

Tips on Planning Your Route for Your Next Adventure

By Kevin Jackson

Planning your route for backcountry expeditions sets the tone for the entire journey. Your route will determine the difficulty of your trip, the area you will explore, the amount of equipment and food you will need to carry and, most importantly, provides a detailed road map for your team as well as those who will be tracking your progress. Therefore, prior to embarking on any outdoor adventure it is essential to plan your route according to your adventure expectations and to understand the limitations of the terrain you will be exploring.

Getting Started

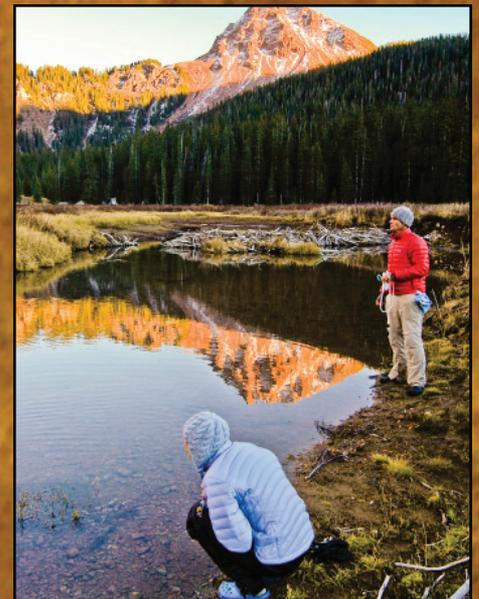
Route planning is basically how you and your team will get from point A to point B. When I start planning any of our adventures, I find a detailed map of the area with a scale of USGS 1:25,000 (1 km = 4cm). I then determine how many days it will take to complete the journey and the wilderness requirements, such as park permits and camping restrictions. I then break down each day into stages beginning with the previous night's camp and making the destination to the following night's camp. Each stage should cover total distance, camping and water access, evacuation and safety plan, and gear (such as clothing, cooking and sleeping requirements). This will provide you with the foundation for a successful journey.

How to Calculate Distances

When planning any backpacking trip, I always apply Naismith's Rule to determine the time it will take to cover a certain distance. This rule allows you to calculate how long it will take for a fit person to walk a given distance while taking into consideration the increase or decrease in elevation. The rule states that a fit person can walk on flat ground at a pace of five kilometers per hour, plus half an hour for every 300+/- in elevation. This is a great tool to use if there are not distances or time indicators on your map, and it is very effective when taking groups out into the backcountry. You should plan on walking no more than six hours a day (excluding rest and food stops). Based on this rule, you will be able to determine the total time for each stage and the daily distance covered. It is important to share this information with your group as well as the park service prior to departure.

Don't Forget Your Paperwork

You will need to carry with you a set of paperwork that includes all your planning records and details of the journey. The paperwork should outline your start and end dates along with each stage broken down with starting point, destination, daily distance, elevation gain/loss, the evacuation route and what time you plan on arriving. Also include on each sheet the contact information for the local park service and/or other local authorities and your home contact.



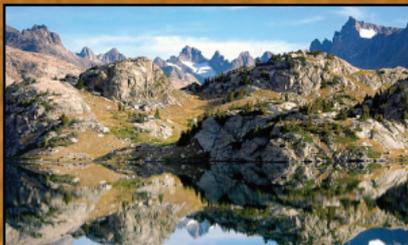
Camping & Water Supply

Every day should have an ending that is either a designated camp site or at a lower elevation with access to water. When camping is not designated by the forest service, look for low-lying areas in a basin or canyon. Typically, there will be a stream or river in the area to filter water and a level area for setting up camp. If this is not possible, look for a wooded area to set up camp to reduce the effect of strong winds as well as provide more warmth in colder climates.



Your Evacuation Plan

Regardless if I am planning a day hike or a multi-day expedition, I always have an evacuation plan in case of emergency. Your evacuation plan should be very explicit and indicate escape routes in case of bad weather or severe injury. For multi-day expeditions, you should plan 2-3 evacuation routes along the way looking for the closest place where vehicle transport can be reached or a ranger station where you can call for help.



Your Celebratory Meal

Finally, after every trek you should plan on a big meal at a local eatery. Although any meal after a long day of hiking can typically be the best you've ever had, look ahead of time for an eatery that you know has good food and which can serve as your adventure-ending celebration. Here's a sampling of a few of my favorite eateries in the United States:

- Corral Bar & Grill; Pinedale, Wyoming; Wind river Range
- Whitney Portal Store; Lone Pine, California; Mt. Whitney and John Muir Trail South
- Cantina; Aspen, Colorado; Maroon Bells Snowmass Wilderness
- Sirianni's Pizza Café; Davis, West Virginia; North Fork Trail and Otter Creek Wilderness
- Quincy's Pizza; Damascus, Virginia; Mt. Roger's State Park and Grayson Highlands State Park

Kevin Jackson is the owner of TST Adventures, an outdoor travel and training company in San Diego, California. To learn more about the areas they explore or to get involved in one of their many adventure programs, call (858) 309-2311 or visit www.tstadventures.com.

Get Out of Here

Experts Reveal Hot Adventure-Travel Destinations

By Allison Weiss Entekin

If your idea of the perfect vacation is traversing a rainforest or hiking a glacier, then you should get to know Leon Watts, managing owner of Adventure Outfitters (www.wattsadventures.com). Watts has made his living guiding locals through the most adventurous spots on earth, and he says Machu Picchu, Peru, is "hands-down" the No. 1 place his clients want to go. "It seems to be on everyone's 'list' for places they must see in their lives," he says. "We fill at least two trips to Peru a year."

Steve Curtis of Bill Jackson, Inc., (www.billjacksons.com) says his clients often tell him they're interested in visiting Africa. "It's always a popular place," he says. Watts agrees. "The dollar goes a long way in East Africa, Tanzania and Kenya, so travelers are making the most of it."

Roger Watson of Travel Country Outdoors (www.travelcountry.com) says many of his clients take eco-expeditions to the Manuel Antonio National Forest in Costa Rica. If that's too tame for you, Watts recommends heading to Nicaragua — it boasts a similar environment and is still mostly undiscovered. "Nicaragua is where Costa Rica was 15 years ago," he says.



Southern California Adventure Travel Resources

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

The Southern Terrain (TST) - www.thesouthernterrain.com - TST runs tours internationally as well as domestically. They will also get you in shape so you can ENJOY the trip.

Ride Strong Bike Tours - www.ridestrongbiketours.com - The best of European cycling vacations. When they say climbing, they MEAN climbing!

REI Adventures - www.rei.com/adventures - Over 140 trips worldwide.

O.A.R.S. - www.oars.com - Multi-sport expeditions for families, singles or teams, domestic or abroad.

DOMESTIC TRAVEL

Lifecycle Adventures - www.lifecycleadventures.com - Cycling trips in the California wine country. Life doesn't get much better.

Tahoe Trips and Trails - www.tahoetrips.com - Has a great array of exciting adventures, and they are not just in Tahoe either!

Adventure Connection - www.raftcalifornia.com - White water rafting in and around California.

Photos Courtesy of TST Adventures and are all taken on the Overland Track in Tasmania, Australia