



SOLO BACKCOUNTRY HUNTING TIPS

Steven Maichak 1/2/2019

Take it from me, the following tips I learned and implemented during my DIY adventure will help you find success in your own solo backcountry hunting pursuits.

- No matter how in shape you think you are, you could always be in better shape, so start training several months out before the season starts.
- There's no need to force anything to happen. Take what is given to you and maximize their benefits. For me, it meant a Forest Service bathroom, OHV trails, and cattle/game trails.
- Staying hydrated and well-nourished is critical to spending long days in the field. My daily recommended food cache includes a minimum of 6 quarts of water along with a filling lunch and plenty of healthy snacks. The weight of your sustenance is motivation for you to consume all of it to make your pack lighter, both of which are to your benefit.
- Take care of your legs and feet at all costs because they are your moneymakers in backcountry pursuits. Supportive footwear that prevents ankle rolling and sole soreness is a must.
- Never "red line" when covering long distances. By that, I simply mean find the max pace you can sustain for a quarter to a half mile at a time before pausing for a breather or to scout ahead using your binoculars. "Red lining" even once can set back your energy levels way earlier than you want and adds up quickly after a few days.
- Take it slow going downhill. A simple sprain can end your hunt in a hurry. To top it off, you'll still have to figure out how to get back to your vehicle.
- Cattle and game trail networks are godsend when trying to go long distances quickly. They are often winding, but you'll find most turns are pretty intuitive to increase your efficiency. Additionally, they are much quieter than bushwhacking.
- Learning how to effectively use a hiking pole can be of great benefit to your knees and leg muscles. Shooting sticks can double up nicely.
- Like finding the depth fish are suspended in the water column, you need to find the topographic strata game are using. There's usually a cattle or game trail every 50-100' up and down in elevation. How you use that network of trails is your decision.
- For me, it's lightweight gun or bust, especially when you know you have long hikes ahead or plan to still hunt. By the way, I hope you don't mind scratching up that handsome, finely-checked wood stock; a synthetic stock takes the worry out of bushwhacking.
- I carry a small, but surprisingly comprehensive, first aid kit. Nicks, cuts, and blisters can quickly compound to create a draining experience, so you'll want to address them at the onset.
- A proper pack with an internal or external frame, cushy hip and shoulders straps, and correctly fitted to your person will do wonders for reducing fatigue in your back, neck, core, and legs when hiking out your meat, cape, and rack.

