

MULTI-SPORT ADVENTURES: Training, Packing & Proper Fueling

By Kevin Jackson

I found myself standing atop a 400-FOOT WATERFALL listening to the cheers of encouragement from my fellow teammates as I got set to REPEL DOWN INTO A NARROW CANYON where I could barely see the ground below me. This was just one of the obstacles presented to me on my latest multi-sport adventure.

Recently, I joined a group of elite athletes and ventured into the outback of Western Australia to try our skills on an eight-day adventure through the Kimberley Region. This multi-sport adventure featured canoeing and kayaking, swimming through a gorge, repelling over waterfalls, horseback riding, trekking, survival skills and, of course, barramundi fishing that made this a truly unique Australian experience. Throughout the adventure, however, there were many times when the extensive preparation we did before the trip proved invaluable.

For this particular expedition — because of its remoteness and varying level of technical knowledge required — our preparation included six weeks of focused training designed to provide us with the skills to handle ourselves in the Australia Outback. Extremely important was the degree of knowledge required for the specific activities we encountered, most notably canyoneering and repelling, and how to utilize our equipment most efficiently in remote regions. Finally, we carefully analyzed our nutrition needs and gear requirements before embarking, knowing we'd be

encountering numerous waterfalls, narrow canyons and rugged terrain along the way.

Here's a look at what we learned and some tips that will help make your multi-sport adventure successful — and ultimately more enjoyable.

TRAIN RIGHT

When training for multi-sport adventures, replicate to the best of your ability the specific activities you will be doing and allow your body to create the muscle memory it needs to perform. Also learn about each sport and get expert instruction on proper technique.

Some aspects of our Outback adventure were not as physically demanding as we expected; however, having the confidence and general knowledge not only reduced our risk of injury but also allowed us to thoroughly enjoy the overall experience. Equally valuable was being technically competent with our equipment and having the ability to care for it and fix it when necessary. For example, taking a pre-trip rappel and anchors course provided a basic understanding of what to expect and boosted our confidence.



I recommend at least one exposure to each activity prior to departure as well as four to six weeks of training for hiking or kayaking of any distance.

PACK LIGHT

Multi-sport adventures require a variety of clothing; however, going into remote regions comes with weight restrictions. As a result, it is important to reduce the weight of your pack as much as possible. Here are five ways you can do this and still allow you to carry all the essential gear for your multi-sport adventure:

1. CAMP SHOES. Although camp shoes are considered a luxury for most adventure enthusiasts, they have considerable value for your feet after a long day on the trail. Look for lightweight water shoes or sandals, rather than heavier running shoes. I carry a pair of Crocs, which are extremely light and durable and can be useful for creek crossings.

2. BATTERIES. Replace the AA Alkaline batteries in your flashlights with AA Lithium batteries. Lithium AA batteries weigh half as much as alkaline and last about three times longer.

3. FUEL. Cook with a lid on your pot for better heat retention. Water (or food) heats faster and uses less fuel, which reduces the amount of fuel you'll need to carry. Another tip for using less fuel is to blacken your cooking pots. A blackened pot will absorb heat faster than one with a shiny surface.

4. BACKPACKS. Shorten nylon webbing straps wherever possible. You can easily save four ounces by removing patches from the top of your pack and the foam-backed nylon belt loop (which allows the lid to double as a hip sack when removed from the pack) from the inside. I also remove a couple of plastic loop fasteners on the sides of the lid that are used as part of the hip sack configuration.

5. BOOTS. Cut off excess shoe laces for two reasons: 1) excess shoelaces are unnecessary weight and 2) they can be a safety hazard in the bush. Also, as your pack weight goes down, your requirement for heavy boots is reduced. Since every pound of your boots while hiking is equivalent to five pounds on your back, you can significantly reduce the relative load you carry by getting a pair of lighter-weight boots.

Another technique I use to help reduce the amount of gear I need to carry is to create a list of essentials for each sport and see how many items could be used for multiple purposes. For example, you can use your dry sacks as pillows or your camp shoes (such as Crocs, Tevas or Keen sandals) as water shoes.

FUEL PROPERLY

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate; and eat regularly.

Too often when going on expeditions involving multiple activities, the routine of hydrating and eating regularly is lost. For instance, after a three-hour hike, you may need to get into a kayak requiring you to leave your hydrators and food supplies packed away.

During your multi-sport adventure, try and stop every three to four hours to eat and drink and request the rest of your party to do the same. Also, be sure you understand the limitations of eating or drinking while on a 400-foot rappel as opposed to taking in fuel while hiking with all your supplies readily available.

Multi-sport adventures offer a unique opportunity to explore a variety of terrain as well as learn new skills along the way. Remember to train properly beforehand, pack light and fuel properly. Ultimately, how well you prepare for your adventure can mean the difference between an unforgettable experience or one you'd much rather forget. ✦

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STAY SAFE IN THE WILDERNESS Tips From Southeastern Experts

By Allison Weiss Entrekin

Heading into the great unknown is all about freedom, but failing to take the proper precautions before you go is just plain foolish. We talked with two Southeastern wilderness experts to find out what you should do before embarking on your next adventure. Here's what they had to say:

1 GET TO KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING. Orlando resident Cris Coban, an avid outdoorsman who has summited dozens of peaks across the world, says your best sources of information are the people who are familiar with the area to which you'll be traveling, like rangers, rescue workers and others who have spent time there. You can also search the Internet and read books about the area to better understand its wildlife, geography, weather patterns and regulations.

2 DON'T LEAVE HOME THIRSTY. "Be prepared by pre-hydrating with water and electrolytes before a big hike, bike ride or kayak excursion — that way, you'll be ahead of dehydration and will keep yourself on your game for the Plan Bs you encounter along the way," says Anne Sontheimer, a SOLO instructor with the Nantahala Outdoor Center in North Carolina.

3 FILL SOMEONE IN. "Leave your itinerary with a responsible person outside the area who can initiate a search if you don't return in time," says Coban.

4 PACK A WELL-PLANNED BAG. Sontheimer and Coban recommend bringing plenty of food (don't forget the utensils), water, maps, a compass, a headlamp, warm and water-resistant clothing, waterproof matches and a personal first-aid kit (this should contain Latex-free gloves and a face mask, a SAM splint, an ACE bandage, two large cravats, moleskin for blisters and a tube of povidone-iodine for wound care and water purification). Oh yeah — don't forget the duct tape. "Duct tape can do amazing things when it comes to first aid and treatment," says Sontheimer.

5 BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING. Coban recommends asking yourself the "What if?" questions most people prefer to ignore: "What if my equipment fails?" "What if I get lost?" "Can my food be compromised?" "Can I run out of water?" "What if I'm injured?" By thinking about these issues before they arise, you're much less likely to panic in an emergency.

6 GET READY TO HAVE FUN. "Enjoy every breath of fresh air and the beauty of the unspoiled wilderness," says Coban. "Leave it unspoiled so the next visitor will be able to experience the same."