

Les Stroud's Survival Tips

IMPORTANT! The truth about the SURVIVORMAN Endure™ *Personal Survival Kit* and the SURVIVORMAN Trek™ *Team Survival Kit* is that I don't want you to use them! In fact my preference is for you to examine all the contents, put them back inside the pot and carry them with you only to be used in an EMERGENCY. The way to think about a survival kit is to think of it as you would a first aid kit. It is there for when things go wrong.

IF YOU HAVE PURCHASED THE SURVIVORMAN Endure™ *Personal Survival Kit*:

A suggestion straight from me is to take the following items out of the SURVIVORMAN Endure™ *Personal Survival Kit* and whenever you travel in the wilderness place them on your body, either in pockets or on rope around your neck or wrist, or on your belt. This way they are always with you and won't be lost along the trail or left behind at a portage. Then return them to the kit when you are finished the trip and store them for your next wilderness, hunting, fishing or trekking adventure!

TAKE OUT AND CARRY ON YOUR BODY, ON YOUR BELT OR IN YOUR POCKETS:

- Compass
- Whistle
- Magnesium flint striker
- Orange garbage bag
- Small flashlight
- Parachute cord
- 'Survival' blanket
- Plastic Ziploc bag

* I suggest you also carry another power bar (your favorite flavour) and a bandana, in *addition* to the ones provided with this kit – leave these items inside the cup.

Here's what is NOT in this survival kit BUT WHAT YOU SHOULD STILL HAVE WITH YOU!

In addition to the SURVIVORMAN Endure™ *Personal Survival Kit* carry the following survival items in your pockets, on your belt or around your neck. Each member of a group should have their own:

- Sharp belt knife (*Les Stroud 10" SK Mountain™*)
- Multi-tool or multi 'Swiss'-style knife (make sure it has a small saw blade) (*Les Stroud SK Engage™*)
- Lighter (full of fuel) (my preference is a butane lighter that works like a little blow torch)
- A few pain killers in a small Ziploc plastic bag (Tylenol, Ibuprofen, prescription pain killers)

Although this may sound like a fairly weighty list of items to carry, when everything is spread out among your various pockets (obviously, wearing clothes with a lot of pockets is helpful), or on a rope around your neck or attached to your belt, you hardly notice them at all. They simply exist as part of you, and should present no problem. But if you're lost and alone and have no supplies, they can make a world of difference.

IF YOU HAVE PURCHASED THE SURVIVORMAN Trek™ *Survival Kit*:

Here's what is NOT in this survival kit BUT WHAT YOU SHOULD STILL HAVE WITH YOU!

- Sharp belt knife (*Les Stroud 10" SK Mountain™*)
- Multi-tool or multi 'Swiss'-style knife (make sure it has a small saw blade) (*Les Stroud SK Engage™*)
- Lighter (full of fuel) (my preference is a butane lighter that works like a little blow torch)

- A few pain killers (Tylenol, Ibuprofen, prescription pain killers)
- Fixed Blade Saw (*SK Path™*)
- GPS (Global Positioning System) * in *addition* to a map and compass
- Satellite Messenger Device
- Flares
- First aid kit (*Les Stroud First Aid Kit*)

Take Responsibility For Your Own Survival

While teaching survival courses, early in the week I would announce to my students that we were going for a wilderness hike the next morning. When they asked me what they should take along, I would casually tell them "Whatever you think you need for a hike in the bush."

Then, about midway through the hike, I would stop and ask everyone to show me what they had brought with them. There was always one person armed to the teeth with survival gear. A few more would have a few basic survival items, and a few who had basically nothing.

I was always struck by how many people would go out not expecting the unexpected. Here we are, hiking into the middle of the bush and they had carried absolutely nothing to help them if disaster struck. Sure, chances are nothing bad would happen, but when you're in the wilderness, you don't have the luxury of knowing when and where you're going to be separated from your partners. Remember: You can trust your guide and your partner, but don't rely on them.

This was never quite so clearly revealed as when couples took my course. The couples were usually proud to show off their *one* very well-equipped pack invariably carried by the husband. In those instances, I would pull the husband aside, then turn to the wife and say 'So, now... *what do you have?*' It was only then that it became painfully evident to her that she had absolutely nothing that would help her in a survival situation. She was relying on her husband and not herself.

You could become separated from your partner in a heartbeat. The creation (and possession) of a survival kit is a personal undertaking, and one that should never be left to another person, no matter how close you are to them. Disaster often strikes in mysterious ways in the wilderness, and to be left alone without these few simple items is to court death.



*USE ONLY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY!!

Have you found yourself in a situation where you have to keep all your wits about you and figure a way out? Hopefully, the words here will help you do exactly that - get out of your present circumstances and back home safely.

FIRST: Relax. If you can, sit down. Let's go through this together, step by step. Slow down your breathing and slow down your heart rate. Take three long deep breaths.

ASSESS YOUR SITUATION

Zone 1 Assessment – Your body and clothes:

- Are you hurt?
- How are you physically?
- What are you wearing?
- What do you have in your pockets? Take stock now.
- If you are not alone – repeat this process with everyone and determine what the group has collectively. Hopefully, these answers will leave you feeling a little reassured.

Zone 2 Assessment – Your immediate vicinity:

- Do you have a pack and if so, what's in it exactly?
- Do you have any food or water?
- What else is lying around you?
- What can you glean from your immediate surroundings? Can you rip or break something apart to aid you? For example, can you make protective insulated boots out of your car or boat seats?

Zone 3 Assessment – Your extended area:

- How far are you from safety?
- Do you know of anything not too far away that can help you?
- Which direction is safety?
- Is there any shelter close by?
- How difficult would it be to get to safety and are you and everyone else up to the task?
- If not what are the challenges to getting to safety and can you overcome them easily?
- Do you know these answers FOR SURE?
- Does anyone know you are in trouble and if so how long before they effect a rescue?
- How soon can you move, IF you can move?

You now have the answers to many questions that should help you to decide what your next move is going to be.

YOUR NEXT MOVE!

Now that you have assessed your situation, you can take some time to think. I can't guess at what you may be experiencing so I will keep things general and to the point so you can apply the thought process to your current situation.

It is likely that you have to decide between staying, finding shelter and setting up a signal ...or leaving.

IF YOU ARE GOING TO LEAVE:

- Take the time to organize yourself and your companions.
- Make sure that you will not make the situation worse by leaving too soon or not strapping things down. Tie things up or otherwise carry things in a way that won't be bothersome.
*Remember, it is not the desert that will stop you, it is the grain of sand in your shoe!
- It's your feet that will take you home – protect them anyway you can, use whatever you can, to make protective footwear.
- Do the same for everyone – *be proactive!*

- In any way you can, make markings of some sort – blazing a tree with an axe or knife – bending and breaking branches – leaving bright pieces of material tied up high for eyes to see. This is to tell people which direction you left in and to serve as a way back to this spot if you need it should you get lost further.
- If you have paper and pen leave a note telling where you headed and what your circumstances are.
- You must consider – will you make it out today for sure, or will you have to sleep somewhere along the way? If so, how many nights? With what kind of shelter?

IF YOU ARE GOING TO STAY:

- What is your best shot at overnight or long term shelter and how can you affect that as soon as possible?
- You will need water soon – where is it and how easily is it acquired? Store some immediately if it is in short supply.
- Don't worry too much about food just yet. You have many days you can go without being anything more than hungry. If you are going to be here even just a couple of days - ration out your food now to avoid using it up too soon.

- Try to make yourself as comfortable as possible – as concerned as you may be, you are going to need sleep to be able to think clearly tomorrow.
- Staying matters when you know someone will come along or come looking for you. If that is not going to happen, and you know that for sure, or that is your best guess, then sooner rather than later you will need to travel out. Why sooner? Because later you will have less reserves and supplies. That said, you may need a day or more to regroup and gather up your energies and senses for the trek to safety.

Your Basic Survival Kit: You

A survival kit shouldn't just be a separate pack that you carry in addition to the everyday gear you take along on a wilderness expedition. Your basic survival kit should be spread out over your body and in your pockets, and carried on you at all times. Why? The answer is very simple: you'll never leave a pocket behind on a portage trail or when you stop for a snack. But you might leave a fanny pack behind. It happens all the time.

Final Note from Les Stroud:

Preparation and planning go a long way toward strengthening your psychological state and arming you with the tools you need to make it through alive and well. And for all the planning and preparation you will do in advance of your wilderness adventure, *nothing* strikes quite as close to the heart in those dire moments as having a well-equipped survival kit.

Most people take the time to have the necessary basic equipment when they head into the backcountry, such as a tent, a stove, and proper clothing. Yet

your survival kit may be the single most important thing you carry with you on any expedition.

I've ventured into the world's remote areas with a huge variety of survival gear: fully stocked survival kits, basic 'whatever-I-can-carry' survival kits, and quite often with no kit at all. Survival items have dangled from my belt or hung around my neck. They've been fanny packs I barely noticed and fanny packs so heavy I preferred not to carry them (but did anyway).

How you set up your survival kit is only limited by your imagination. Why not fill the hollow end of your fishing rod with a lighter and some kind of ignitable tinder like cotton balls? Or if you're a mountain biker, you can easily pop off your handlebar grips and fill your handle bars with a few choice items. I've even had a kit that was drilled into the stock of a rifle.

Get Outside and Stay Alive!... Les Stroud