Essential Wilderness Skills
For Beginners

by
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# Table of Contents

- Introduction 8
- Before you head into the wild 9
  - Type of trip 9
  - Where to go 9
  - What to learn – prepare yourself 10
    - Show respect for the nature 10
  - What to do 11
- Outdoor gear 12
  - Backpack 12
    - Loading options 12
    - Daypacks 13
    - Frame backpacks 13
    - Choosing your backpack 14
    - Loading your backpack 15
  - Sleeping bag 16
    - Shell materials 16
    - Liner for your comfort 16
    - Insulation fill 17
    - Features and options 18
    - How to choose a sleeping bag 19
  - Stove 21
    - Stove basics 21
    - Pressurized gas stoves 21
    - Non-pressurized Stove - Alcohol stove 22
    - Picking the most appropriate stove 23
  - Tent 24
    - Tent types 24
    - Designs and styles 24
    - Care 27
  - Snow gear 28
    - Cross country skiing 28
    - Snowshoe hikes 29
- The appropriate clothing 30
  - The layering principle 30
    - Comfort 30
  - The Base layer 31
  - Layer two - insulation 31
    - Shirt 31
    - Sweater 32
    - Pants 32
  - The outer layer 32
    - Weatherproof outerwear 33
    - Headgear 33
Clothing for hot climates
  Loose fitting clothing
  Protect your head
Clothing for cold and snow
Footwear
Designs
  Pick the appropriate socks and take care of your feet
  Boots for snow and cold
Cutting tools
  Fixed blade knives
    Tang and handle
    Knife blade
    Characteristics
    Maintenance
  Folding pocket knife
  Basic knife safety tips
  Knife Sharpening
    How to sharpen a knife
Axe
  Basic axe safety
  Using a axe
  Sharpening
  Folding saw
    Folding knife saw combo
    Wire saw
Wilderness survival kits
  Pocket survival kit
  Pouch style survival kit
Backpacking gear list
  Trail food
    Backpacking food suggestions
    Construct a day-by-day trip menu
The principles of survival
  Stress
  The will to survive
  Survival techniques
  Basic needs
    Warmth
    Water
    Sleep
    Food
Navigation by map and compass
  Read the terrain
  Walking speed
  How to use a map
    Scales
Contour lines 55
Grids 55
Colors and symbols 55
Cover your maps 55
Make your own map 55
How to use a compass 56
  360 degrees 56
  Declination 56
  Bearing 57
  Cross-bearing 58
  Make your own compass 59
How to use electronic navigation tools 60
  GPS 60
  Barometer 61
  Altimeter 61
  Backup compass 61
Natural navigation 62
  Navigation by the sun 63
    Using a pocket watch 63
    The shadow stick method 64
  Navigating by moon 65
    Understanding the Moon phases 65
    East - West 66
    A rough rule of thumb 66
  Navigating by the stars 67
    North Star 67
    Southern Cross 68
  Navigating by wind 69
    Trees 69
    Sand and snow 69
    Breeze 71
  Navigating by trees and plants 72
    Plants 72
    Trees 72
    Moss 72
  Walking direction 73
    Walking in circles 73
    Walking in a straight line 73
    River crossing 74
    Walking in deep snow 76
How to make a fire 77
  Fireplace 77
    Wet ground 77
  Fire material 78
    Tinder 78
    Kindling 78
Fuel 78
Type of fire 79
How to start a fire 80
  Start a fire with matches 80
  Flint striker 81
  The bow drill method 82
Find and build a shelter 84
  Shelter site 84
  Natural shelters 85
  Making ropes and cords 86
    Natural fibrous material 86
    Roots 86
Building a survival shelter 87
  Debris hut 87
  Lean-to shelter 88
  Sleeping place 89
Snow shelters 89
  Keeping your body warm 90
  Snow cave 90
  Snow house - igloo 91
Finding water 92
  Dehydration 92
  Indicators of water 92
Where and how to find water 93
  Dew 93
  Rainwater 93
  Condensation 94
  Solar still 95
  Seawater 95
  How to melt ice or snow to drink 96
Water purification 97
  Waterborne contaminants 97
  Basic methods of water purification 98
  How to make a water filter 98
  Portable water filter bottle 100
How to deal with food shortages in the wild 101
  Natural food 101
  Wild edible plants and berries 102
    Berries 102
    Pine needle tea 102
    Quack grass 102
    Cattail 103
    Poisonous plants 104
    Edibility test 104
  Bird eggs 105
  Edible insects 105
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food poisoning cure</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to predict weather from nature</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature signs</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clouds</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Sky</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How animals predict the weather</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Animals</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake safety</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattlesnakes</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to avoid snakebites</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to treat snakebites</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear safety</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear attack</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic rules of survival</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilderness Survival Quiz</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

To me, nothing is more exciting than spending quality time in the wilderness, especially when it is spent with people you care about. Therefore, the aim of this book is to inspire those of you with little or no wilderness experience to gain the knowledge and self-confidence necessary to spend time in the wilderness. A wilderness trip can be relaxing, but it can also be a way to strengthen relationships with your children, friends, and significant others. If you are able to increase your knowledge of how to take care of yourself and others when in the wilderness, you will feel more confident and may be able to enjoy your wilderness trips even more.

The information presented in this book is based on my 30 years of wilderness backpacking experience. These trips provided me with a solid understanding of basic and practical wilderness skills. My experience is from temperate and polar climactic zones, such as the conditions found in Canada, northern and central USA, and Europe. However, I have full respect for people’s different viewpoints, and acknowledge that not everyone may agree with me on every point.

The blue underlined text throughout this book are external links, where you can find additional information on specific topics. If you are connected to the Internet and click on one of those links your web browser will open the link to the relevant text.

Take care and safe travels!

Erik C. Falk
Before you head into the wild

Planning and preparing a wilderness trip is an exciting and fun activity, and, in most cases necessary to have a safe and enjoyable trip.

Type of trip

What type of trip are you planning? Canoeing, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, hiking, backpacking or maybe another of the many ways to enjoy the nature? My fascination is wilderness backpacking. It is the activity I most enjoy and appreciate. Wilderness backpacking is exploring wild countries on foot, carrying all your gear in a pack on your back, and, as I see it, the best way to experience nature.

If you are a beginner, or have small children with you, do not fret. You can always pick a shorter more level trail or stay in an area that provides huts to sleep in. Huts have the advantage of enabling you to travel lighter, because you don't need, for example, to bring a tent. This way you are still experiencing the outdoors, but have less weight on your back and fewer worries if it is raining or snowing. However, I really encourage you, at some stage, to try backpacking.

Where to go

At some stage in your trip planning process, you have to decide where to go. You may already be familiar with the area you plan to visit, or maybe it's your first time. Many mountainous regions of the world are popular among backpackers, and several countries have well established trails designed specifically for backpackers and day hikers. If you need proposals and ideas of wilderness areas to visit, one good tool to use is, of course, the Internet. If you would like some of my ideas and tips on destinations, click on the links below.

Hiking and backpacking trips in:

- [US](click to follow links)
- Canada
- Europe
- Scandinavia