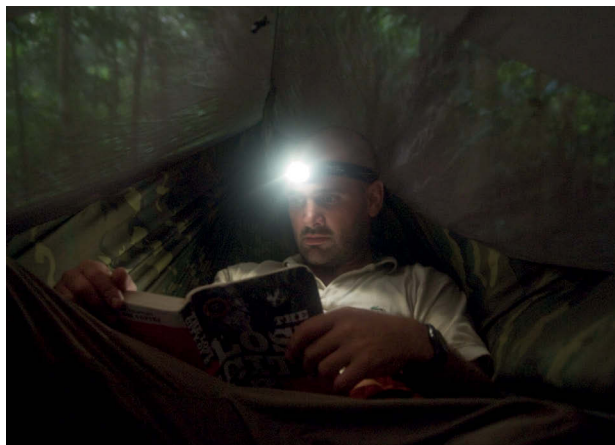


FOREWORD

My name is Ed Stafford and I'm alive. Therefore, like you, I'm a survivor. I don't mean to be facetious – but there are many times in my life when I could have died.

In 2010 I became the first human to walk the length of the Amazon from source to sea. Four thousand miles, 860 days, seven pairs of boots, and one Guinness World Record. Before I set out (and all along the route) everyone told me I was going to die. On the way I was held up at arrow point by Asheninka Indians, at gun point by drugs traffickers, electrocuted by an electric eel, and arrested for suspected murder by Shipebo people. I suppose the naysayers were right – I could have died. But I didn't.

Fast forward two years and I chose to strand myself naked (and with nothing to help me survive) on an uninhabited island in the Pacific for 60 days. With no-one to talk to, I built an existence from scratch. Eating raw snails and coconuts eventually progressed to managing to light a fire and opening up new possibilities such as roasting feral goats' legs. I built myself a home in the trees and, after two months on my own, even plumbed it with guttering and a rainwater collection tank made from washed-up debris. I proved to myself that I could survive with nothing but two hands and half a brain.





Why do I take on such trips? Of course, I thrive off the adrenaline. But it's more than that. I was adopted as a baby, and that lies at the heart of it: I am genuinely grateful to have even been born. It could easily have been very different. I was lucky and I was given my crack at living a full life. We all are, I suppose. I have no intention of wasting it.

But things don't always go to plan. On one occasion in the Amazon, when I was over two weeks' walk from any human settlement, my GPS died. I wasn't sure if it was the unit or whether there had been a nuclear war as all the satellites had gone down. It didn't really matter. I had to make do with a 1:4,000,000 tourist map of South America and a cheap compass. There was such a high margin for error in my calculations each day that they were a joke. If it hadn't been life-threatening, it would have been hilarious. The advice in this book on how to survive in the wild without GPS (pages 130–133) might just have come in handy. Hindsight is a beautiful thing, as they say.

Sometimes, prevention is better than cure. I was once stranded naked in Rwanda without any form of sun protection, so I covered my head and shoulders in hippo faeces. It stopped me from burning and my girlfriend even commented on how smooth my skin was when I got home. Bonus.

My favourite survival trick is one I stole off an old expedition colleague of mine called Luke. Our plan, in the event that we encountered hostile tribes in the Amazon, was for Luke to whip out his juggling balls and start performing. We figured nobody would kill someone who was juggling. As a non-juggler I just hoped

that our assumption also stretched to jugglers' mates. Happily, we never had to find out.

But you don't have to be in a remote or hostile place to get into trouble. After a late night a few years ago (and feeling somewhat the worse for wear) I found myself locked out of my room in a Central London hotel with no clothes on (it does seem to be a recurring theme). With no desire to bare all in reception downstairs, I just called the lift and pressed the alarm button. As if by magic, a flustered employee fumbling a large set of room keys appeared. Phew. To those unfortunate enough to share this fate, there are some face-saving tips on pages 102–103.

For me survival has never been about He-Man strength or Boy Scout preparation. Nor do I think you need the courage of a bear or the cunning of a fox. I personally think you can survive any situation if you treat it like a game. Games require you to be focused and alert, but importantly they are just that: games. In this state of mind, you are less likely to freeze, or panic and make rash decision, or flap and do nothing. Your adrenaline will be channelled into constructive behaviour and the things you do will seem easier and more achievable. It seems a subtle change in outlook – but it's a very, very useful one.

Enjoy the book and, as the *SAS Survival Handbook* used to unhelpfully say, 'Can you survive? You have to!'

Thanks for that, chaps...

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HOW TO SURVIVE...