can be a huge asset in a survival ordeal. There have been many times I have benefited greatly from having one and other times where I surely would have benefited had I had one, but there are also times when a big pack can become less-effective or the survivor becomes separated from his pack.

Reasons Packs Become Separated from Survivors & Situations Where They Become Less-Effective

- Packs get taken off when we take a seat in a vehicle or rest
- Ejected from a vehicle
- Pinned in wreckage
- Unplanned swim
- Need to outrun hostiles
- Need to cover miles quickly

The past couple of decades, there has been a huge emphasis on bugout bags in the survival community, before that the bag was mostly referred to as a ruck (short for rucksack) or a pack. The “average” American spends about 50% of his (or her) time at home, 25% at work and 25% elsewhere.

Catch A Glimpse of Green Beret Outdoor Survival Ingenuity

No matter what your level, it is to your advantage to have some survival gear on hand. In 1865, the last known Native American to live in the wilderness was a Yana man named Ishi who walked out of the hills in California. The previous fall, Ishi was living with his mother, his younger sister and his uncle when a party of surveyors surprised them in their camp, causing them to scatter. The prospectors selfishly helped themselves to nearly everything the small band owned, including bows and arrows and fur winter clothing. The result was that even though they had lived in their entire lives in the wilderness only Ishi survived. If you have spent much time at primitive survival, then you understand how time consuming it is to make certain articles and that materials are often only available in certain seasons. Regardless of training and experience, the loss of certain pieces of gear can diminish your chances of survival which is the situation most survivalists will be in should they become separated from their bugout bags.

Adopt a Modular, Layered Approach to Survival Gear

Those of you who read my articles on website know that I am into applying modularity to survival kits and the reason is that it is not the strongest or even the smartest who survive, but the most adaptable and a modular survival kit can be quickly and easily broken down into its primary components and then reorganized ... adding or subtracting modules to adapt to dynamic or even unforeseeable circumstances.

Layering that kit means that if you are separated from your pack, as often happens in severe survival scenarios, you still have what I like to call a *Survival/Self-recovery (SSR) Core*

Layer of survival gear. The layer must be compact and lightweight, so it is not removed when you rest or take a seat in a vehicle. It also must be worn or fit comfortably in your pockets. Because we tend to remove packs and large pouches when we rest or enter vehicles, the equipment they contain will be of no use to us if we are ejected from a vehicle, pinned under wreckage or if we take an unexpected swim and must doff our packs to swim to shore.

Rescue & Self-Recovery

In all my decades of adventures across the globe, I have been through a lot. I have gotten turned around, been injured, robbed, attacked, handcuffed, have treated gunshot wounds, participated in rescues, been activated and responded to declared emergencies, experienced storms on the water, hunkered down through sand storms, been stranded by flash flooding, had a verified microburst tear through my camp, got vehicles stuck or had them break down. I have even needed help myself, but I have never managed to get myself into a situation where I needed a full-blown rescue effort involving the authorities.

I have self-recovered many times, but never needed rescue and in interviewing other survivors. Interviewing other survivors and adventurers, I have established that my experience is typical. On average, adventurers self-recover many times for every time rescue is necessary, yet survival kits and prevailing survival doctrine both discourage self-recovery in favor of rescue. Ask any survival instructor and they'll parrot what they have been taught by rescuers, "Stay put and wait for rescue!" While that does make the jobs of rescuers easier, it doesn't take into consideration all the people who are able to self-recover, preventing rescue from taking place.

I suppose I could preach, "Self-recovery vs Rescue" but I

think that would be a mistake. I can't predict the future, and neither can any other survival instructor. You may need to be rescued next or you may need to self-recover. Instead, I recommend that your survival gear should give the option to do either. You might need to be rescued or you might need something less, often a whole lot less.

Survival/Self-recovery (S/SR) Core Layer

The SSR Core Layer should give the survivor a few basic tools for security, treating illness and injuries, block the wind, stay dry, get warm, make shade, procure and treat water to avoid waterborne illness, procure and cook food to avoid foodborne illness, navigate, signal for rescue, make tools, escape restraints, open or bypass simple locks, pay for a ride, parts, food or supplies during self-recovery and work in the dark. While that may seem like a lot of capability, the tools to do all that and more can be comfortably carried on one's person.

With the S/SR Core Layer, should you become separated from your bugout bag or get home bag, you will still have the essentials needed to survive. I carry the bulk of my SS/R Core Layer broken up into pouches which I store in my pockets.

Clothing

With or without a bugout bag, the clothing, footwear and accessories you choose to wear impact your chances of survival. The clothing people wear for a day hike is a good example. Day hikers and trail runners often drive up from the valleys to the mountains, wearing the bare minimum to make their hike or run more comfortable in the heat of the day. When things don't go exactly as planned and they end up spending the night, they are woefully unprepared for nighttime

temperatures and end up hypothermic or succumbing to exposure.

Clothing Tips

The clothing you choose can make you less dependent on your pack or lighten the load.

- Layer for the coolest nighttime temperature instead of the daytime temperature. In the hotter parts of the day, strip off layers and stash them in your pack.
- Wear or bring a hat. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat can keep you from getting wet in a light rain with little wind, can shade you or prevent heat loss. It is little wonder that cultures the world over have come up with hats adapted to their environment. Notice what the locals wear and pick one up.
- Layers should be light, loose-fitting and adjustable to trap dead air space or allow air flow as needed.
- Choose clothing with pockets to carry your S/SR Core Layer.
- Clothing should be concealed carry-friendly whether you carry normally or not.
- Long sleeves that can be rolled and buttoned in place as short sleeves or clothing that can be otherwise adapted to cover more, or less, of your body is preferable. You may want to protect windburned or sunburned skin, catch a breeze, warm up or cool down.
- Wear wicking layer next to the skin that transport moisture away from the skin.
- Quick dry clothing is much more comfortable than cotton denim should you get wet. It is also less work to dry it out.
- Flammability is an issue when working around fire in survival and combat settings. Flame & flash resistant clothing can protect your skin from burns, while flammable clothing can make a bad situation worse by adding fuel to the fire.

- Choose footwear that is useful in a survival situation. I like light boots on the trail and light hurraches or similar sandals around camp to let their feet cool and let their socks dry out. Clean, dry socks are important to keep feet warm, comfortable and prevent blisters.

Travel Fast & Light Between Pre-Prepared Locations

Mobility is often the only thing between survivors and a certain death or imprisonment at the hands of a superior adversary in a SERE scenario. Other times when survivors must travel fast & light to cover great distances on foot can occur in a bugout scenario, a get home scenario a self-recovery. A survivor may also have to travel quickly to carry out a CasEvac plan or to seek transport or aid for a patient with an urgent medical need.

Doffing a Pack

The survivalist may need to doff a pack in a hurry and many military packs have quick-release hardware to enable the wearer to doff the pack very quickly in an emergency, such as while drowning. Where possible, doffed packs should be cached and concealed for future retrieval.

For this reason, I carry contractor grade drum liners, rust preventative and an entrenching tool in each vehicle. Moisture is the primary enemy when caching equipment for future recovery and having the supplies to cache the contents of a vehicle or a pack can seal moisture out of equipment caches, preventing the loss of equipment should it become necessary to lighten a load or abandon a vehicle. Reasons a vehicle may need to be abandoned are to avoid traveling along lines of drift, because it runs out of gas or breaks down. I also carry tape to mask reflectors and camo netting to better hide

certain vehicles.

Equipment carried should be organized so that maps, communications plans or other material of intel value, weapons, night vision and equipment necessary for security and S/SE equipment should be layered as separate modules so they can be quickly separated out or reconfigured to adapt to survival ordeals as they evolve.

Think Like a Long-Distance Trail Runner

Fast and light is by no means a new strategy. Growing up, I was taught by an archeologist parent how Native Americans from the Phoenix Area, stripped down to the bare essentials and ran long distances down to the Gulf of California and Baja Peninsula to trade. Runners carried a leather boil pouch, into which heated rocks were added to heat water and cook dried foods, not unlike backpackers reconstituting freeze dried food in bags on the trail today. Modern ultralight hikers have little on their predecessors despite their obsessive calculations and great expenditure on modern materials. Parrot feathers and sea shells from Mexico and flint cores from Idaho attest to their impressive long-distance endurance.

Whether you are you better off plodding along with a pack or moving swiftly with the bare essentials is a decision best made by the individual, but a modular, layered approach to equipment ensures that the survivalist has options available. When mobility is more important than increased capability, it is usually because of urgency and the fact that that the survivalist is headed someplace that resources have been prepositioned, but lightening your load enables you to move faster while burning fewer calories ... which reduces your load. See what I'm getting at? Adding weight can pit a vicious cycle against you and shedding pounds can put it to work for you.

Prepare for Survival without a Pack by Caching

Caching equipment facilitates survival without a large pack. The successful guerrilla war fought against the US Army for many generations by bands of Apache was made possible by caching techniques. Highly mobile and lightly equipped bands could disappear into the desert and mountains because they had aunts and uncles and cousins and friends who supplied them everywhere they went, while the Army had to carry their supplies with them.

Types of Caches

Different types of caches are be constructed for specific purposes.

- **Travel Cache** -The purpose of travel cache is to resupply the survivalist along routes home and to retreats, making it possible to survive without a pack and focus on replenishing supplies consumed in travel.
- **Resupply Cache** – Resupply caches are cached in an Area of Operations and can contain food, medical supplies or weapons and ammunition.
- **Primary Supply Cache** – Primary supply caches outfit the survivor with a basic loadout, giving him a fresh start should he make it out of a situation with precious little and the option to not return home should it be compromised.
- **Escape Plan or Exit Strategy Cache** – This cache contains travel documents, portable wealth, burner phones, contact information and sometimes vehicles with clean papers or specialized equipment to flee a city, state, country or continent.

Knowledge Weighs Nothing

You have probably heard that the more you know, the less you need. As I mentioned in the beginning of this article, equipment improves chances of survival for even the most knowledgeable survivors, so I am not saying that knowing enough makes preparation unnecessary, just that with enough knowledge, you can get by with less equipment.

Or at Least Very Little

I also applied the modular, layered approach to my survival library, which is divided into: paper (walls of books), portable paper (box of most necessary books), packable paper (precious few pocket volumes in my pack), digital (rugged external drive) and EDC digital (flash drive with a Micro-USB OTG port for my cell phones & a USB port for computers). Like many survivalists, I curate a Digital Survival Library and my EDC DSL goes with me everywhere. I can plug it into any cellphone and a huge library of survival information on hand as long as I can keep a cell phone charged. I also keep a backup cellphone and solar charger in a 75dB Faraday bag in my go bag, to help ensure that I will have access to it. I also keep a copy on an encrypted server out of the country so I can get at it if I need to and have internet access.

Sure, there are circumstances where it could become unavailable to me, but there are plenty where it could be available too. Besides, there is just too much information out there to know it all and having access to a massive survival library is a wonderful resource. It is truly incredible how much data fits on a tiny flash memory device. I use the maps quite a bit.



Discover The 8 Pillars of Special Forces Wilderness Survival by Special Forces Veteran Brian Morris

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