

7 Shortcuts to finding the perfect Survival Retreat



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Finding that perfect survival retreat, farm, or homestead can be a very challenging adventure. You are trying to find a place that is safe. One that has good soil, water, and the natural resources that will provide you with the things you need once your supplies run out. You want an area with like minded people. And you want a place that is enjoyable to live, where your family will want to be, even if hard times weren't coming. Let's face it, most of us have reluctant spouses or children that just don't get it. You want to accommodate their needs and yet prepare for the journey ahead. What also complicates this decision is you probably don't know that much about gardening, hunting, or home defense. What trees make the best firewood, what plants are a natural alternative to antibiotics, what predators will be trying to eat your chickens and how do you protect them?

To top it all off, you are under the pressure of the ticking time-bomb clock. We just don't know how long this house of cards will stay up. It has defied gravity for many years now, but we all know the merry go round is going to stop someday – and probably soon. When it goes down, it will crash hard. There will be a lot of misery among the unprepared. You probably won't get a second chance to relocate again. So you have to get this decision right.

This report is chock full of tips, tricks and tactics that I've learned from my own journey

More about Your Author Marjory Wildcraft



My first career was in electrical engineering. I was an ex-pat in SE Asia running engineering organizations for the cellular telephone industry. Fascinated by money I later became a professional money manager structuring high yield deals for real estate partnerships. I predicted the real estate bubble would bust and managed to get my investors out ahead of time.

I foresee that the US is completely on track for an unavoidable economic collapse (if pandemic or other calamity doesn't get us first). Of all the abilities you need to survive in a rapidly deteriorating world, growing food is one of the most crucial skills (with few real world examples, researchers, or teachers). So I chose to work on what are the best ways for a family to live and eat well in a collapse situation.

I created a video tutorial "Grow Your Own Groceries" which has almost a quarter million copies being used all over the world by homesteaders, permaculturists, Universities, and missionary organizations.

and from helping many people as a professional relocation consultant.

In my own journey I have made many mistakes. We bought land we fell in love with it only to find years later that it couldn't really support us.

I have travelled extensively throughout the United States travelling to rural areas, small towns, eco-villages, and intentional communities. While I have travelled to other countries, my primary experience is within the US. My specialty is in finding retreats with long-term viability; i.e. you expect the emergency to last for years, decades, or perhaps generations. While of course you will have backup supplies, eventually those will run out and you'll be dependent primarily on the resources of the area you have chosen. I have been a leader in the preparedness industry for the last decade. My primary expertise is in survival food and determining the viability of an area for providing food, shelter, water, medicine, defense, and other needs for a sustainable life.

I have a tendency to think the grass is greener on the other side and have researched growing food and living sustainably in many different bio-regions from the desert southwest, to the tropics, to the upper north. I am fascinated with comparing the pros and cons of a self-reliant lifestyle in each area.

Since I've started this journey I've come to love target shooting, I make my own medicine, and I grow about half of my own food. Through this lifestyle, my bodies strength and balance are so improved I've have taken up skateboarding for fun.

My hobby is learning how to live like a cave woman. Learning skills such as making fire by rubbing sticks together, using stone and bone tools, tracking animals, wild edibles, navigating by the stars, learning bird songs, tanning skins, and primitive hunting.

First Things First

If you are looking at finding a survival retreat you are preparing for some tremendous change in your life. The most important thing is to get in touch with whatever spiritual source that moves you – God, Budda, Yahweh, The Creator, Mohammed, the Goddess, Galatic Flow, or whatever. Asking for help through whatever religious methodology you have be it prayer, meditation, or worship is the foundation for handling the amount of change you are preparing for. Ultimately, your spiritual source will be your guide and the biggest resource for

you in finding your spot on earth. Even if you have not been active in your spiritual pursuits, I strongly encourage you to begin.

The First Three Steps

So here is the approach you'll find that helps you focus and get down to a decision the fastest. We are going to take a three step process to finding the perfect survival retreat.

First, determine the ***region*** you want to focus on.

Then narrow the region down to a ***community*** you want to be in or near. (I'll have a lot more to say about how far in or out of town you want to be later on in this report).

Then start selecting the ***specific land*** you want to settle.

This report is categorized into three sections based on this progression.

First Shortcut

The Three Best Tools With Most Of The Data You'll Need To Find Your Region

I have a library of books on relocation, survival, real estate, and country living. Save yourself some time and just get the best ones.

Go and order these two books and download this software right now.

These two very comprehensive books give excellent detailed regional, and state by state information. You'll be able to quickly flip through the various regions you are considering and gain insights that would otherwise take months or years to assess. I have personally spent time in many of the areas and agree with much of the analysis presented in these two books. Both of the authors have military intelligence backgrounds and do an excellent job of presenting information. There is a lot of surprising 'behind the scenes' type information in these books that you will want to be aware of. Each author has his own viewpoint and bias of course, but in general I have a strong agreement with the information they present. These books are not that useful for finding communities or specific land

sites, but will be immensely helpful in helping you get an overview of a region very quickly. If you only want to start with one, get Skousens.

On Retreats by Rawles

Strategic Relocation by Skousen

Both are available here: http://astore.amazon.com/wwwbackyardfo-20?_encoding=UTF8&node=11

The third most important tool is free. If you haven't used Google Earth yet, go to www.googleearth.com. There is a free download. Google earth gives you the power of the eagle and the hawk. You can fly over any region you are interested in and see terrain, buildings, roads, photos people have uploaded, Gov't land, it goes on and on. Google Earth will be a tool you will use in all stages of finding your retreat but is most useful when looking at communities and specific sites. Prepare to become addicted.

Second Shortcut

Finding Your Region by Using Your Biggest Threats and Fears

Looking at your greatest threats and fears is a quick way to help you eliminate regions and get you focused on areas that will work for you.

If family, job concerns, or other factors don't limit you than the first thing you need to do is decide on a region.

Not sure exactly what to prepare for? Let's go through the biggest factors that dictate which regions you should look at.

There are four big categories that will focus you:

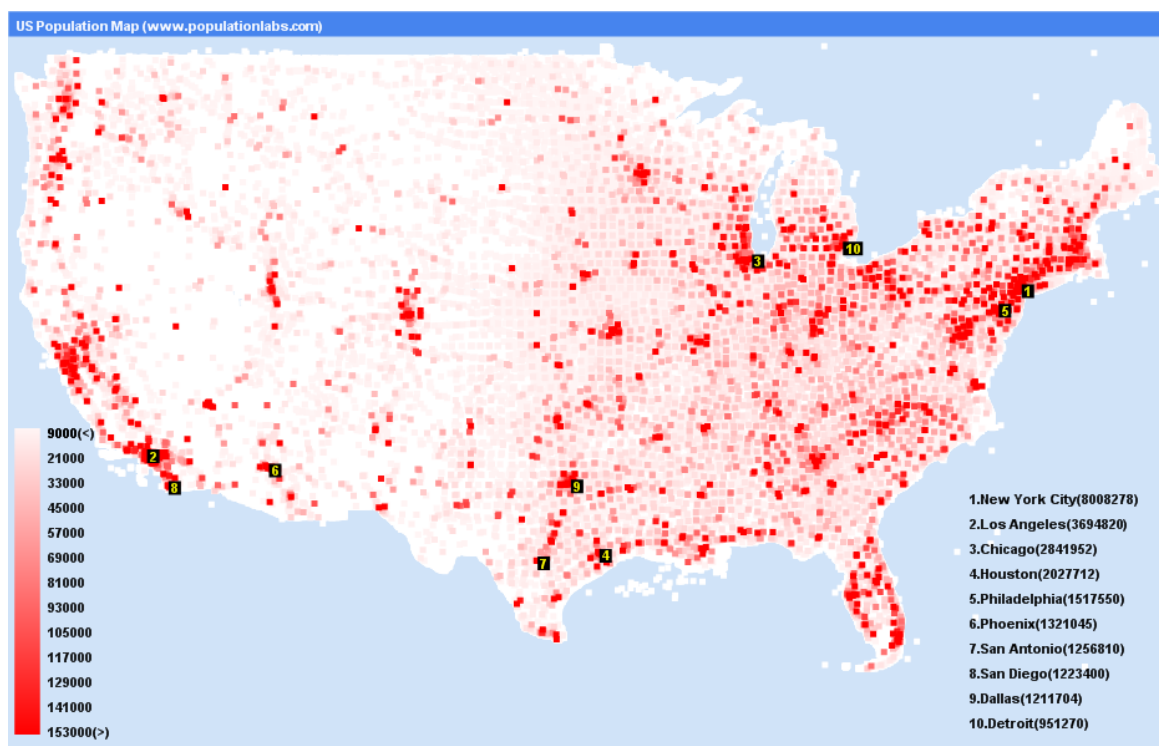
- A. Population**
 - B. Nuclear**
 - C. Natural Disasters**
 - D. and Climate**
-

A. Population

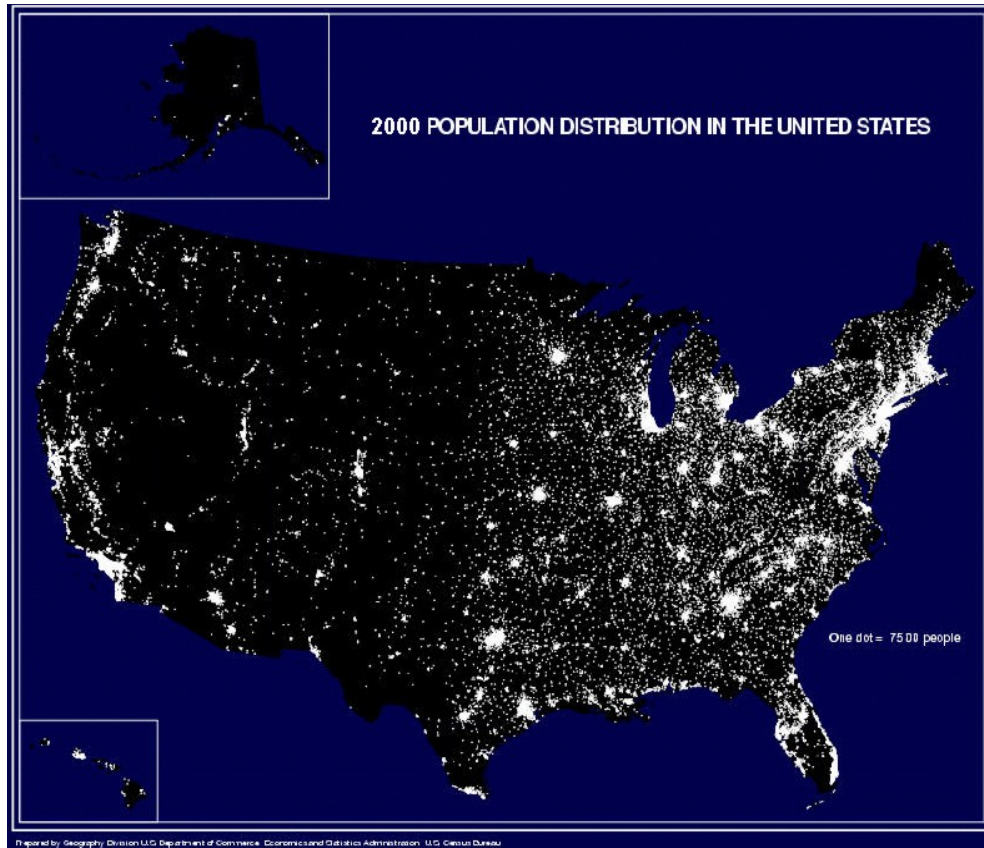
First of all, human populations are by far the biggest threats you will face in a collapse situation. Yes, I am talking about armed thugs, gangs, and zombies coming to kill you or get your stuff. But more importantly, people pose an even bigger concern. Famine and disease are by far the biggest killers of humanity (far

more so than bullets or weapons) and both famine and disease are exacerbated in areas with higher density of human populations. So the further away from heavily populated areas you are the better. How far is far away?

The “ultimate best” answer is at least a tank of gas away from a major US city. That’s about 300 miles. Here is a map of population density of the US. And here is another photo of US at night – also quite revealing. In reality there are only a few areas in the Western US that meet this criteria. Yes, the Western States are definitely less populated, and I’ll get back to the option of Western States in later sections.



map provided courtesy of www.PopulationLabs.com



map provided courtesy of the US Census Dept.

The next best option for most of us is to be *as far away* from a major city as possible.

There are a few surprising exceptions to the 300 mile rule. For example, I know of one small community that is very close to a major city, but because of geographic protection in the form of very steep terrain, that small community is isolated from the large nearby urban population.

B. Nuclear

Another threat is proximity to nuclear power plants or nuclear targets. Generally the winds of the Earth travel from West to East (mostly) so being east of a nuclear site (down wind) is much worse than being west of a nuclear site. There is a very rough guideline of being at least 50 miles away from a possible nuclear event – I am not sure where that number came from – probably is based on the area that was evacuated during Chernobyl back in 1984. In reality, you want to be as far away from these sites as possible. Below is a gross level map of nuclear

power plants in the US. Refer to Skousen’s books for more detailed US and regional maps showing nuclear sites. As you can see, it is almost impossible for you to be 50 miles away from a nuclear power plant on the East Coast of the US.

There are currently 104 operating nuclear reactors at 65 commercial power plants in the U.S. Nationwide, 108 million people live within 50 miles of a nuclear plant, yet many do not know they may be at risk if an accident or terrorist attack led to the release of radiation.

Here is some horrible news that is rarely discussed in the survivalist circles. Almost every nuclear power plant in the US has cooling pools with decades of spent rods that have to be kept cool. If any event disrupts the ability of the pools to keep those rods cool, the resulting steam explosion will cause huge amounts of radioactive material to be distributed, the groundwater contaminated, and the land destroyed for an unknown large area around the plant.

The half life of the radioactive components in those spent fuel rods is at least 200,000 years. As we’ve seen from Fukushima, and the resulting higher levels of radioactive material showing up in California, Oregon, and Washington (the West Coast of the US) even a large ocean may not be enough to protect you.

U.S. Commercial Nuclear Power Reactors— Years of Operation by the End of 2010



Note: Ages have been rounded up to the end of the year.

Source: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

I am currently researching:

-Best Geiger counters to use to measure radiation

-Radiation levels and consequences of exposure.

-What radiation levels could be expected in a complete collapse and the survivability.

-How you can adapt your body to higher radiation levels. As a species we have learned a tremendous amount from the Chernobyl and there is a good body of tested methods for treating radiation poisoning.

When I have more information the best options for measuring radiation, damage from radioactive exposure, and treatment for staying healthy, I will let you know. To be informed when that report is ready, please stay on my email list and you will be the first to know.

C. Natural Disasters

Every region has the potential for some form of natural disaster. The East Coast has severe hurricanes. The mid-west have tornado alley. The West Coast and along the southern Mississippi are earthquakes. The Pacific Northwest has volcanoes. The Southwest and much of the West has droughts.

The key to finding your region is not to try and avoid a natural disaster, but to find ones you feel you can live with and prepare for. I grew up in Florida and I take a good hurricane in stride. But for me, living near a possible volcano is terrifying. I also discovered living through a severe drought in Texas that although that is certainly survivable with some planning, it drove me nuts. I have friends who describe themselves as 'desert rats' and they are completely comfortable in very dry regions. Everyone is different. Natural disasters will continue to occur and as far as I can tell they will get more and more severe. In a collapse situation there won't be

any FEMA, or Red Cross, and the possibility of getting to another region may no longer exist, so you want to choose something you feel you can live with. Believe me, there will be enough stress in your life that if you have deeper fears of a particular type of natural disaster, then your life will be a living hell worrying about the region you live in.

D. Climate

Can you handle heat? Do you love getting out in the snow? Is humidity a problem? Is too much dryness easy or difficult? Crossing out some regions because of the climate is an easy way to narrow down your search. My husband

has flatly informed me we are not going to live in a northern climate and our family handles heat just fine. You may be the opposite.

From the consulting I have done, I've found that usually you are most comfortable in the climate you grew up in.

How do you handle the situation where family member have very differing desires? Well, I am not a family counselor, and you may not like this answer, but from my experiences living in drastically different climates I have been amazed at how your body can adapt if you are willing. In my opinion, adapting to a climate, while difficult, it is probably one of the easier changes you can make. From my personal experience, it takes about two to three years for your body to adapt to extreme bioregional changes.

Third Shortcut

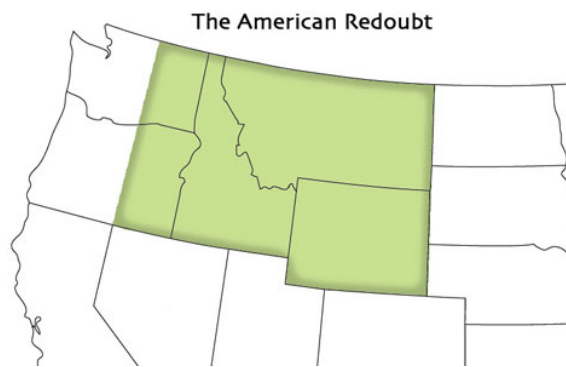
List of Regions Already Known for Survivalists and Preppers

I have been involved with the preparedness / survivalism for at least a decade. I've been reading the top blogs, interacting on various yahoo groups, listening to podcasts, and hanging out in chat rooms. Over the years I've been collecting information on areas where the prepared are gathering.

Below is an overview list of regions that are 'known' for people who are preparing or already have a high degree of self-reliance.. These are the biggies, and reading through this list will get you up to speed very quickly not only on the major regions you want to consider, but also some of the reasons why these are good areas. There certainly are more areas tucked in here and there around the country, but the list below comes up most prominently from my years of being on chat boards, yahoo groups, and reading blogs related to survival. Not to mention that I have travelled and sometimes lived in most of these regions personally. Note that I intend this to be a quick way to get you oriented with the big overview. Definitely read through both Skousen's and Rawles books for further insights in the legal system, politics, and religious trends in each area.

The American Redoubt is an area declared by Jim Rawles as a haven for Christian survivalist families. Jim Rawles is the voice of the biggest survival blog on the net at www.SurvivalBlog.com which is an excellent resource on survivalist related topics. The American Redoubt is centered in Northern Idaho, extending to Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon, Montana, and Wyoming. Rawles makes some excellent points for why this area is one of the best in the US; low population density, good agricultural base, lots of innovative small industry especially in firearms and ammunition. With Rawles's ability to speak to a huge audience via his blog, the area is attracting more and more people with a like mind. Below is a map with a rough outline of the area, and here is a link to Jim's website with more information on the American Redoubt.

<http://www.survivalblog.com/redoubt.html>



Southern Oregon and Northern California. Good rainfall, pacific climate, and low population densities make this area attractive. Try to get a place fairly far from the I-5 corridor. A general principle for any area is that you want to be away from inter-state highways as they are likely to carry a lot of undesirable traffic. Back in the 70's this was considered to be the premier survival retreat area. Many of the traditional survivalists (which are generally conservative) now consider it to be too liberal. A significant part of the economy is based on medical marijuana (legal and illegal) which indicates both an agricultural base, and a group of people very aware of how to deal with a difficult Government.

Maine. Maine is considered to be the red headed step-child of the New England States which is a good thing for those seeking to return to a simpler lifestyle. If you are a cold-hardy soul, there is a good population of people there who are already living off-grid. The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

(MOFGA) is the best and strongest gardening association in all of the US. Since the East Coast was colonized before the automobile was invented, many of the small communities are laid out for pedestrian or equestrian access - which is a real delight when considering how expensive fuel is, and will continue to cost.

The Ozarks. This area is northern Arkansas and southern Missouri. Economic booms have bypassed this region, and many people in the Ozarks are self-reliant because that is the only way to make ends meet. The Ozarks have long been known as a place for people who are 'dropping out' to live off the land and do their own thing. The population is very diverse politically, economically, and religiously. Land is still very reasonably priced and you can find places with both soil and water, but you have to look.

The Appalachians. As with most other desirable regions, the mountainous terrain makes it highly defensible. There is also lively agricultural production. The tourist trade for mountain crafts has helped support a good bank of people with skills in the old ways. The classic series of "Foxfire Books" was compiled mainly from stories of folks living in the Appalachians.

Southern Rockies (Southern Colorado into Northern New Mexico). At higher elevations of the southern Rockies you get more rainfall and greater vegetation. There are lots of small towns and communities dotted through the region that have a lot going on. Colorado was the location of Galt's Gulch in the fictional book by Ayn Rand "Atlas Shrugged" that is such a popular title with preppers (a lot of whom have a libertarian bent). Galt's Gulch was a secret valley that a group of very talented and capable people escaped to as society imploded.

SW Four Corners Area. Many people who live here say they were 'called' to be there. Like the rest of the West, water is a key resource. Also, there are still many Indian reservations, which may or may not be an issue. All of the four States in the corners have areas known for people who are working towards sustainability and the entire area is protected by vast deserts which very few people have the skills to cross.

North Texas/Southern Oklahoma. Of course you are going to want to be away from Dallas, but there is lots of open land and good communities of Texans and Okies who are preparing. Oklahoma City has a very large preparedness group

that meets regularly. And if you need to be near an active economy, Texas will probably be strong for a long time as it is the heart of the world-wide oil industry.

Alaska. This is one of the places I have not spent any time. Still considered to be the last frontier, the people that I've met from Alaska are naturally rugged and their day to day life demands more preparedness skills than ordinary Americans ever think about.

Here is a short list of towns (mostly small) that I see regularly mentioned on blogs and websites related to preparedness. By no means is this list complete. But once you've found a region, take a look at the towns in your region listed here.

Dennison, TX	Carson City, NV
Kerrville TX	Salt Lake City, UT –
Wimberly TX	really big city, but
Mena, AR	dominated by
Fayetteville, AR	Mormons who are
Thayer, MO	theoretically
Springfield, MO	prepared.
Black Mountain, NC	Ogden, UT
Boulder, UT	Sun Valley, ID
Angelfire, NM	Coeur d'Alene, ID
Gila, NM	Sandpoint, ID
Montrose, CO	Spokane, WA
Ft. Collins, CO	Mazula, MT
Colorado Springs, CO	Grants Pass, OR
Basalt, CO	Bend, OR
Prescot, AZ	Fairbanks, AK

Intentional Communities and Eco-villages

Intentional Community is an inclusive term for ecovillages, cohousing communities, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives, intentional living, alternative communities, cooperative living, and other projects where people strive together with a common vision.

The absolute best resources for checking out existing communities is at the Intentional Communities website www.ic.org. You'll find listings, profiles, contact info, and maps for IC's across the US. Even if you don't want to join a group, finding out who is nearby is worth while.

Other resources for finding where groups are gathering are:

www.theSurvivalPodcast.com run by Jack Spirko has an in-depth forum with thousands of posts from people all over who are prepping. Jack also has several years of archives of mp3 audio files that many folks download and listen to while driving, gardening, etc. A super way to multi-task and build skills quickly.

www.Collapsenet.com Run by Michael Ruppert. There is a locale directory on the site.

www.TransitionUS.org is the website for the Transition Town movement in the US. The Transition Movement is comprised of grassroots community initiatives that seek to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as peak oil, climate change and the economic crisis. Check out the website to see if there are transition organization in the area you are considering.

www.SurvivalBlog.com this site has a wealth of info on everything related to survival, but also has a section devoted to finding retreats and many postings by people from all over with insights and information on their favorite locales.

Forth Shortcut

Don't Make This Classic Mistake

So who are your kids going to marry? Who will sew you up after a misplaced blow while chopping wood? Who will you trade with to get something out of those extra batteries and wire you have? With whom will you celebrate the joy of growing all that squash? Who will help you fight off that renegade mafia claiming to be the new Government? How many will gather to shed tears when your spouse dies? Who will worship and share your love of God with? Who knows the local plants to treat infections after the antibiotics are expired? With whom will you make music or swap jokes?

The natural tendency when thinking of a survival retreat is to think isolation.

Survivalists in general tend to have a strong independent streak and often forget how important the community you are surrounded by impacts you. Also,

because most of us tend to keep our preparations secret for security reasons, we often are reluctant to think about community.

Believe me, I strongly suggest you keep your preparations as quiet as you can. While looking for the community you certainly don't want to reveal the full extent of your preparations. We just don't know how bad it will get and a level of privacy is extremely important. I've been approached many times over the years by producers from national television shows asking if they could film all of my supplies. Yes, I've made videos which details all the systems I have in place for growing food – but as you watch those videos you'll notice there is no way to know where the farm is, or even who I am. We intentionally scrubbed every piece of footage that might have had any identifying signs. Quite frankly I told the producers that I would be a complete idiot to put all of my preps out display on national television.

So security is important.

And, the natural tendency is to get as far away from all people as possible. In the very first section of this report I discussed how people and high population densities are your biggest problem. But getting too far away is not only a bad idea for social purposes, but also for security. An isolated farm far off the beaten path will very likely become detected at some time. In some rural areas right now law and order is questionable, it will only get worse as time goes forward. Being so far away from others – basically no one can hear you scream. Having your farm and family taken over by murderous thugs with all the horrible rape, torture, and murder that goes along with it is surprisingly more likely if you are further out.

In the numerous interviews and reading I have done from people who have lived through collapsed currency or civil war situations, the best strategy for survival comes from being in, or very close to a small community. Large cities are clearly not viable, and at the other end of the spectrum, being way far out also makes you vulnerable.

When we first panicked we headed out as far as we could. We were at least 6 miles from the nearest little store and 25 miles from a small town. After years of living that far out we realized as a family that we wanted to be closer to other

people. I have seen this same pattern over and over again among people who move – they head out - way out - to the hinterland. They get out as far as they can, and then they end up moving back in a little closer.

Don't make the mistake of getting too far out there. But how far in or out of town should you be?

If you will be having a group living with you on your land then your main concern will be getting a large enough tract with houses and out buildings. That probably won't be right in town. And if your group is large enough you don't necessarily want to be in town. But you do want to be within an easy trade distance to town and to be able to get help with regional defense.

How big of a group is big enough to be further out of town? Probably about a dozen adults. There will be a need for at least one person to be on security 24/7, others to work growing and preparing food, building, cutting firewood, and other work. And there will always be some down for illness or on trade business.

Americans with our car-centric culture have completely lost touch with pedestrian travel. Very few towns are laid out in a pedestrian friendly way. Why am I so hung up on being able to walk or bike? Because most of the fuel in the US is imported. As the dollar loses value, the price of fuel will go up. Yes, there are lots of ways of making alternative fuels, but all of them involve work. No matter how you look at it, our lifestyles are headed towards using less and less fuel.

Being in the town itself, especially if you plan on being very active in leadership after collapse, is a good strategy. I recently interviewed a couple who moved back into town after years of being way out in the country. After having a big acreage around them they thought they would only be in town temporarily until they found another farm that was closer in. But with an easy walk to work and biking to the grocery store, and no gas bills, they've decided to stay in town. They are working to teach neighbors how to garden and generally helping the small community to prepare.

The houses in these small towns tend to be less expensive. You do need a minimum amount of land to ensure water, food, and heating supply. If you want to know exactly how much land you need to grow all of the food your family

wants please see the “**Grow Your Own Groceries**” course available here at www.GrowYourOwnGroceries.com/retreat . (Note that even if you don’t plan on growing your own food but will be having family members or other help do that work, these resources will get them up to speed quickly).

Being just out of town a ways means you can bug out from the towns people if you need to, and yet be close enough for all the benefits of trade, help, socializing, etc.

I saw an ideal model of how to have the best of both worlds in a historical museum in Fredericksburg, TX. The early German settlers that came to Texas had land outside of town that they worked during the week, and then they had a tiny little house in town. The tiny town home was called a Sunday House and was used when the family came in to attend church, socialize, and trade goods and services.

The German settlers tried to get their farm land as close to town as possible so the journey in was short. From the records in the museum, the furthest out they had their land was ten miles.

In the middle ages many European markets were spaced approximately 14 miles apart. That way you were only 7 miles at most from any town. 7 miles was a good distance as a person can walk into town, spend a few hours taking care of business and then walk back home all within a day.

Regardless of how far in or out of town you are, you’ll be involved with the people around you at some time. The community around you can either be your safety net, or a huge factor in dragging you down. Finding the right community- one that really can be your safety net - is crucial. You probably won’t have a second chance to move after collapse. Yes, in the very beginning of this report I spoke about human population being the thing you want to avoid the most. But a small population is critical for your ultimate success in the long term.

When looking for a community you are seeking both people who have skills and resources, but also people with whom you naturally resonate. You want to find people with whom you easily work with as the need arises. As collapse unfolds your life will become more entwined and inter-dependent on the people in the community around you. The level of relationship and friendship developed is

unimaginable to those of us who have only experienced superficial American society.

OK, so you've found a region to focus on. You realize you want to be pretty close to a small town. You are looking at the map and there are dozens or hundreds of little towns. It would take weeks or months to drive through them all – and after that you still wouldn't know that much about who lives there. How are you quickly going to find a place with like minded people?

Fifth Shortcut

Find The Perfect Community By Having A Good Time

This is the quickest way I know to find a place with people whom you like, enjoy being around, and can help you if needed. This technique took me quite a few years to discover, but since I've been recommending this to my clients, we have speeded up their relocation projects immensely.

Almost every little town is known for something. A bluegrass festival, antique car parade, or wiener dog races.

First of all, a small town that organizes events shows you there is community cooperation, leadership, and organization. The event itself also gives you an instant snapshot of the character of the community.

For a small community to put on an event takes a lot of effort. The organization and preparations take a significant amount of work from members of the community.

For example, in South Texas the little town of Poteet has an annual strawberry festival. If you love that red, sweet, juicy fruit – growing and eating it – well then even before you get to Poteet you know you have some resonance with the people in that region. You know before you get there you have something in common with at least some of the community.

Another example is the town of Thayer Missouri. Twice a year Thayer puts on a 'Go Green' festival which has featured a wood burning truck, a solar race car, Ham radio, treating infection during crisis, and improving you garden soil. So if you are interested in these things then even before you ever get to Thayer, you know you have something in common with these folks.

Just a bit of searching on the internet will get you to the information about the festival or event the community puts on.

The absolutely fastest way to get to 'meet' the community all at once is to go and attend the festival. No, everyone is not going to be there, and there will also be a lot of visitors, but by and large this is probably the biggest gathering of everyone in the community at one time. If you can attend that event this is absolutely the quickest way to find out if that community is right for you. When you go to the event treat it like a first date. You are just taking a look around – did you enjoy yourself? Did you find the event interesting, useful, or fun?

One of my clients was a family focused on a region of S. Oregon and N. Calif. Their main source of income was from the wife who was a doctor transitioning her practice into alternative medicine. They found a small community that had an herbalism event which looked perfectly fit to their interests. They went and attended the event and realized something important. Most of the community was white, 'pasty white' is how they described it. And by seeing most of the community all at once she realized that she didn't want to live in that area. The family had lived in mixed

About Maps...

When you start to go out touring the country side be sure you get good paper maps. My experience with the various GPS services is that they are not that accurate especially in more remote rural areas. On numerous occasions I've had GPS systems try to get me on roads that didn't exit or no longer existed. On several when checking from a local resident about missing roads and I get something like this: "yeah, that road was destroyed in the hurricane of '02 and the county never got to fixing it so its closed".

I suggest you order your maps of the area online well before you go.

Years ago you could pick up a map at a gas station anywhere, but fewer and fewer places are carrying road maps anymore. I like the Rand McNally series of maps that has larger print.

A good compass is also a good thing to have handy.

neighborhoods all of their life (black, Mexican, Asian) and they realized that they really wanted that kind of diversity.

Could they have looked up the demographics ahead of time? Yes, of course. Did they know to do that? No. It was only by actually going there and seeing the community out in full force that they realized what was important for them. Just going on random trips they might not have noticed that issue for quite a while, but seeing everyone, or mostly everyone, at once immediately showed them who was there.

By the way, they did find exactly what they were looking for a few months later.

Sixth Shortcut

Quickly Characterize the Community by Shopping, Religion, and Industry

Just like the festivals - the shops, churches, and industry is a reflection of the people who live in the community. Often the community will have a chamber of commerce with an online list of local businesses. It won't be complete, and nothing beats boots on the ground, but it will give you a broad stroke brush of an idea of what is there. You might give a call to the chamber and ask them who are the major employers in the area. Many of these businesses may not survive any major economic changes, but you can probably see how they may change. For example, if light industry is the main employer, well the tools and manufacturing equipment can be probably get re-purposed as the situation change. And it tells you there are probably quite a few mechanics and technicians living in the area who are handy.

Does the community have a farmers market? Flea market, gun show, or trade market on a regular basis? Those kinds of markets will easily transform into the kind of bartering and trade places after the dollar no longer works. And if the people living there are already used to meeting up on Saturdays at fairgrounds to buy local produce, the transition will be that much easier.

Are you deeply religious? That can be a quick way to hone in on an area that will be perfect for you. I've visited towns where for example, the Baptist or Mormon church was the largest building in town. For that building to be built there were a

lot of people supporting it's creation and if you resonate with that kind of worship you know you can know you are close to home. Go attend a service or two.

Are you seeking a more diverse experience? Other areas I've visited had a balance of several different churches showing the population was more mixed in its religious approach.

The kind of shops and stores also reflect the people.

Now some of you are likely to joke about my feminine perspective on shopping, and it is funny. But it is also serious. For a store to be successful in business it has to be supported by the community. Yes, the store may or may not exist after collapse, but while it does operate it tells you exactly what the people in the surrounding area are willing to support.

I once went through one small town where there was a post office, two restaurants, a community center, a school, and three hardware stores. Those three hardware stores was a great tip off that this town had a focus on practical skills and DIY experience.

I've been quoted many times for stating that 95% of the food sold in grocery stores is toxic to the human body and it is one of the reasons I've been so passionate about growing my own food. I want to know for absolute sure my food is safe and the best way to do that is to grow my own. I don't always grow everything though, so one of the first things I personally look for is a supply of organic food. I also like to be surrounded by people who are passionate about health. If there is not a store that sells organic food, then I have a good indication that the population doesn't support that. BTW, there are numerous online resources for finding out about the local organic food being grown in the area, and I've found that quite often these online sources are not complete, but they do give you a place to start. My favorite is www.LocalHarvest.com.

Are there thrift stores or antique stores? For most of my life I avoided antique shops thinking I wasn't interested in paying high prices for old useless memorabilia. But travelling through many antiques shops in small towns I've discovered that there is a surprising number of antique shops that have incredibly useful hand tools at very reasonable prices. These places can offer old

butter churns, harnesses, lanterns, grinders, and a host of other useful self-reliance implements you might not have known of.

If you want a small town but your spouse wants some of the luxuries of city life, a small tourist town might work for your family. Tourist towns often have the advantage of having more amenities than a small population can normally support. For example, you'll get a greater diversity of restaurants, shopping, public infrastructure, and general niceties. If you want to live the good life as much as possible until it all falls apart this might be the best option for you. The downside is that there are lots of folks who know about the town. Although that can be compensated for by high defensibility, or if it is remote enough from major cities to winnow down the traffic.

There is a tiny tourist town I went to that only had a handful of stores but one of them was a restaurant that offered amazingly fresh food from local farmers – the salads, the meat, the vegetables all were locally grown. The local residents generally couldn't afford to eat there, but it was a stop on a beautiful motorcycle route fairly far from any large cities. The owner of the restaurant had created it just to encourage local food production. She knew full well that by making it possible for locals to make a living by farming she was keeping a food shed for the entire community alive and well. When the touring traffic stopped the area would be much more resilient because there was a strong group of producers of local food. If you have the resources to create something like this in the area you choose, it won't be very profitable in terms of monetary return, but is an excellent investment in your overall security.

The Viability of the Town and the Area

When you are looking at small towns here are two things to consider. What is the town's water supply? Is there a river that runs through it or very near by? Is it gravity fed from a reservoir uphill? Is there enough regular rainfall for people to quickly get rainwater collection systems up and running?

A second question to ask is if the Sheriff is a "Constitutional Sheriff". A "Constitutional Sheriff" is a name given to Sheriff's who have sworn to uphold the second amendment of gun ownership even in the face of Federal pressures. Gun control and roundup of civilians' weapons is a deep concern for many people who are liberty minded. If your local Sheriff is on the side of helping you retain your rights that is a very good sign indeed. I recently saw a convention of Constitutional Sheriffs in the counties of N. California and S. Oregon which is an area with strong potential to break out into its own political entity after a collapse of the US Gov't.

My mother was a young woman during WWII. She told me that during the times of food rationing (yes, the US Gov't enacted food rationing along with many other types of price controls during the war – and be prepared to have it come around again as times get tough) there was a very active underground market. She told me that the quality of food in those black markets was higher than any she had ever seen in grocery stores before or since.

In my experiences visiting communities in the Ozarks and the Appalachians I've found there are many “dry counties” where the sale of alcohol is not allowed. This was initially a huge concern to my husband who continually astounds me with the quantities of beer he consumes. But in quite a few of these locations, once we got connected into the local networks, we were delighted to find that the prohibition laws spawned an active home-brewing community (which was legal). And the beer was way better than anything you can buy commercially.

Remember that things are very likely to change over time, so what you are looking for is to get a sense of the character of the people who are there. In a collapse situation many of these stores will close or evolve into something else. But while they are open they indicate the character of the community.

Be prepared for change. Things do change a lot. I have often been to places that historically were flourishing and now there is only a stop sign. And of course most of us have seen the opposite; where an area was once farmland it is now subdivisions.

Back in 2008 I was living in a rural area that had been pretty lively. As gas prices went up and up, I saw many of the smaller tracts go up for sale as what once was a cheap commute into town became a costly trip. I was amazed at how fast the country side was vacated.

I once went to a valley that currently had a population of 3,000. I spoke with the leaders of the somewhat covert prepper movement in the valley and they told me that historically the valley had supported 2,000 people. They felt that with economic collapse there would also be disease, epidemics, and pandemics that would wipe out at least one third of the

population so they felt the valley would be viable.

A final shopping checklist: are there local nurseries, seed growers, or feed stores? Are there regular livestock auctions? These are all indications of strong local agriculture.

In addition to growing your own groceries I am working on projects for growing small quantities of highly desirable trade goods such as tobacco, chocolate, or coffee. And of course, home brewing of beer or spirits.

All in legally acceptable quantities of course. Can you imagine how much someone would pay for really good homegrown coffee if none were available? Or chocolate, or beer? Small quantities of these highly valuable crops are an excellent addition to any survival retreat plan. Stay on my email list and you'll be the first to know when those reports are ready.

Seventh Shortcut

A Good Rural Realtor is Worth Their Weight in Gold

If you are in a hurry to find a farm, a good realtor is the fastest way to get the inside scoop on the details of the area. Most of these rural realtors do it because they love getting out and driving the countryside. They've been visiting farms and homesteads for years and they know more about the area than most of the residents. A good realtor will know where the creeks run, what land is being used to grow what crops, who the big landholders are, and they are likely to know a good percentage of the residents. In many rural communities there are large groups of descendants of the original settlers. Some of the best realtors are a part of that family

group – they know almost everyone because they are related to almost everyone. And often a big part of how they get listings is because Uncle John is wanting to sell that extra 10 acres, or Aunt Judy died and now the family wants to let that go.

A good realtor will know about mineral rights and especially about water and water rights. Especially in Western states water rights a huge deal; there are situations where you can own property with a big spring but not be legally allowed to use a drop. You might be thinking that after collapse the law isn't going to be an issue, but that is not necessarily the case. Water is so tightly used in the west that there is a high probability that the water is being used downstream right now. After collapse if you use it they may not be able to stop you, but you'll have a huge problem with a neighbor right from the start. And more than a few people have been killed in water wars in the west.

Since most people know me from the videos I've created teaching you how to grow food I've gotten a few questions as to why I didn't have bees at my farm. I used to keep bees years ago, but now I have something even better. I have a *neighbor* who keeps bees. If you aren't aware of it, there is a growing trend of 'black markets' in high quality food. Most of this is because of the heavy regulation and other Gov't interference with small producers. For example, fresh raw milk is illegal to buy or sell in many States in the US. In response to this there are 'cow shares' and other creative, legally acceptable, ways to bypass the onerous regulations. A good realtor will have connections into the local community and he or she can make introductions. He or she will probably know who will you can go to get a pig butchered in a friendly 'neighbor helping neighbor' type arrangement that bypasses the expensive fully licensed USDA certified processing centers. He or she will also probably know who the local gunsmith is, the best place to get canning supplies, who fixes well pumps, and the names of a couple of good carpenters. This kind of connections is invaluable.

I regularly use several realtors at the same time in the same area. Like any other industry, finding someone you are comfortable with is key. I often 'test' a realtor's attitude by giving them a description of my ideal homestead and asking them if that kind of property is available or how often that comes up on the market. Some realtors of course will tell you "yes" because they want to sell you a property, but what is more important is realtors who say "no, that never or rarely comes up". I've been in areas with excellent properties and yet one of the realtors insisted that nothing like that ever was available. If your realtor doesn't believe it, he or she won't ever see it even if it does exist.

Another reason I use multiple realtors is I've found that some of the bigger brokers in a rural area may not list their properties on the MLS. In other words, sometimes the only way you would

The Trade-offs of Terrain

A very quick guideline is that the more difficult the terrain, the easier it is to defend. But the soils are usually very poor or non existent (hence day to day living is more difficult). On the other hand, flat land is more difficult to defend but can have much more fertility (especially in valleys). Since most of us don't have military combat experience, and if you do, most likely your group is pretty small, most people opt for getting into some hills or mountain's and opt for high defensibility. Regardless of where you are; two things are important; building soil and learning small group tactics.

know of the availability of a farm is if you work with the listing agent directly. It is not too common, but it comes up enough you should be aware of it.

Here are some things to expect when you go looking at farms. Because of the distances between farms in rural areas, you will probably only get to see about two or three properties in one day. When looking at suburban or urban properties you can rip through a lot of them quickly, but that is not the case in rural areas because of the distances involved. Also you'll be spending a lot more time at each property as you'll be looking at much more than the house; you'll be touring the barns, fencing, water sources, and the land. It takes more time than you might be used to.

Note that if you don't have a lot of experience buying and selling real estate, if you find a 'for sale by owner' you might consider paying a good realtor help in the transaction. In the country, there is a lot more for buyers to beware of. Buildings may not be up to code (not necessarily a problem, but codes are there for reasons). Property boundaries are often difficult to assess. Issues with surveys and property boundaries are a much bigger problem. Most likely there will be a well and septic tank, which you will need to learn about the local regulations. Water rights, mineral rights, and easements are all things which may have to deal with. I saw one crazy deal with a property one time where you got all the land but the seller wanted to retain the timber rights! In general, much more so than in the city – caveat emptor!

Water and Soil

Just as I wrote about checking that the community is able to have water post-collapse, you want to make sure your farm has water. The ideal situation is a spring above the house so you can simply use gravity to bring the water in for cooking and hygiene. Finding that kind of situation is possible, but rare. So the next best thing is to have as much water as possible as close as possible. Springs, ponds, creeks, wells, tanks; the more forms of water the better.

Bonus Shortcut

Just Ask For It

If you have only purchased property in an urban or suburban setting it may surprise you to know that you can find a rural property simply by asking. I've found properties for people, and guided others who have found properties this way. People in small towns and country settings tend to be much more laid back and friendly than you might be accustomed to. Because of this, word of mouth can be amazingly effective to find farms or land in the country. When I am in the area, in addition to working with realtors, I simply start asking locals. I'll ask folks I meet if they know someone wanting to sell some land. I've been surprised at how many times I've heard something like "Oh yes, John Stokes down on CR 208 is selling his land, just go down about 2 miles past the big white fence. Here is his number and tell him Jim Dawson sent you..."

Driving down back roads and talking with shop owners, the motel clerk, or even folks I meet at intersections. For example, one time I was picking up a plat book at the county assessors office and I asked the woman behind the

Here is a very brief overview of soils. The USDA (The United States Dept. of Agriculture) Soil Conservation Services has mapped out almost every acre of soil in the US and offer free access to the information in soil surveys available at <http://soils.usda.gov/survey/>.

The most essential thing you are concerned with is the "Soil Capability Rating" which is a number from 1 to 8 and often some letters after it. A class 1 soil is the best soil you can possibly get, and class 8 soils have such severe limitations they are only suitable to recreation or wildlife. Finding land with either class 1 or 2 soils is the goal. Class 2 soils do have some limitations, but usually these can be overcome with good farming practices. For example a class 2e soil, the "e" indicates that the soil is prone to erosion, which is not really an issue if you are using cover crops (which you will be doing if you are growing sustainably).

counter if she knew of any farms for sale. She was in the middle of a divorce and her soon to be ex-husband needed to sell out. That property didn't work out for my client, but it gives you an idea of how different it can be from finding property in the big city.

The odds may be small, but also check the FSBO 'for sale by owner' listings in the local paper, Craigslist, and online sites such as www.fsbo.com . While you are visiting the church, or checking out other social groups, be sure to ask if anyone knows of a property for sale.

Also this kind of asking can be very useful once you've found a property. Ask around to see if anyone knows if the pond ever dried up in the last drought, or is the spring really a year round spring? Was there ever any flooding in the area in past years? Have there been any wildfires?

Final Thoughts

You are on an incredible journey – we all are. The adventures that lay ahead of us will be unique in human history. In my journey, I've found that returning to a life where I produce most of my own basic needs has been the most fulfilling thing I've ever done. The inner strength that comes from eating deeply nutritious food that I've grown myself, the confidence from knowing I can provide for my family no matter what, the joy of independence from tyrannical systems, are all so worth it. Finding the land and the community to support you is the beginning of the adventure and I sincerely wish you the best of luck.

Remember that ultimately, we will not go to safe places, the safe places will be where we go.



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