

Why You Should Bug Out To A Rural Area

When most people talk about bugging out, I get the impression that they're talking about bugging out to the wild.

This isn't a new impression on my part; I've been seeing it for years. Yet bugging out to the wild, while a great sounding idea, is the hardest sort of bug out to do. The typical bug out bag only includes three days worth of food, yet I never hear anyone talking about how they're going to replenish their food, once they get to their favorite wilderness location.

But living off the land isn't as easy as it might seem. Granted, many thousands of people lived off the land in the early days of our country. But the ratio of people to game was much better back then, making it fairly easy to find dinner. In any situation bad enough to cause you to bug out, the only places where you're going to be able to find abundant game to hunt are those which are a long ways from any cities, towns or even farms.



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Of course, you could bury a massive stock of supplies out there in the wilderness somewhere, just waiting for you. That would be a big project and keeping it secret would require a lot of patience. But that's not to say you couldn't do it; it would just be difficult.

On the other end of the spectrum, we have the kind of bug out

that happens when the government calls for an evacuation due to a hurricane. While technically a bug out, it's different than what we usually talk about for two reasons; because it's temporary and because everyone is looking for hotels and temporary refugee centers to go to.

But that's not a realistic example of a bug out either, due to the fact that what we're seeing is all of the unprepared people and what they do. There are surely preppers included in every one of those mass exodus exercises, but they either blend in with the crowd or simply use the crowd as camouflage.

Regardless of whether you and I end up bugging out for a short-term problem, like a hurricane or because of a TEOTWAWKI event that causes a breakdown of society, we need a workable plan to keep our families safe.

If you happen to have a cabin in the woods, which you can use as a bug out retreat, more power to you. I've wanted to buy some land and build such a cabin for years, but the finances just keep eluding me. The best I've managed so far is a backpack and a tent; which isn't a survival retreat by any means, it's more for use along the way to my retreat.

But where am I going to go? That's the question.

Find a Small Town

My solution has been to find a small town that's far enough from our home that it will probably be missed by any regional disaster, while still being close enough to be accessible in the event of a disaster. While that town is only 70 miles from my home, it is also 131 feet higher above sea level, as well as being 80 miles farther inland than where I live. That means that the town is much more likely to survive a hurricane, the biggest threat that faces the area in which I live.

There are several reasons why my wife and I have chosen this

town, chief amongst which is that we like the town itself. But it was also important to us that it be a small town (actual population is slightly less than 2,000 people) in an area that is at least semi-agricultural. We wanted it to be close enough to be easy to get to, while far enough inland and high enough above sea level to be relatively safe from hurricane flooding, even if it was still close enough to be hit by said hurricane.

The town we found isn't really on anyone's radar for anything, even though it has its share of cute shops and its monthly market days to bring in tourism. But other than that one day a month, there's really no reason for anyone to visit that town. There's nothing to make it look like a good place to run to in an emergency.

As with many other small towns, there are a few small motels, as well as a fair number of places for sale or rent, although the prices to buy a house are a bit steep. It also has one important thing, which is critical to our plans... a self-storage business. It also has a small river flowing by, providing water.

So, what's wrong with our little rural town? Like any other small town, it's suspicious of outsiders. Small towns are different. Everyone knows everyone; and they can spot a stranger from a mile away. So, while they depend largely on the money that those outsiders bring into the town, those people are easily identified as who they are... outsiders.

Should a disaster happen, it's likely that the residents of our small town will be just as suspicious of outsiders as they are now, or even more so. As with any other small town, they are unlikely to be very welcome to the masses of people from the city, who are going to think that things are better in the rural areas and flood out of the cities, looking for help. Those towns are not going to be a haven filled with food and other critical resources, like many will expect.



Integrating Ourselves in the Town

As I see it, the only way that any of us can use a small town as a bug out destination when things go to pot is to integrate ourselves into that town before that happens. That means building a relationship with people, so that we aren't strangers when we show up at disaster time.

William Forstchen captured the attitude of the small town very well in his best-selling novel "One Second After," which talks about the aftermath of an EMP. In that story, the town ends up blockading the roads and keeping people who aren't a part of the town out. They were able to do that because the town was in some rugged mountains, which kept people from coming in cross-country.

Our chosen town doesn't have that advantage; but that doesn't mean they won't try to keep strangers out in the aftermath of a serious disaster. It's commonly believed that such towns will blockade the entrances to town and post guards. How well they might do in keeping people out is another matter altogether.

At the same time, even if people do get into those small towns, they will stand out as being strangers. One might be able to hide that in a big city, where people don't necessarily know each other, but not in a small town, where everyone knows each other. If those towns are serious about their security, any strangers slipping into town will probably be found rather quickly.

To combat that, we're actively working to get to know people in town. Once a month we travel to the town and spend the weekend there, staying at the same motel and eating at our favorite restaurant. We always make a point of visiting the same antique store, where we talk to the owner and go to the same church, where people are getting to know us. Basically, we're using a weekend getaway as a chance to form

relationships with people, getting them used to us, as we integrate ourselves into their community.

This community also has a blacksmithing club, which I am anxious to meet. My dad was a blacksmith in the latter years of his professional life and I had the opportunity to learn a little from him. I'm hoping that this club is open enough that I might be able to spend some time with them, increasing my skills. Of course, that would give us more people that we know, who would vouch for us when we show up for sanctuary.

When the time comes that we have to bug out to that town, they will already know us. That will make it much harder for them to turn us away, even while they are turning aside others. But that's not all we're depending on.

Establishing a Supply Cache

Since we live in a hurricane zone, we operate under the assumption that the most likely disaster we will have to face is a hurricane. On top of that, I'm always aware of the risk of major disasters, like an EMP. In either scenario, we will be better off in our selected rural town, than we will be at home. So, while we have a stockpile of equipment and supplies in our home, to help us survive a disaster, we don't expect to be staying here.

Our number one plan, like that person who has a cabin in the woods, is to bug out and go to our rural town to survive there. With that in mind, our main supply cache is in a self-storage unit, located in that town. We have a 10' x 10' unit, which is well stocked with food, survival gear and camping supplies.

In addition to the supplies and survival gear, I have a fair collection of tools there. While I haven't bothered stockpiling power tools in that cache, assuming that there will be no power, I do have woodworking and mechanics hand

tools, which will allow me to do a variety of different things.

The survival stockpile we have set up in that cache is actually larger than the one we have set up at home. Part of that is because we had to include things like camping gear, which we would not need at home; but the other part is because bugging out to that town, rather than staying in the city, is our number one survival plan. The only disasters we would stay in the city for are short-term ones which catch us by surprise.

We've also scouted the town for potential locations to set up camp. There are a number of abandoned buildings, which while not ideal, would make a decent survival shelter. But even if we can't use those, the tent and other camping gear we have would allow us to set up camp in a number of locations that we've already spotted.

This supply cache is our second ace in the hole for being accepted by the community, if we ever end up having to bug out and go there. With it, we can prove that we aren't going to be a burden to them, eliminating the biggest reason they would have for rejecting us. In addition, I'm a former engineer, with considerable skills which could be of use to the town. We're hoping that combination, along with the friends and acquaintances we're making, will have them greet us with open arms.

Where to Go From Here?

Of course, my preparations to use that town as our survival retreat aren't over. Prepping never seems to end. I'm hoping to be able to buy a small piece of property somewhere in that area and park a travel trailer there or build a tiny home. That would be our real ace in the hole, if I'm able to do it, because it would provide us with a legitimate claim residency.

While this won't be the same as having that cabin in the woods that I would really like to have, it will be just as good. Perhaps it will be even better. Survival in the wild is challenging at best, with all the different tasks that need to be done. We humans are social animals, accustomed to sharing work with others. Using a small town as my bug out location provides me with those others, without the risks that are associated with trying to survive in a big city.

The sense of community that exists in a small town may very well be their most important survival trait. That sense doesn't exist in the city anymore; but it isn't lost either. All you have to do to find it is find a small community somewhere.



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