

# 15 Tips For Surviving Journeys Through The Wild

In today's modern world, land navigation without computer assistance is almost a lost art form. The average person finds it too hard to use a map and compass, let alone other tools that can be used to get from point A to point B. Maps, compasses, and other non-computer oriented navigation tools require at least some basic math skills.

What would be the odds to get lost in the wilderness, far far away from civilization? What if your car gets broken or your plane crashes in the middle of nowhere?

This is why you must know how to find your way back to civilization, and get back safe home with your group or to any other destination of interest to you.

## **Should You Stay or Leave Your Location?**

Before you even decide to go somewhere, you need to assess what you are leaving behind in exchange for going somewhere else. Some questions you need to ask include:

- Do you have the knowledge, training, and experience to survive in the wild, or in some other area of interest to you? If so where are you going and how long will it take to get back to civilization or your current location if needed?
- Are you injured? If so how bad? Will you need to heal before leaving?
- What is the situation with food or water supplies? Are there other people who can or cannot travel?
- Is the weather too hot or cold for the group to survive?
- What advantages/disadvantages are there to going to a remote location?

If you survived a plane crash and you are a survivor, stay at the crash site. In most cases if an aircraft is experiencing trouble the pilot will send out a Mayday call stating location, course, and nature of the problem.

{adinsertter emp}If you are in a major boating or ship accident, stay with the boat or ship. If there was time, the captain would have sent out a Mayday giving location and how bad the damage is to include whether or not the craft can stay afloat or if it will sink. Finally if you are in a car or an off the road vehicle stay put with the vehicle and wait for help to come.

In all of these examples searchers have a starting point to search for survivors. The worst thing that could happen is the survivors would leave the crash site and get lost from the main group. Now the rescuers will have many lost people to find instead of one group of survivors at a known location.

If you are at an emergency shelter stay there. Most search parties would check there first and then broaden the search area outward. If you are lucky enough to have a map of the area, emergency shelters are usually located on the map if any exist in the area.

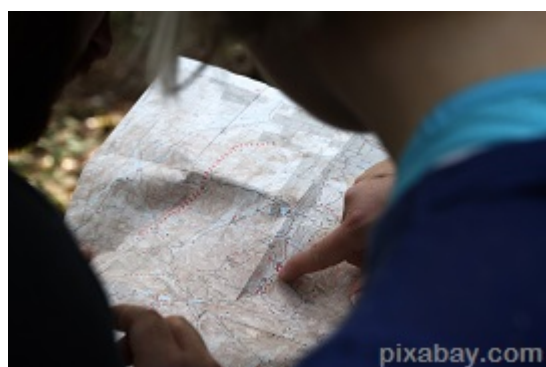
In most cases it is best to stay with a group and not set out on your own. If you leave, the rescue party will have more than one rescue to conduct, which means valuable time will be lost. Never forget that within just a few minutes a situation can become critical. An untrained person in the wild would not last long in this environment and would most likely die from their lack of knowledge on how to survive in the wild.



Even if you have jogged down a few nature trails, consider yourself fit, or gone camping in a public campsite, that does not mean you are truly ready to survive in the wild. From snakes and contaminated water to poisonous insects and mistaking poisonous plants for edible ones, you truly never know when disaster will strike.

### **When to Leave the Group or the Location?**

1. If you are alone and no one knows where you are. In this situation, you may well be safer trying to survive in the woods, or going through uninhabited areas in order to get back to civilization.



Do this only if you are pretty sure of your location and you have the [experience with a map and compass](#) or other means of land navigation.

Even if you do not have a map for the area, knowing basic navigation skills can help prevent you from going around in circles or losing track of how much area you have already covered.

2. When no one would be looking for you because you are not where you should be. This could happen if you were lost in a storm and you were blown off course. A second reason for not being where you are supposed to be could be by damage to the navigation systems. Since you are off course in this situation, there may not be a beacon or other alert in the probable search area.

3. If you or a group have been missing for a while and the supplies are running low. I would do this only if there had been no signs of a search in the area. Before you leave, place

a note in a weather proof container stating your name (and the names of those leaving with you), what direction you stated out in, the date, health/physical condition, how long your supplies are expected to last, and when (if) you will return to the area where you started out from.

4. When a member or members of the group require emergency medical care. If the travel distance is not too long and there is a strong belief of the location or the camp is not known, then go for it.

5. If it is decided within the group that one portion of the group should leave to seek out a safe route back to civilization and try to return with help and rescuers. Then the group should be divided into two groups.

The first group (the A group) would contain all those individuals that would be staying at the present location. The A group would be made up of individuals that are injured (but in a non-emergency condition), children, elderly, and infants, plus at least one or two people that can help them survive. Those who cannot travel must stay behind because the terrain is too rough for them or the distance is too great to be traveled by them.

The second group (the B group) would contain all the individuals that would be leaving the present encampment to find help or rescuers. For each member of the B group they should write down their name, next of kin, and other contact information in the event that they are lost and leave it with the A group. Included in this information should be the route taken, departure date if known, estimate of travel time, and return date.

Also the B group should be carrying the same information on the A group with a possible location of the A group's camp. This way if A or B groups are lost their personal information and other information could be used to find the other missing group and

verify who they are.

Before the B group leaves there should be built enough shelters for the A group to be kept out of the weather. Look around you and make what ever you have work for you. If you have a broken down vehicle, aircraft, water craft, or any wreckage, or building debris use it for the construction of shelters. Remember to use what you have first if you do not have any ready made shelters. A handy acronym to remember when building a survival shelter is the word SITTING.

- **S** is for shelter. Find, build, and use one based on your environment.
- **I** is for improvise. Improvise all materials from around you.
- **T** is for trees. Look to trees for a quick sleep spot or for construction materials for a shelter.
- **T** is for time. Take your time and build the shelters right the first time.
- **I** is for insight on how to build the project.
- **N** is for nature. Use all that nature offers including caves, holes, logs, fallen trees, and other useful materials just laying around.
- **G** is for ground. Build a platform on the ground at least. [Go under ground in extreme weather.](#)

When building long term shelters take the time to get it off the ground and protect it well from wind, rain, and, all of the nasty little critters. Make sure that there is lots of cushioning for sleeping and lots of leaves and foliage to make cover for warmth.

## **Travel Tips to Use While on Your Journey**

Now that you have prepared for your trip, selection of the route is everything. When choosing the route always choose the path of least resistance. The odds are high you will be weak, tired, and hungry. Also, keep in mind a few thing in order to

survive the journey:



- Try to walk the high ground. Do not descend unless it is required. It is hard on you to climb down hill, but it is even harder to climb back up. This will wear you out faster than if you walk the ridge lines. The nice thing about walking the ridge lines is that you can see both sides of the mountain, this will double your chances of finding civilization or water.
- If you must drop down into lower elevations, try to read the ridges and stay on a path that keeps you as high as possible on the land. Look out for dead ends that will eventually force you to backtrack.
- Avoid walking in valley bottoms, as it could be dangerous. About the only time to do this is if you are looking for water or trying to shield yourself from high winds or other bad weather conditions. In these low areas, you are more likely to encounter thick bush that makes traveling very difficult. If you find yourself in thick bush, drop down low and try to find a game trail to follow out. Once out, do not return to this type of terrain.
- Use terrain features like rivers and ridge lines to help keep you on track. These features will help to keep you from getting disoriented in thick cover or low light.

- Do not try to traverse swamps or mountain ranges. It is safer just to go around them, unless your time is running out and you have no choice but to take the chance or die.
- As you are walking on the route be aware of your surroundings. Do not walk with your head down or staring out into space. Always study and analyze your environment for things that might be of benefit to you. For example, always look for tracks either animal or human. These tracks could lead you to food, water, or even rescue.
- One of the worst things that could happen to you on your route to freedom is to find yourself going around in circles. Most people have a dominant leg when they walk. As you walk you tend to step longer and stronger with your dominant leg. This actually makes it difficult to walk a precise straight line for long distances. Unless you correct your course on a regular basis, your body will tend to steer you in a large circle in the direction opposite of your dominant leg. If your dominant leg is your right leg, then you will circle to the left. To correct this problem step to the right whenever you come to a tree or other obstruction in the path that causes you to deviate from the straight line path. This will keep you closer to the on course route.
- Be aware of the fear factor! When you are lost, scared, or uncomfortable in a unfamiliar landscape there is a tendency to move toward your dominant side. This tendency is greatly increased at night and cause people to run around in total panic.
- Never jump off a cliff into unknown water! There may be dangerous rocks or other under water obstructions below the surface.
- Stay out of freezing water. You will become hypothermic within 45 minutes and could die. It is best to build a raft or continue to walk down the river. You never know, you just might walk into civilization or rescue.

If you find yourself working too hard, think strongly about changing the route for an easier path. Do not push too hard to reach a planned destination. Your schedule is not chiseled in stone. It must be flexible in the event of unplanned delays.

Remember to take it as easy as possible, it is not worth wearing yourself out. While traveling, remember you must take planned breaks for food, water, rest, and sleep. If you do not take care of basic needs, there is a strong chance you will not make it to the final destination.

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