

# Low Cost Wild Adventures

Contributed by Steve Gillman  
Friday, 13 March 2009

Want to have a little bit of adventure without traveling a thousand miles away or spending a fortune? Use your imagination or try these.

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My own wild adventures include summiting Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador (20,600 feet, the last 4,000 feet over glaciers), getting lost in the mountains of Colorado, and kayaking days from the nearest road in Canada, in six-foot Lake Superior waves. I may have had more of these trips if I had more money years ago. And of course time can be an issue when you want to have some adventure.

{bot\_wrgoogle}The good news is that some wild adventures aren't expensive or in far-away places. There is plenty of fun and excitement near home, if you look.

## My Dirtbagging Adventure

What is dirtbagging? It is simply stripping camping or backpacking down to its essentials. You throw some things in any old pack or duffel bag, and get out there. Forget the extensive planning or fancy equipment. Leave extra clothes behind, sleep in a pile of leaves or next to a fire, and use your wits instead of your wallet for a change.

For example, my own dirtbagging trip started with a bus ride near Traverse City, Michigan (where I lived at the time), to the end of the line. I pushed the rubber tube ahead of me onto the bus, and the driver looked at that and at my small day pack with a laugh. I got off the bus in a wooded area, then walked another half-mile to get to the Boardman River, where the road crossed it.

I had a homemade plastic bivy sack, a small umbrella, some snacks, and a few warm things to wear to bed instead of using a sleeping bag. I kept everything in a bundle on my lap as I floated down the river sitting in the inner tube, my butt and my feet in the water the whole time. I steered as necessary with my hands.

As evening approached, the trout surfaced everywhere. I watched deer jump back from the riverbank as I floated past. Prehistoric-looking blue herons hunted for fish along the edges of the river. I feasted on wild strawberries and other wild plants whenever I took a break. I didn't need to paddle much, instead just going with the flow of the river, relaxing, and even closing my eyes for a few minutes during the calmer stretches. But the trip still had the element of unpredictability, and thus adventure.

The first unpredictable event was the rain. It started when I set up camp, and continued for the next twelve hours. I barely stayed dry in my garbage bag bivy sack, covering my head with my small umbrella. The next unpredictable event was a large white-tail deer that almost stepped on me in darkness. His snorting scared me half to death. When morning came, it was still raining.

It was a thunderstorm, actually, and I might have waited, but unlike a tent, a plastic bivy sack doesn't have enough space to do anything. I decided it was time to go home, so I bundled up my things, got into the cold river, and climbed onto the tube. The storm got worse.

I was soon past the wild stretch of river, and I began to drift by beautiful homes that sat along the banks. I was on my tube, wearing a heavy sweater, umbrella overhead, trying to stay warm and dry. Dawn came late because of the storm, and I watched people drinking their morning coffee through the windows of lighted kitchens. Occasionally, some looked up from their breakfast and saw me in a flash of lightning. I waved and floated by.

Not wanting to put my hands into the icy water, I quickly learned how to steer through the rapids using only my feet as paddles. I portaged around a dam, through knee-deep mud that nearly took one of my shoes. Finally, just before noon, I scrambled up the steep bank near the house. I walked down the street in the rain, carrying my umbrella, my pack, and

my rubber tube, hoping the neighbors were still asleep.

#### Other Wild Adventures

My friends and I used to drive to a big river an hour away, park the car, and hike upstream for an hour or more. We would then build a raft of dead trees and float back to the car on it, which sometimes involved falling off and chasing the raft. These trips were named "Tom Sawyer Day," and I even did one trip where I took my bicycle twenty miles down the river on a homemade raft, through the Manistee National Forest.

Other ideas? Get a book on wild edible plants and take a short survival trek in the nearest woods. Organize your own adventure race with friends. Get on a bicycle, start peddling, and see where you end up in the next day (bring food and water or take a route that has stores). If you use your imagination you can always find some wild adventures that don't require traveling far or spending a lot of money.

By Steve Gillman. To get the ebook "Ultralight Backpacking Secrets (And Wilderness Survival Tips)" for FREE, as well as photos, gear recommendations, and a new wilderness survival section, visit: <http://www.The-Ultralight-Site.com>