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LEARNING CURVE Follow the
Worcan Pass Trail down around
the bend, and you'll find the
perfect classroom for testing
your new backcountry skills.
California's Sierra Nevada
Arctic can't be top of your list of things
to do in the state.

HUMANITIES p.44

PAULO MAIORA CANAMUS

U T BACKPACKER U

STUDY UP.
GET SMARTER.
CAMP BETTER.

THE PROFESSORS

Guides. Adventurers. Athletes. Great souls.

THE SYLLABUS

A mixture of savvy and inspiration. And the campus? Ah, the campus: The Earth's untrammled wilds. Herewith is a higher education in backpacking, from navigation to cooking to the subtleties of packing. There's a final exam, of course, which is to use your newfound skills on your next adventure. Naturally, we'll give you full credit.

THE FACULTY

Erik Weihenmayer, blind mountaineer • Nina Wallace, champion orienteer
• Ida Lange, quartermaster, Geriatric Adventure Society • Chris Imperial,
Special Forces SAR land navigation instructor • Sir Isaac Newton, special
forces expert • Conrad Anker, professional climber • Emeril Lagasse,
tele-chef • Brian Robinson, record distance hiker • David Lynch, wine
director, Babbo Ristorante • Dave Herring, huts manager, Appalachian
Mountain Club • Martin Zemitis, tent designer, Mountain Hardwear

NAVIGATION

EXPLORE MORE. HIKE FARTHER. STAY FOUND.

MOUNTAINEER Scott Hamilton was trekking in Alaska several years ago when he met an old Inuit dogsledder. What, Hamilton asked, was the secret to finding one's way through the Alaskan bush?

"I look to the sky," the man replied.

To the stars? The sun? The clouds?

"No, I just look at the jet trails. All the planes are going to Anchorage."

He shared the cardinal rule of navigation: Pay attention. "The key to survival, whether you're 1 or 100 miles into the woods, is to be completely aware of your surroundings at all times," says Keith Nyitray, whose 1989 solo traverse of Alaska's Brooks Range took him 2,000 miles over trackless terrain by foot, sled, and canoe.

Adventure racers, orienteers, and alpine climbers have developed their own techniques. All rely on common sense—or senses. Listen, feel, even smell. Look around. Look down. And when you're really stuck? Look up.

CHEAT SHEET

BEWARE OF USING GPS and compass side by side. The electromagnetic force of the GPS antenna will pull your compass needle off. Keep them 6 to 12 inches apart.

A LITTLE LOST? Don't guess where you are. Get out the map and place where you were. It'll probably show you your location. You'll be happier if you're actually in the area.

CHAT WITH THE LOCALS. Even those master explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark asked Native Americans about the terrain up ahead. "There's no substitute for intimate, lifetime knowledge of an area," notes Scott Hamilton.

5 SENSES OF A BLIND CLIMBER

ERIK WEIHENMAYER SHOWS HOW TO USE TYPES OF VISION THAT ARE OUT OF SIGHT.



1 Listen. Sound bounces off rock, while trees and snow muffle it. There's a difference in sound quality between a rock wall and an open bowl. You can sense it as you hike.

2 Smell. On descents, I'll know from the scent when we're in the third clump of trees above timberline.

3 Touch. A lot of times, you can remember the direction of the wind or the way it hammered you in one spot.

4 Feel. There are so many nonvisual clues out there—the way a trail curves, low-hanging trees that brush your face, a patch of ice on the trail, the angle of the trail bed that forces one foot higher than the other.

5 Space and time. When my teammates guess distances and altitudes traveled, I'm usually the closest to the altimeter. You have to be awake. Pay attention.

Blind since age 13, mountaineer Erik Weihenmayer has summited Aconcagua, Mt. McKinley, El Capitan, and Mt. Everest.

[EXTRA CREDIT]

Using an altimeter, take an elevation. Then climb for an hour and guess how high you've come. Do the same with miles. Start paying attention to landmarks, so you know what a mile feels like. It feels different if you're climbing a thousand feet in a mile, or 3,000 feet.

ERIK WEIHENMAYER

NIGHT MOVES

Getting around when the sun goes down

Like bats and ghosts, moonlight hikers, 24-hour adventure racers, and Micronesian navigators are night creatures. You can be one, too, with a few dark-loving skills.

Rule one: Hit the lights. "Turn your headlamps off. Give your eyes a couple of minutes to adjust, and you'll be able to see terrain much better," says Nina Wallace, a world championship orienteer from Canada. In the dark, there's less room for mistakes. "Pick safe routes, and use easily identifiable linear features, like ridges or streambeds," advises orienteer Eric Bone. "Double-check everything. Have you gone the right distance? Is the trail making sense?"

Since it's harder to see what's out there, take time to stop and look around you, Wallace says. That includes looking up. Before hosting PBS's *This Old House*, Steve Thomas studied under Micronesian navigator Mau Piailu. Piailu taught him how to read the night sky like a AAA guide. "Stars keep their positions relative to one another," Thomas explains. "It's like they were painted on the underside of a vast dome."

[EXTRA CREDIT]

Learn six well-known stars or constellations and the general direction they rise and set on the horizon. For star guides, check www.stardate.org.

WHAT NAVIGATORS KNOW

■ Turn around. Knowledgeable trackers study how the route will look on the way back.

■ Make a list. "Simplify the steps in your route: ridgetops, valleys, slope breaks, streams. Create a list of directions. Then keep your eyes open," advises Eric Bone, U.S. World Championship orienteering team member.

■ Study the terrain. "Map contours might tell you the degree of slope, but they don't say 'boulders' or 'scree,'" notes Martin Rydlo, adventure race trainer and team coach.

■ Plot the easy way. "You need to have your route wired tightly to figure the path of least resistance," says Chris Imperial, navigation instructor for the National Association for Search and Rescue. "You structure that into 'attack points.' Navigate to a known feature, then follow an accurate compass reading to another attack point."

■ Don't be subtle. "Ontario, where I live, is quite flat and featureless, with a lot of forest and marshland," says North American Orienteering Champ Mike Waddington. "When map reading through those areas, we pick the biggest, firmest features to guide us."

■ Take the high road.

"Anywhere you go, the animals stay on ridgeline, and they're usually there for a reason. Let yourself get pulled downhill into drainages, and suddenly you're down there thrashing in the thorn vines," says Imperial.

■ Hedge your bet. "Say I'm trying to hit a point feature, like the intersection



FIND YOUR BEARING FAST WITH AN ORIENTEER'S TRICKY COMPASS!

of two valleys," says Bone. "If I aim straight for the intersection, there's a good chance I'll miss it." The solution? Aim off to the left or right of the correct route and into one of the valleys. That way you'll know which one you're in, and can follow it to the intersection.

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“If you're headed to a new area, I can't stress enough the previsualization process. Study the maps. Paper them to your wall. Look at them from afar up close. Look at how the weather might flow through the land, how you'd travel. The land isn't just a scenic backdrop you move through; it's a huge, 3-D ecosystem, and you'll become a part of it soon.”

COOKING

PACK SMALL. EAT BIG. LIVE WELL.

“JUST bread and water and delightful toil is all I need,” said John Muir. He clearly never tried our trail-baked upside-down cake (below). The key to gourmet hiking is to pack the makings of five-star meals without adding much heft. To minimize weight, learn to dehydrate your favorite fresh foods and make the most of limited ingredients, says Ida Lange, who plans menus for the annual 3-week Arctic expeditions by the Geriatric Adventure Society of Erna, NH. She figures on a pound of food per person per day—less if there’s dependable fishing. Limit bulk by packing tortillas instead of heavier foods like bagels and repackaging meals in plastic bags.

Once packed, follow the advice of our favorite backwoods chefs.



Fiesta Flavor: Spice up burritos and rice with ingredients you dehydrate at home, like peppers and mushrooms.

[EXTRA CREDIT]



PIECE OF CAKE

Not all pastry ambitions are half-baked.

Food guru Claudia Pearson of the National Outdoor Leadership School tells how to bake.

Use a shallow frying pan or standard coolpot with a flat lid and no plastic parts.

Master the “twiggy fire.” With the pot cooking on the stove, build a small fire on top of the pan lid for an oven effect. Use twigs the size of pencils and matchsticks.

Cook food evenly by shifting the pot off-center over the flame every few minutes.

For even easier baking, try the Outback Oven (Backpacker’s Pantry, 303-581-0538; www.backpackerspantry.com; \$64.90).

Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

1/2 cup baking mix (like Bisquick)
1/2 cup flour
8 tablespoons brown sugar
1/2 cup powdered milk
2 level tablespoons powdered egg
pinch salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup cold water
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
6–8 dried pineapple rings (rehydrated)

AT HOME: Combine baking mix, flour, 4 tablespoons of brown sugar, milk, egg, and salt in a zipper-lock bag. Put the remaining 4 tablespoons of brown sugar in a separate bag.

IN CAMP: Add vanilla and water to the bag containing the flour mixture. Knead the ingredients in the bag until the batter is smooth. Heat the oil in a 10-inch skillet that has a lid. Stir the brown sugar into the oil and spread the mixture evenly in the bottom of the skillet. Place pineapple rings on top of the sugar mixture in a single layer. Pour the batter over pineapples, cover, and bake for 15 to 25 minutes. *Serves 4.*

CHEAT SHEET

BATTER UP: Next time you need to mix batter for pancakes or bread, dump the ingredients into a zipper-lock bag, seal, and knead the goo from the outside. For pancakes, cut off a corner and squeeze the batter directly onto the cooking surface. Use the same method to make dough for cookies, scones, and pizza.

MOVEABLE PANTRY

Essential gear and ingredients

■ **Cutting board.** Use the plastic sheet that comes in a package of meat. "It's easy to pack, weighs next to nothing, lasts for a few trips, and comes free with your bacon," says Illo Gassoway, who teaches backpacking cooking classes in Yosemite National Park.

■ **Dehydrated foods.** Check The Baker's Catalogue (800-827-6836; www.lingarthurfour.com) for powdered cheese, butter, coconut, even spinach. Adventure Foods (828-497-4113; www.adventurefoods.com) features cold-prep meals, desserts, vegetarian meals, and drinks.

■ **Better bags.** Claudia Pearson, who has packed more than 93,000 meals for the National Outdoor Leadership School, recommends using clear plastic two-ply sacks to keep food fresh and organized. Bags are available from Tweed's Wholesale (307-856-5425). Your food will stay fresher than with zipper-locks, which lose their seal after a couple of days.

■ **No-mess pasta strainer.** Pack a mesh baseball cap; you'll never suffer burned hands and spilled pasta again. Hold the cap on two sides and dump in the pasta. Rinse your hat away from, not in, water sources.

A WINE FOR EVERY MEAL

Cover your cooking sins with a decent bottle.

Which wines go with standard backpacking dinners? We consulted David Lynch, wine director at Babbo Ristorante in New York City.

Note: Wine travels best in 12-ounce Nalgene bottles or Lexan flasks available at outdoor shops.



Quattro Formaggio (mac 'n' cheese)

"All that cheese requires a wine with some bite: An Italian Barolo or a hearty red Burgundy."

Spaghetti Bolognese (spaghetti and meat sauce)

"Gotta go Italian here. Try a light Valpolicella or Bardolino for a '70s pizza parlor vibe, or a Chianti Classico Riserva for serious mountaintop dining."

Potato Croquettes (instant mashed potatoes with stuffing)

"A white Burgundy, maybe Macon-Villages or Chablis, or a toasty barrel-fermented California chardonnay."

Chili con queso and rice (chili with cheese and rice)

"Let's go Latino on this one—something fun and fruity from south of the border: maybe a rich Argentine Malbec or a plump Chilean cabernet."

SOME LIKE IT HOT

Trail drinks with a bite

Glavine (serves 4)

1/2 cup water
1/2 cup sugar
2 cinnamon sticks
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1 orange, sliced
1/4 lemon, sliced
1 bottle dry red wine

Boil water and add everything but wine. Simmer 5 minutes. Reduce heat, add wine, and heat to taste (do not boil).

Hot Coconut Smoothie

1/4 cup powdered milk
1 tablespoon coconut cream powder or powdered coconut
1 teaspoon sugar
(or more to taste)

On the trail, just add above ingredients to a cup of boiling water. Stir and sip.

Trail Chai (serves 4)

5-6 cups water
4 or 5 black tea bags
1 cup powdered milk
1/4 cup sugar (or to taste)
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon cardamom
5 cloves

Boil water and add tea bags. Let them steep for 5 minutes. Then add the remaining ingredients and stir.

PHOTOS BY WITCH MAGAZINE/RECALL IMAGES, COURTESY THE FOOD NETWORK

HOT LUNCH, NO WAITING. At breakfast, fill your Nalgene bottle with boiling water. Add cider mix, soup mix, cocoa mix, or tea bags. Then put the bottle in a "cozy," available at most outdoors shops for about \$17. Or make your own cozy with a scrap of closed-cell foam and duct tape.

ESSENTIAL UTENSILS. For easy mixing and stirring, use a ginch wisk and a wooden kitchen spoon, with its handle borrowed for easy packing.

TASTIER CAMP CUISINE WITH EMERIL LAGASSE

So he's never summited Everest or tried the Haute Route. Who would you rather have giving you cooking beta, some skinny uberhiker or America's favorite TV chef? Here, Emeril looks at camp cooking and tells how to kick it up a notch.

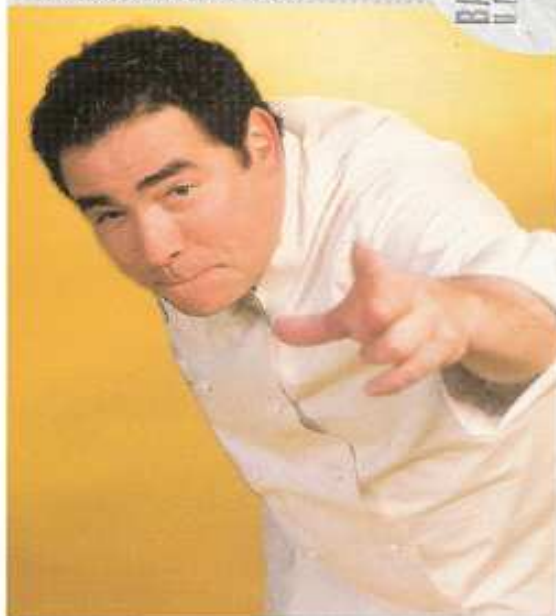
5 SPICES Emeril never leaves home without salt, pepper, Essence, cayenne, and parsley. What's Essence? A mixture of salt, paprika, granulated garlic, black pepper, onion powder, dried thyme, dried oregano, and cayenne pepper. A few pinches of each ingredient in a film canister yields a week's worth of Essence.

1 POT A 2-quart nonstick aluminum saucepan is all you need on the trail. Emeril's favorite one-pot meal: Wild Mushroom Risotto (he uses porcini mushrooms, arborio rice, shallots, dried bacon, and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese).

1 SAUCE Kicks up any meal. Sauté slices of tobacco or serrano chiles, garlic, and onion with pinch of salt in 2 cups of water until seeped. Then puree the mixture, adding a cup of white vinegar. Refrigerate and age 2 weeks before using.

1 SPUD To rescue a salty dish, Emeril suggests adding a potato cut into quarters (lightweight version: Add plain dried potato flakes). The starch in the potato will help draw out the extra salt.

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TRAIL CHIPS. Cut corn tortillas into small triangles. Heat a dollop of oil in a skillet or pot, and add the tortillas in a single layer. Sprinkle with chili powder or salt to go with beans or hummus. Or use cinnamon and sugar for a sweet treat. Flip when crispy, then stand back. Your mates are hungry.

SURVIVAL

BE PREPARED. BE AWARE. STAY ALIVE.

IN 1992, Colby Coombs and two ropemates slid 800 feet down Alaska's Mt. Foraker. His companions died; Coombs broke his neck, ankle, and shoulder blade. He hobbled 6 miles to the nearest ranger station, a journey that took him more than 5 days. How did he manage to survive? He didn't have a choice—not if he wanted to live. "And I did."

Survivors share two traits, according to Daryl Miller, the lead rescuer on Denali. "They have confidence in their outdoors skills, and they start taking care of themselves instead of just sitting there waiting on a rescue." Retired park ranger Charles "Butch" Farabee adds a third: "Ideals." Survivors "have family or friendships that give them the desire to live," says Farabee, a veteran of more than 1,000 SAR missions.

Then there are the mistakes that get hikers in trouble in the first place. Farabee points to the deadly four: failing to imagine a worst-case scenario and prepare for it; ignoring the weather; failing to leave an itinerary; and overestimating one's abilities.

What should you do when you get in a fix? Read on.

CHEAT SHEET

THAT BITES. If a rattlesnake bites you and you're alone, walk out, say wilderness medical experts Robert Norris, M.D., and Sean Bush, M.D. Keep the bitten part as still as possible. Use a makeshift crutch for a bite on a lower extremity, rest frequently, and drink often. Don't cut and suck. Don't use a tourniquet. Don't ice it.

PANIC POISON. Stay calm. Your life depends on it. Stress produces cortisol, a hormone that circulates throughout your body for hours, interfering with memory and ultimately wearing down bones and dendrites—critical parts of the brain associated with memory. Experts say that panic is often implicated in disastrous survival decisions.

GEAR TO DIE FOR

What's not in your kit could kill you.

SUPERGLUE

The knife went wild and the cut went deep. When you're days from medical care, search your pack for superglue. It can safely be used to hold skin shut as long as you keep the goo out of the wound. Just remember to irrigate the wound before holding it closed and gluing the surface shut.

DRINKING STRAW

"On big climbs, I carry a plastic drinking straw in my suit. When there are little trickles of water on the rocks, I can drink," says Conrad Anker, Himalayan climber and Mallory's discoverer on Everest. Works on desert potholes, too.



PEE BOTTLE

In a cold-weather emergency, a full pee bottle can act as a hot water bottle. Use the urine's heat to keep warm for a couple of hours.

SUNGLASSES

Wearing sunglasses after dark limits the heat escaping through your eyes. "It can make a perceptible difference in body heat retention," says John Gookin, survival expert with NOLS.

DUCT TAPE

Use it to secure splints to broken limbs, craft avalanche probes, fashion an emergency shelter, and more.

"IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A LOST PERSON AND YOU CAN READ MAPS, YOU CAN FIGURE OUT THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE, AND CHANCES ARE, THAT'S WHERE THE VICTIM WILL BE WANDERING."

Chris Imperial, navigator instructor for National Association for Search and Rescue

DEADLY MISTAKES OF THE LOST

Don't try these tricks away from home.

Sometimes it's obvious. Your plane crash lands just north of nowhere, and you look out the shattered window and think, "I could die out there." Usually, it's more like the experience Gordon Snow describes in *Safe and Sound* (Goose Lane Editions): "You may have been feeling uneasy for some time, but you know for sure when you can't deny any longer that night will arrive before you do."

Keep a bad situation from becoming worse by avoiding these common mistakes.

X Heading down an unknown trail, despite the fact that you

don't know which way to go.

X Traveling off-trail with determination in a straight line figuring you'll get un-lost eventually.

X Walking downhill and/or downstream, even though you don't know where the stream or hill is headed.

X Hiking after dark. "Unless there is imminent threat to life or limb, any lost person is better off if they do not move," says Charley Shimanski, executive director, American Alpine Club and education director, Mountain Rescue Association.

PHOTO BY JOHN BURCHINA, WETCH MANUFACTURING, WASHDC, COURTESY NOLS

BEST SIGNALS FOR HELP. Use large rocks or tree limbs to spell "help," or draw an arrow to your shelter. Light three fires in a triangle—a universal distress signal. Use a flashlight, mirror (a CD works well), or other shiny surface to flash rescuers. Build a signal pole by hanging shiny or bright objects from a tree. Blow 3 long blasts on your emergency whistle or harmonica.

UNDER COVER. Use trees in the shoulder area to form a "tee" for survival. Water flows down the trunk, but you're able to stand in the lee of the trunk. Camp is prepared to build a shelter. After you've built a shelter, look for signs of life. If you're through the shelter, look for signs of life. If you're through the shelter, look for signs of life.



TRAIN TO LIVE

A FAMOUS SURVIVOR SHARES WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT THROUGH.

October 1993, Mogadishu, Somalia: Under heavy fire, Master Sergeant Tim Wilkinson, an Air Force pararescuer, ran back and forth several times between an incapacitated helicopter and a bullet-riddled building, carrying life-saving supplies and medical care to the wounded. He took bullets in his face and arm, and earned the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism. The movie *Black Hawk Down* immortalizes the unselfish acts of Wilkinson and his compatriots. "My training prepared me the best it could," he says. "You need to train for the type of environment you think you'll be facing, or else you'll have a false sense of security."

Wilkinson endured months of combat training to survive his ordeal; the backpacker's training regimen is much simpler. Here are the easiest ways to train to survive a backcountry emergency:

- Learn to swim, even if only at a beginner level.
- Take a first-aid class. Review it every 3 years.
- Exercise regularly. The stronger you are, the more hardship you can endure.
- Learn to navigate. (See page 36.)
- Plan ahead. Brainstorm all potential disasters before you head out, and draft a plan for surviving each one.

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PHYSICS

BEAT GRAVITY. CHEAT THE WIND. REST EASY.

SIR ISAAC Newton tells us that a pack's weight depends on two factors: gravity and mass. We can't control the gravity part. But backpackers are making some serious inroads into mass. More hikers are opting for lightweight trail-running shoes, while gear designers are ditching every gram of extraneous doodads from clothing and packs.

Experienced backpackers also know how to overcome other physical forces—cold, wind, rain, darkness. To find out how you measure, ask yourself:

- How light can I go? *Before each hike, take one more item out of your pack.*
- Do I have perfect pitch? *On a stormy night, set up a tent in your yard.*
- Can I feel the rain? *Pitch your tent under a sprinkler to find leaks.*

When you've honed your skills, take a break. The greatest hikers of all are the ones who make themselves the most comfortable in camp—thus obeying Newton's first law of motion, which says that an object at rest tends to stay at rest. And who are we to argue with physics?



CHEAT SHEET

HEAT. Pitch your tent in a clump of trees or bushes, which retain the day's heat, rather than in a wide-open clearing where you're susceptible to wind.

VOLUME. When winter camping, dig out the snow inside of your vestibule. You'll have a comfortable seat for tying your boots.

MORE HEAT. Keep leather gloves around your stove for emergency use. And make sure you bring cleaning needles and spare parts. Clogged stove valves are among the most common meal-stoppers in the backcountry.

MULTITASK GEAR

Defy gravity with gear that does double duty.

"The real key for ultralight travel is to have gear that works in synergy, with multiple uses for a single item," says Brian Robinson, who in 2001 became the first person to hike the Appalachian, Continental Divide, and Pacific Crest Trails in a single year. Here are some items you can put to multi-use.

Take this...		Instead of this...
 Poncho		Groundcloth, tarp, pack cover, rain suit
 Trekking pole		Tent/tarp pole
 Pack		Sleeping pad (or use it with a 3/4-length pad)
 Newspaper		Book, TP, firestarter
 Bandana		Water pre-filter, pasta strainer, pot holder
 Sleeping pad		Pack frame, camp chair

DROP AND GIVE US 20

The best way to rest

Expert hikers are experts at resting. While leading the party that discovered George Mallory's body on Everest in 1999, climber Conrad Anker used a technique he calls the "20-breath rest." A score of breaths is sufficient for restoring the system when oxygen is thin, he says. Just sit down, prop up your pack, and breathe by the numbers.



On the other hand, Brian Robinson, our favorite obsessive hiker, got a lot done during his thru-hiking rest stops. He used them to go to the bathroom, change clothes, filter water, and put food in his pockets for peripatetic snacking. "I tried to make sure that when I stopped, I did so for multiple reasons," he explains. But when he spotted another human soul, he took time for conversation. "After the longer, lonely stretches, I really needed the contact."

WHAT'S BETWEEN YOU AND THE LOWERING SKY

That nylon over your head is only millimeters thick. Two tent designers tell how to use it wisely.

"Always pitch the tent's narrowest profile into the wind," Ted Ganio, operations manager, Sierra Designs

"I'm a big tarp fan, but I set up tarps very low to the ground, so that no matter what comes up, even if you get wind and lots of rain, you don't have to readjust in the middle of the night. I tend to stake the perimeter against the ground, then perhaps raise the front edges a little." Martin Zemitz, world-renowned tent designer, currently designing for Mountain Hardware

"If you're sleeping in a bivy sack, bring earplugs. I've probably designed 50 of them in my life, and all of them are really loud in the rain. It sounds like someone beating a drum on your brain." M. Zemitz

"When picking a tent or bivy spot, think about how rain might pool. It can come right through the ventilation zipper around your face or along the side. Make sure you're in a spot where the water won't puddle so you can vent without water splashing in." M. Zemitz



GUY TALK AND OTHER LINES

Don't just shove stakes in convenient spots around your tent. "The ideal guyline should be literally 90 degrees from the pole arc," says Ted Ganio of Sierra Designs. "But that's difficult, because it means guying up as well as out—say, to a nearby tree trunk." To make your tent bombproof, run the guy out through the strap of a trekking pole or the binding of a ski before leading it to the stake in the ground. If you can't, try plan B: "Stake the guy as far out from the tent as possible," he says.

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WEIGHT LOSS 202 On your next trip, make a written inventory of every item. Idrees Kurt, Webberg, owner of the Sierra Mountaineering International guide service, will do your list for you. "I'll give you a list of what you actually used. Probably, you'll bring things you don't need," he says. "Just don't bring them at all." Plus, example each item on your list to see if you can't live with it. Replace it with something lighter—Lexan instead of metal spoons or a 5-ounce pack instead of one weighing 10 pounds. If you do eliminate those things, they will go.

HUMANITIES

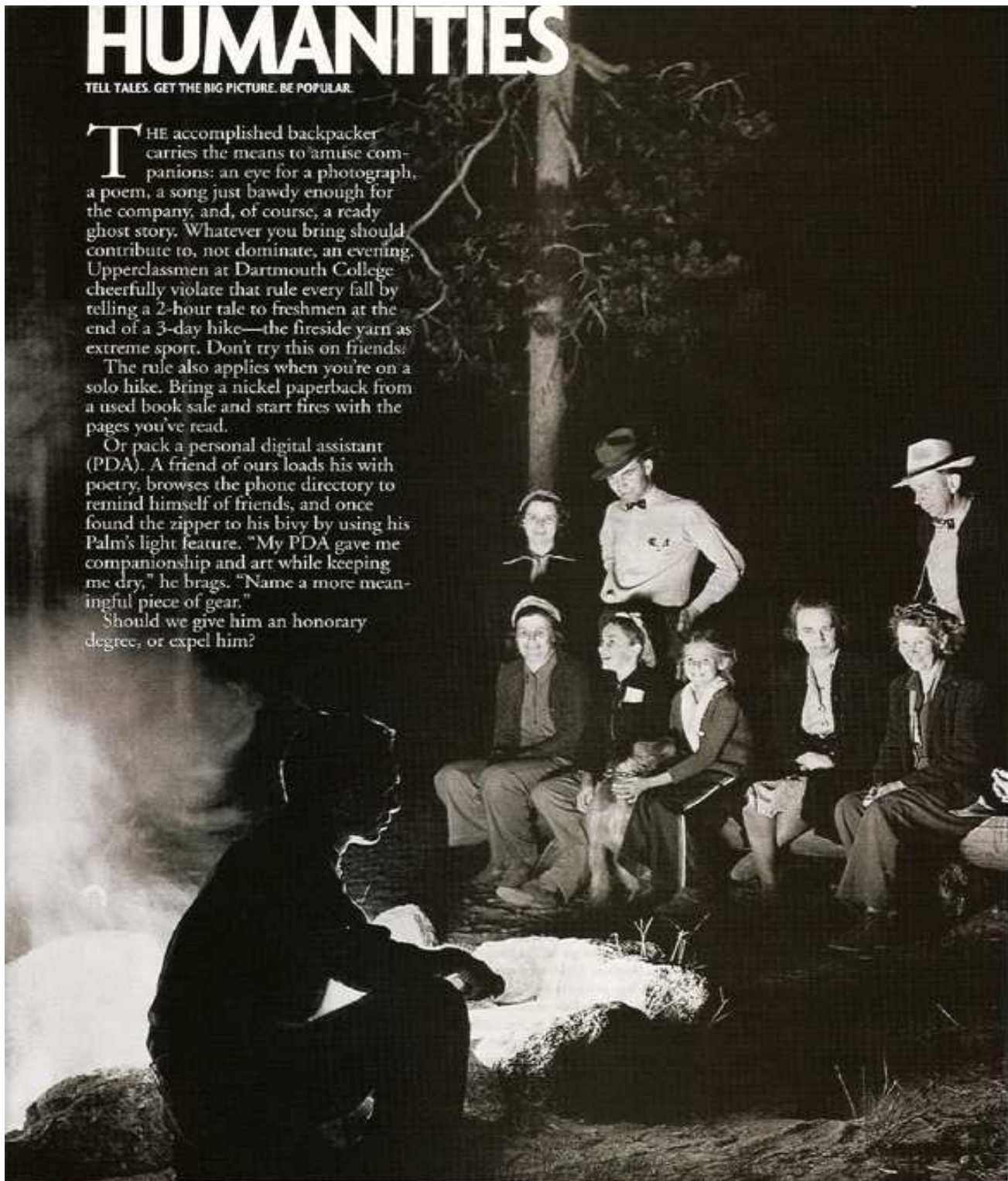
TELL TALES. GET THE BIG PICTURE. BE POPULAR.

THE accomplished backpacker carries the means to amuse companions: an eye for a photograph, a poem, a song just bawdy enough for the company, and, of course, a ready ghost story. Whatever you bring should contribute to, not dominate, an evening. Upperclassmen at Dartmouth College cheerfully violate that rule every fall by telling a 2-hour tale to freshmen at the end of a 3-day hike—the fireside yarn as extreme sport. Don't try this on friends!

The rule also applies when you're on a solo hike. Bring a nickel paperback from a used book sale and start fires with the pages you've read.

Or pack a personal digital assistant (PDA). A friend of ours loads his with poetry, browses the phone directory to remind himself of friends, and once found the zipper to his bivy by using his Palm's light feature. "My PDA gave me companionship and art while keeping me dry," he brags. "Name a more meaningful piece of gear."

Should we give him an honorary degree, or expel him?



CHEAT SHEET

BEST PACKABLE TOYS. "There are a lot of games where you can put the cards in a zipper-lock bag and leave the board at home. If it's summer and you're near water, I'd recommend toys like the Super Soaker. The smaller water pistols won't take up much space in a pack. I mean, how easy? You're hot. You need diversion."
Ninette DiFalco, head personal shopper for Manhattan toy giant FAO Schwarz

BEST FIRESIDE SONGS. Call us, come, call us old! In a hood, but two stiff forekisses are "America, The Beautiful" and "This Land Is Your Land." Your grip is looser to enter the series, and the patterns. In a hood, they're your soul with a bit of purple mountain majesty.

REQUIRED READING

Our favorite books for trail and home

FOR YOUR PACK:

» *A Sand County Almanac*, by Aldo Leopold. When this paean to the Wisconsin wilds was published in 1949, it inspired America's first generation of ecologists. Today, it reads like poetry.

» *The Long Walk*, by Slavomir Rawicz. The author, a Polish Calvary officer, escaped from a Siberian POW camp in 1941 and walked to India. You'll never complain about blisters again.

» *Kabloona*, by Gontran de Poncins. A French nobleman spent years in the Arctic living with the Inuit and wrote the funniest, most intimate observations

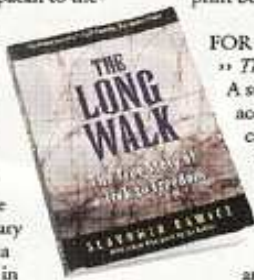
about hunter-gatherers. Look for Time-Life paperbacks of this out-of-print book at used bookstores.

FOR YOUR LIBRARY:

» *The Journals of Lewis & Clark*. A surprisingly well written account of the most successful camping trip in history.

» *The Ants*, by Bert Holldobler and Edward O. Wilson. This giant, photo-filled tome won the Pulitzer Prize in 1991 and will have you looking down more when you hike.

» *The Last Navigator*, by Stephen D. Thomas. Before he became the *This Old House* host, Thomas apprenticed himself to a Micronesian man who had found his way from Hawaii to Tahiti without map or compass.



CREATIVE ETHICS

While the soulful hiker leaves no trace, the clever one aims for convenience.

THE TRAIL-FRIENDLY TRACKMASTER
Snag a wild souvenir without stealing from the land.

Fill a zipper-lock bag with plaster mix, available at craft stores. Make a simple cardboard frame to fit around an animal track. Add water to the mix, pour it into the paw print, and wait for your plaster cast to dry.

THE TRACELESS DISPOSE-O-MATIC
With this cool strainer, your friends will beg to do the dishes.

Sew together two triangular scraps of window screen or other bendable mesh, leaving one side open like a funnel or coffee filter. Use it to strain your wastewater. When you're done doing the dishes, just turn the filter inside out in your trash bag. Modestly accept your companions' praise.

LIVE MUSIC

Take your favorite sounds to the trail

Tired of Kumbaya by the campfire? Several backpackable instruments will expand your repertoire of trail tunes. One of our favorites is Martin's Steel String Backpacker Guitar (www.mguitar.com; \$274). It weighs 1 pound 13 ounces and is easily strapped to the outside of your pack. Add a harmonica, mouth harp, or bongos, and there's no Bob Dylan, Dave Matthews, or bluegrass tune you can't play. Just be kind to trailmates who can't stand your singing.

PHOTOS BY PAUL S. BEECHER/SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; WITH MICHELLE/ROCKY MOUNTAIN MOUNTAINERS



FULL EXPOSURE

BACKPACKER PHOTOGRAPHERS SHARE TECHNIQUES, POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE



BACKPACKER UNIVERSITY

POSITIVE

- Carry extra batteries. A dead camera is dead weight.
- Use a fill-flash or forced flash in rain, at dusk, and when the sun is straight overhead to fill in harsh shadows and brighten foreground colors.
- Use faster film (200 or 400) for shooting sunlit backgrounds with a fill flash, and for most telephoto, canyon, and forest shooting.
- Shoot people against sunset backgrounds using a "night mode" fill flash.
- Follow the Rule of Thirds: Mentally divide your picture into three horizontal sections and three vertical sections. Place your subject where the dividing lines cross.

NEGATIVE

- Don't include much sky in the frame on overcast days; film washes out gray-white sky.
- Don't capture silhouettes that overlap or melt together, horizons that cut your subject in half, and tree branches in the background that seem to impale your buddy's head.
- Don't shoot straight on. Kneel down or climb higher for dramatic positions.

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ANATOMY OF A CAMPFIRE STORY. Keeping your companions on the edge of their logs is easy when you know the ingredients of a great suspense story. Use the following as a guide, filling in the blanks with your own details. Prologue: "There I was, deep in the wilds of _____." Plot: "And when I looked up, the grizzly was so close I could smell his breath. So, I _____." Climax: "Just when I thought hope was lost, out of nowhere came a _____." Resolution: "That night, snag in my tent, I decided to return to _____ next year."