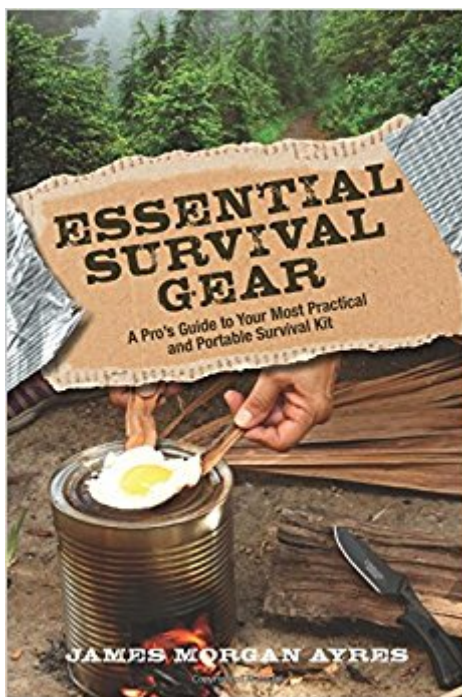


The book was found

Essential Survival Gear: A Pro's Guide To Your Most Practical And Portable Survival Kit



Synopsis

Disasters strike every day, but despite the best laid plans you may find yourself in one with only the clothes on your back and without a well packed first-aid kit. In *Essential Survival Gear*, J. Morgan Ayres explains in detail what you need to have when a dire emergency occurs, wherever you are, whoever you are. Ayres—•a former Green Beret, martial arts master, and wilderness and urban survivalist—•explains his four-layer concept (clothing, day bag, backpack, basic equipment and luxuries) and profiles and provides photos of a broad range of gear, with recommendations on what works best in what scenario—•from cityscapes to wilderness and everywhere in between—•and how to use it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

James Morgan Ayres is the pen name of a writer who, using a variety of pen names, has written over a hundred articles and short stories, seven books, two shows for television and more commercials than he cares to remember. He worked in Latin America, Asia, and Europe as a consultant for U.S. Government agencies and private corporations. Once a soldier, he served with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 7th Special Forces Group (Green Berets). In parallel lives he founded and sold four companies with international operations and has traveled or sojourned in over forty countries.

An Addendum to My Earlier Review of *Essential Survival Gear* as a Rich and Rewarding ReadI have purchased an additional copy (my 4th) to give to a friend who takes his young sons camping

and on trips in Michigan. I continue to re-read the book and find new value in its stories and advice. However, this addendum is to correct a potential short-coming in the original review. There I made specific reference to pictures in the book. To see them one would have to buy the book. I want to direct attention to a picture available to everyone looking at the page for the book without buying it; the cover picture (which can be expanded) tells us a great deal about the book, its approach, content, and, also I believe, about Ayres. There are essentially three elements to the cover. Focus first on the title, "written on torn cardboard and held in place with two pieces of duct tape. It illustrates a minimalist approach running through-out the book and gives one an open invitation to improvising. What cannot be done with duct tape? Cardboard can serve a number of functions in a survival situation, including in the role of insulation keeping cold ground from draining one's body of heat. What else is available in our environment for use as improvised gear? The second part of the cover to examine is the lower third. Here there is an emphasis on making due with a hobo stove to cook an egg. But there is more; the "utensils to handle the egg are from wood in the environment rather than expensive, high-tec knives and forks. Indeed, a minimalist approach. But the knife in that part of the picture is far from minimalist. It allows one to make minimal equipment to serve one in unexpected situations if one has the skill and experience to do so. The third part of the cover to examine is the top third; arguably this is the richest part of the cover. Here one finds a conifer forest with hints of mist and fog on the left half of the picture. The mist and fog easily represent existence in a complex world. There is a dirt "road or path just to right of center. The road beckons us to travel away from our comfortable habitat where we may encounter who knows what, but the fog does not cover the road. I may be reading too much into this part of the picture but I find an important connection to a passage in Ayres' earlier Tactical Knives. Here (page 91) Ayres quotes Tolkien's The Fellowship of the Ring where Bilbo Baggins is talking to Frodo: "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to." An early chapter in On the Shoulders of Hobbits employs the same quotation and then explores implications of the "Road" in works of Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. Ayres gives us food for thought and action in traveling life's Road in Essential Survival Gear that takes us far beyond mere survival. In large part that is why I gave the book to my grandsons and have read parts of it to them and used it to promote discussion about how it applies to their lives. The same

applies for my use of it with my students and the sons of a very good friend. There is also an important cultural critique caught up in the story mentioned below about the ten year old who survived a fall into an icy creek because of his scout knife, a waterproof match case, and powerful mind/body skills. Today a ten year old would have no hope of having a scout knife with him to aid survival; our culture of fear may well impede our survival. Maybe a sense of spirit would help us in a large measure. I offer the book to you in the same spirit; and, no, I do not get a

kickback for doing so. End of

addendum.*****A disclaimer:

I have rated a number of Ayres' books before and found significant value in them. I might be biased but that does not mean I am necessarily wrong. What follows is an examination of why a high rating here is not wrong. In one sense the book is an easy read. To say it is an easy read is not to say it is a simple read. Ayres has the ability, perhaps somewhat rare, to identify essential principles in complex material or situations and make them available to many across various experience and skill levels. One major approach to doing this is via story or narrative that captures essences and makes them alive, approachable, and applicable. Another approach is to link personal photographs to stories and experiences. In one sense his approach is that of a minimalist and in another sense it is far from minimalist. His foundation for all that follows concerns one's ability to have expanded mind/skills and thus awareness of the surrounding environment. For example, there is a single picture of a ferry between Turkey and the Greek island of Meis that he and his family recently took. It is linked to the story of thoughtfully looking at the "skills" of those manning the ferry. Two or three minutes observation coupled with finding the life jackets and life boats were serviceable produced some comfort that the trip could end well. A few more minutes observation of passengers and how they were likely to respond if there were problems produced important information if there were trouble. Too many people today are so caught up in ear buds and music or social media to assess their surroundings; think audio zombies. Ayres treats mind/body skills in much greater depth in his *The Tao of Survival*. Another story concerns a ten year old who slipped out of school early to try some ice fishing in late November. He went without telling parents and ended up slipping down a frozen slope and breaking through creek ice and was soaked. Because he had some training in making fire and had a boy scout knife and knew how to use it, he was able to survive the experience. He also knew how to keep his head and not panic under conditions where many adults today would find panic all too available. In mind/body skills Ayres is very far from a minimalist. It is when one comes to the amount of stuff our culture identifies as essential that the minimalist in Ayres comes to the front. He

sets the stage for this by citing the work of Lee Mastroianni of the Office of Military Research who argues: "The ability to move is directly related to the ability to survive." (p.2) Be honest, how many considering survival issues could walk a long (any?) distance with a pack containing 40-60 pounds of stuff? Ayres helps us build essential gear by levels, starting with mind/body skills that weigh nothing, moving to what can easily be carried on one's person, moving to a "ready bag" of relatively small dimensions containing essential gear kept with one on a continual basis, to a slightly larger ruck-sack, to, finally what could be considered base camp materials allowing relatively more comfort. In many surprise survival situations it is likely that one will have just personal stuff and what is in the ready bag. Think of this adding up to about 10 pounds. Even I could likely move with this load (71 years old). The story that illustrates the possibility of this for real humans is found in the narrative of Annie sprinkled with delightful photographs (pp: 167-80). The Ayres met Annie on Turkey's Mediterranean coast and she expressed an interest in traveling the Lycian way alone with minimal equipment. This would include travel from sea level up to about 5,000 feet with wide variations in weather at the time of her trip. See especially Annie's picture on page 171 and her "equipment" on page 174. It is a wonderful testament to the resilience in us, especially if we do not pack "fear" as we travel life's road. It is a wonderful testament to our ability to improvise and endure, indeed survive and prosper. An important part of the book is how it leads us to find what is indeed essential. That is a lesson that involves much more than just survival. Ayres helps us learn that lesson; it is then up to us to apply it. PS: I have three copies now; one for me, one in my office to share with students, and one to share with grandkids. Good reading and even better living.

An awesome book! Guidance for Backpackers, Survivalists and Bushcrafters. Its not often a new book comes along that does more than rehash the same old info. This book does a wee bit of that, but does it in a fashion that will finally seep into your personal style. Going light weight is what is often preached, but Ayres puts it in your soul! Mr. Ayers does review some equipment. What he says to get, get it because he has tested it thru time and personal experience! He most often takes the cheap approach to gear, using what you have available without paying a lot of money. This book is worth every penny! Especially if you travel abroad. TNRR aka Survival Sully

A lot of "survival experts" will write a book based on what they read in other survival books. You see

the same regurgitated back-up for your back-up thinking, which leaves you with a huge overweight cumbersome pack. This layered approach by a guy with a lot of "dirt time" comes across as really genuine. He talks about improvising gear(it's really light if you don't have to carry it). He is constantly trying to find the lightest and most packable gear that will do the task. Really well thought out and tested system.

Mr. Ayres knows what he is talking about. I have bought his previous books and I will buy his books to come. This guy preaches what he lives. I have found some really good down to earth advice which is practical. I am tired of all this marketing hype about survival gear you can find on internet. The idea is not to buy stuff and gear but to buy the right ones. James book helped exactly in this area - by saving me money to buy on unnecessary stuff and pointing my attention to the survival stuff that we really need. Thank you James for saving me money on future unnecessary gear!

Great book! Goes far beyond specific equipment recommendations to the rationale and philosophy behind his choices. Ayres is a unique individual who has lived the life he writes about, well worth getting to know. I'll certainly be reading everything he offers in the future.

While Ayres is a good basic level book, It is not an exhaustive treatment of the dynamic field of survival gear. HE does point out some excellent "hacks", if you will and short cuts. Another worthy addition to your survival bookshelf.

A nice practical discussion. With some good ideas.

Great instructions for knowing what you'll need before you need it.

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