

Bushcraft Courses

The skills we today call bushcraft are not new skills nor are they the by product of some black art or spiritual awareness. They are in fact the living skills practiced daily by our ancestors and natives people all over the world.

Bushcraft has had many names, woodcraft, wilderness living, field craft and Survival to name but a few but bushcraft in its current form is a amalgam of all these skills and more and as such the courses run by the more reputable schools here in the UK reflect this vast array of knowledge available.

Bushcraft courses can range from Wilderness first aid courses as run by Natural Pathways a school based in Kent to such adventurous courses as the Swedish Vildmark course run by Bearclaw Bushcraft but the main stay of all bushcraft courses and the foundation stones upon which all future knowledge is built has to be the basic entry level course.

Most good schools run this type of course and while the syllabus might change from school to school each should include Safe tool handling, shelter building and fire lighting because with these three skills alone we can, in an emergency situation, preserve life and prevent the risk of injury.

Progression from the base level can also take many forms but generally it is recommend that the progression be one in which we remove ourselves from the comfort zone falsely created by the 'base' camp and actually go out and 'do it for real' under the safe guidance of our instructors. Woodlore in East Sussex run a journeyman course of this type in Dunkeld Scotland, Bearclaw bushcraft as mentioned earlier run two types of course one of weekend duration in Essex and another of a weeks length on a uninhabited Island in Scotland (so even if your busy work life rules out a week long event there is a course to cater for you too) while Woodsmoke based in Cumbria run a course called the Nomad in which their students experience bushcraft while simulating the paths taken but hunter gatherer peoples. All are excellent courses and all (building upon your initial basic knowledge) will prepare you for any future travels while building up both knowledge and self confidence in your own abilities.

Knowledge and learning doesn't stop there however, for there are bushcraft courses which will take you even further a field, once you've progressed to this level you might ask yourself where do we go from there?

Well for starters we can never rest on our laurels we must always practice – practice not only makes perfect it also builds muscle memory and in the case of the bow drill (fire by friction) strength too!

A word of warning here also – try to avoid the pit falls of the cyber world, for while the internet is a good source of knowledge and a great way to shop for essential equipment like that stocked by Attleborough Accessories for example it is also filled with unscrupulous and unskilled people who in its faceless forest will misinform or mislead you - such examples of this can be found on all the many forums which have sprung up in recent years and while some incidents are only minor and amusing some are also truly alarming and potentially dangerous, far better to select a good school with fully trained and experience instructors and staff who will guide you over these hurdles safely than to rely on supposition and information gleaned second hand from books or else where – as stated above only in practice can we progress and if you do take information from any source other than a reputable school I would advise you to always cross reference it for safety sake

Another good direction to travel if progressing from Novice is to maybe do a trip overseas such as a horse packing trail across the American Rockies like that run by Bison Bushcraft or trips to the frozen wastes of Northern Sweden as run by Ray Mears, which while expensive are generally good value for money as here you can not only learn how to survival in a subzero arctic environment or the American mountains but you can also practice skill not available to us here in Britain. And this is key for no knowledge is complete until we can expand our horizons to the degree where we feel comfortable learning and using skills practiced by indigenous peoples from other lands and climates.

So I hope from the above you will see that bushcraft courses are more than just 'camping in the woods' they are building blocks of knowledge, they are fun and they designed to enable us to learn by progression and hands on experience whilst operating in a safe environment.

Lastly, I must reiterate that bushcraft courses should ALWAYS be practical events with maximum hands on experience for the student because only in handling the tools, feeling the heat of the fire and fine tuning our fire by friction technique or feeling the freshness of a summer breeze on our faces can a person say they have truly learnt anything, Bushcraft is not a exercise in theory it is a practical subject with totally practical skills.

With this in mind and a warm summer sun blazing as I write I would urge you all to get out there, select a school from the list below and take your first steps onto a trail that will possibly lead you around the world but a trail which will never become boring or mundane.

Happy travels and happy bushcrafting!

Top 5 Bushcraft Schools in the UK.

<http://www.bearclawbushcraft.co.uk/>

<http://www.bisonbushcraft.co.uk/>

<http://www.raymears.com/>

<http://www.woodcraft-school.co.uk/>

<http://www.woodsmoke.uk.com/>

**These are some of the top schools in Britain today; I have selected them not only for their excellent reputations, high standards of instruction and the depth of knowledge of their staff but also as to spread them out geographically as they range from Kent to Scotland. So as such you can generally book any of these with confidence - however if your unsure of their course content or whether it is suitable for you then I would recommend you contact them via their websites above and enquire, a good tip is to check out the availability of their courses well in advance as the better schools will likely have the majority of their courses fully booked early in the year.*