



Don't Take It, Make It

BY JOSHUA SWANAGON

Having grown up in Colorado, I was privileged to be able to spend a good part of my youth backpacking the breathtaking, but often formidable, Rocky Mountains. One thing that you learn when you are hiking mountainous terrain is that less truly is more.

I came to learn at a very young age that there are a lot of items we think we need to pack in, when in fact we can make most everything we need right in the field. With a good knife, folding saw, some cordage and a little know-how, you can camp in as much luxury as someone with a 75-pound backpack full of tent stakes, pot holders, fire tripod, grill, camp chair and every other kind of camp utensil imaginable.

A little over a year ago I had the opportunity to take a trip down to the

Amazon Jungle with my friend's company, Bushcraft Global, where we hiked deep into the Amazon with a couple of indigenous Jacuna guides. To say that they took bushcrafting to the extreme is an understatement. When I am camping, I make simple camp implements for myself, but while in the jungle, our guides had built entire structures, complete with tables and benches, using nothing but their machetes, palm trees and the vines

around us. The way they wielded a machete made it look as though it was nothing more than an extension of their arm, which comes from owning and using a machete from the time they are four years old. We should all be so proficient in the use of our knives.

In Volume II of his book "Camping and Woodcraft," Horace Kephart said "...it was natural, nay imperative, that one should pick up and practice certain arts long lost and forgotten by civilized communities but quite essential in our backwoods way of living." To me that is bushcrafting in a nutshell. Getting back to an early way of life, reconnecting with nature and learning to work with our environment, not just invade it for a weekend. When you actually enter nature and put blade to wood to construct your living arrangements, camping will become more than a getaway, it will be an experience.

Stay sharp and keep it real. **KI**