

OUTDOORS

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Before you take that adventure into the wild, make sure your mind is in shape. (Photo by Mark Rackay)

Get your mind in shape

I enjoyed a massive dinner consisting of a nice rib eye steak and baked potato, ended with some chocolate creme pie. We don't normally eat that way around our house, but my wife was giving me a nice send-off, because I was heading off to Northern Saskatchewan in the morning for a hunting trip.

It was late September and we were enjoying a rather warm autumn on the western slope. Temperatures were topping out in the 80s



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

You know you are going to challenge your body with climbing, hiking, wading, pedaling, and backpacking, all at altitude. Hopefully, you

plastic Spork.

The only thing that made these little meals edible, was that I was so hungry from climbing mountains all day, that I would have eaten handfuls of lichen and called it delicious.

Over the course of normal, weekend camping trips, work on your campfire cooking skills. Especially, as in my case, work on your camping outdoor eating skills. If your big trip is taking you out in the wilderness, there are

Tweeting.

If your destination is somewhere in the wilderness, you are not going to have any of the luxuries of social media or cell service. Our camp had a satellite phone for emergencies and that was it. Being suddenly away from these things can take some getting used to.

Start out with an hour of not checking your phone. Work your time away to two hours, then three, and so on. For some people it will be like quitting

around our house, but my wife was giving me a nice send-off, because I was heading off to Northern Saskatchewan in the morning for a hunting trip.

It was late September and we were enjoying a rather warm autumn on the western slope. Temperatures were topping out in the 80s and we had not seen a drop of precipitation in weeks.

After 26 hours of air and ground travel, we hit camp; a place to call home for the next 12 days. My "home" was a tent with a foam pad of the ground for me to layout the sleeping bag. No mints on the pillow, maybe because there was no pillow. So much for my "perfect sleeper king sized bed" on this trip.

The bathroom facilities were described to me as, "anywhere but in the tents." No shower, but a bath was available if I wanted to jump in the river. The nighttime temperatures were in the upper teens and snow was beginning to fall.

The moral of this story was that I was not mentally prepared for this trip and the rough conditions I was to face, compared to the soft lifestyle at home. My mood did not improve when dinner was served on paper plates. Boiled meat of unknown origin, carrots and potatoes were the entrée and dessert was a second helping. Suddenly, airline food did not seem so bad.

It took me a good two days to become acclimated to the 25-degree average drop in temperatures and humidity's 60% higher than I was used to at home. My body did not sleep well on the ground, so I was generally tired throughout the day.

Before we venture off into the great outdoors for our big trip of the year, spend some time getting your mind in shape for the drastic change of conditions.

Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

You know you are going to challenge your body with climbing, hiking, wading, pedaling, and backpacking, all at altitude. Hopefully, you have been getting in good physical shape before you hit the trail.

If you are facing a drastic weather change for your trip, plan ahead for it. Consider going outside at home when the weather is bad. In Colorado, you can usually find rougher weather if you wait long enough. On one of those colder, windy and rainy days, head out for a hike.

As fall approaches, the morning are considerably cooler. I take my morning runs or walks with the dogs, earlier in the morning. This way, I spend more outside time when it is cooler out, helping acclimate my body to the upcoming change.

If your trip is going to involve many nights on a small pad with a sleeping bag, and your jacket as a pillow, you are in for some getting used to. Try to take a weekend camping trip a few weeks before the big trip to get used to the hard ground again. Skip the hot shower and wash up in the creek, just to get used to the idea and get used to the lack of conveniences we take for granted. Being extra dirty and going without a shower for a weekend won't kill you.

I took a high country trip one time, where all of our meals came from little envelope containing something of unknown origin. The directions said to add boiling water, the stuff inside would turn into a three-course meal. We sat, huddled around a tiny cook stove, eating these envelope contents with a small

handful of lichen and called it delicious.

Over the course of normal, weekend camping trips, work on your campfire cooking skills. Especially, as in my case, work on your camping outdoor eating skills. If your big trip is taking you out in the wilderness, there are no refrigerators or microwaves. You will be carrying everything to eat and cook with on your back.

This means no fresh vegetables or fruits. Meats may or may not be available. In my case, dinner consisted of mystery meat. One of those where after it was consumed, the host says, "You will never guess what you just ate." You are probably better off not knowing.

While on your weekend camp trips, work on making "one-pot meals." Learn to cook over the open fire and on a small cook stove. Figure out just what you can do to make the food more appealing and palatable. When roughing it, even salt and pepper become a luxury.

Never pass up an opportunity to take part in a spontaneous activity. Spontaneity helps keep you feeling young and alive, but it is also very good training for outdoor activities. Being spontaneous helps you be prepared for the unexpected. Remember that Mother Nature just loves to throw you a change-up pitch anytime she can. By taking part in unexpected short activities, even when you are not equipped or prepared, helps get you mentally ready for the big show.

The last bit of advice for people is to learn how to disconnect. Everywhere you go, people walk around with their face in a cell phone. At home, they live with a computer at their side. I don't know how some of these people would survive without Facebook, email, texting, Snap Chat or

Our camp had a satellite phone for emergencies and that was it. Being suddenly away from these things can take some getting used to.

Start out with an hour of not checking your phone. Work your time away to two hours, then three, and so on. For some people it will be like quitting smoking or giving up coffee. You can survive without knowing that your cousin has found true love (for the third time in as many months) or that your nephew is job-hunting. This is what you need to get ready for your trip to the wilderness.

When I got back from that Saskatchewan trip, I realized I had not seen the news in over two weeks. When I finally sat down and read the paper, and watched the evening news, I discovered the world went on without me anyway, and I really did not miss out on anything.

I came home from that trip a half dozen pounds lighter. My entire body was exhausted. I took one of those long showers where you let the hot water run out. My wife made me a fantastic dinner consisting of many of the foods I missed. Yes, the trip took a mental and physical toll on this man, but all in, I would do it all over again tomorrow. Isn't that what those wilderness trips are all about anyway?

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