

#AskPaulKirtley Episode 93 Transcript

[00:00:00,000] In this episode of Ask Paul Kirtley, we are going to be talking about is there such a thing as a bushcraft mindset? We're going to be talking about independent winter travel in the boreal forest. We're going to look at buoyancy, additional buoyancy in canoes. There's an interesting question there. And also how to get one of my knives.

[00:00:45,220] Welcome, welcome to episode 93 of Ask Paul Kirtley and it's good to be back. This is the series where I answer your questions on wilderness bushcraft, survival, and outdoor life in general and if you'd like to ask a question you can leave me a voice message via the speak pipe voice recorder on my website or you can tweet me at PKIRT, P-K-I-R-T, with the hashtag Ask Paul Kirtley and your question. So without further ado, let's get into it.

[00:01:14,550] Okay. First question, and this is via a tweet from Elke. And the question is, *Hi, Paul, your podcast number one is on survival psychology. And in another, the book, The Comfort Crisis is mentioned. A survival mindset exists, yet is there such a thing as a bushcraft mindset?*

[00:01:35,360] You often hear that bushcraft is about living comfortably in nature. So that's a really good question, Elke. Elke's done a course with me in the UK earlier this year. It feels like a longer time ago than that, but it was in May. May 2025 and has long been involved in bushcraft and survival and scouting in the Netherlands. So, good question there. So, a couple of things. First off, I'll give some observations from my own perspective. I'll also give some observations from what I see students doing and developing and where they trip up and where they often excel and what's going what I think is going on in their heads at times. So, is there a bushcraft mindset? Yes, I think it overlaps somewhat with survival mindset. I think it overlaps.

[00:02:31,310] With resilience, I think those things are intertwined. I think there's a positive feedback loop there where the more capable you become in the outdoors, the more resilient you become. You're more confident, you've got more solutions to problems— for starters. So there's a practical resilience, but also there's a mental resilience. Because in the process of learning how to do with less, how to do with less modern equipment, use more natural materials, sleep out without a sleeping bag, make water safe in different ways, make fire by friction, make cordage from fibres from plants rather than just relying on paracord. You fail. You have some difficulties. You have some uncomfortable times. You have some things that don't work. You have some frustrations that you have to get over and that builds mental resilience as well, so that you can then go and deploy that resilience in different ways if you take the subject seriously.

[00:03:34,187] That, yes, I think there's some practical benefits that make you more resilient by developing bushcraft skills. You know, there's lots of people who do many things

outdoors, but they have no bushcraft skills and they're entirely reliant upon modern equipment, modern tools, modern stoves, et cetera, et cetera. While we learn bushcraft skills, even if we're not necessarily learning them for survival purposes when things don't go quite to plan in our trips, camps, and hikes, or what have you— our canoe trips, our winter campouts— we have got a store of skills that we can use. Also, the process that we've got to in gaining those skills also tends to make us more resilient than people who are just entirely dependent upon modern gadgets. So I think there is a mindset that's developed.

[00:04:22,050] I think we can also look at it from the point of view of how you approach learning bushcraft to be efficient and effective in learning bushcraft. You have to be patient. You have to be open to learning new things and, as an adult, that's harder than when you're a young person. Young people tend to be like sponges— if they're interested in something, they'll just soak everything up. Whereas, as an adult, we're often doing the same thing in our jobs in our daily lives. We're not really learning new things anymore. Then we come to learn bushcraft or any anything else for that matter that involves a knowledge base and practical skill set. We have to almost relearn how to learn.

[00:05:02,070] the better you are at learning and the more open-minded and enthusiastic you are to learn as much as possible rather than get away with as little as possible, then you are going to develop a better mindset in terms of developing your bushcraft skills and also employing your bushcraft skills so I think that's important I think approaching the learning process correctly is really important and I've talked about that on other podcasts as well in the past and we talked about timing bow drill for example why that might be important and I'll link to that podcast in the in the show notes and I'll link to it below on YouTube as well. And so, there's certain aspects like that, that if you approach them correctly, and I think also, for me personally, and also one of the things that I try and put across to my students is.

[00:05:53,710] Bushcraft fundamentally is about a knowledge of nature— it's a study of nature, and I don't mean in a kind of botanist way or an entomologist way. I mean it's a practical study of nature. You need to once you get beyond the very very very basics, which a lot of you know I would say 95 percent of the material on YouTube and on websites around bushcraft is really quite basic. I'm not being derogatory there, but what a lot of people— most people— are beginners and so most people are interested in beginner topics. They're interested in what equipment they should have, they're interested in tarps, they're interested in you know the things that go around it, rucksacks, and particularly people are interested in maybe slightly more traditional gear, such as canvas packs and those sorts of things.

[00:06:40,120] They're interested in what acts to buy, they're interested in what I'll post a video about axe skills, and I'll get a bunch of questions about what pair of trousers I'm wearing. Of beginners are interested in because they want to set themselves up—um— to learn more and that is where a lot of people are at and then they're interested in, you

know, fire lighting and ferro rods and some basic fire lighting skills, but many people don't really go that far— even into the fire lighting skills. Many people don't even get particularly good at friction fire lighting. You don't have to get good at friction fire lighting, and nobody's forcing you to learn any of these things. But my view is, if you really really want to get deep into bushcraft skills, you need to have all the basics really really well rounded off.

[00:07:28,840] I was quite surprised at the 2025 Global Bushcraft Symposium— Bushcraft Denmark, Jesper and his team ran a really, really nice session on the edge of a lake. We paddled to the lake and they were running sessions where we met. A small birch, black container, and also, we did bow drill. And I was really surprised at how many people at the 2025 Global Bushcraft Symposium could not do bow drill or had never done bow drill before. And that's not a criticism. The point is that even people going to events like that have got some serious holes in their basic skill set. And so, for me, developing the right mindset is also about making sure you've got all of those cool building blocks in place.

[00:08:17,370] Yeah, of course, you can go skiing, and hiking, and cycling, and horse riding, and all sorts of things outdoors. You don't need to do those things. But if you're interested in bushcraft and you want to call yourself a bushcrafter, then I would. Say you have to develop the mindset that you cover all the bases. Those cornerstone skills are there, you should be able to do fire by friction at least with bow drill. Unless you've got some physical impediment, of course. You know, some people can't do it because they've got problems with their hands, they've got arthritis, they've got problems with their back, and they can't kneel because of their knees. But there are some other ways of getting around that. Positioning yourself and whatnot.

[00:08:52,510] But generally, you have to start with a mindset that you've got to cover that. You should be able to find, process cordage fibers and make cordage. You should understand some basic wild edibles. You should understand some basic wild medicines. You should understand how to make containers. You should understand how to make netting. You should understand how to make basic fishing equipment from natural materials, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. You should understand how to make traps. If you're not going to go trapping, if you're interested in the subject, you should know how to do those in in your skill set, because that's what bushcraft is about. You should be able to put tarps up without making it massively over-complicated. You should have a good repertoire of core knots that you need to do, etc.

[00:09:41,340] And maybe I should put a video out about some of these things, but you have to. If we're talking about mindset, you have to approach the subject wanting to learn it, not just being obsessed with axes and knives. That's not really bushcraft. There's nothing wrong with collecting knives, in the same way there's nothing wrong with collecting trains, train sets, you know, Hornby train sets or old stamps or coins, or anything. I have absolutely no judgment of that. You know, collecting knives is a nice thing. Having a collection of guitars is fine. A collection of cars or motorcycles is fine, but having a collection of bushcraft knives is not the same thing as doing bushcraft. And so, if you want to do bushcraft, you

have to approach it with the mindset of learning the core skill sets and then developing on top of that, and developing skill within those skill sets.

[00:10:35,760] I see a lot of people who have very nice bushcraft knives, but they're not particularly skillful with the use of the knife. In all the different aspects of how to use it. Lots of people buy nice axes, you know, Gransfors, Holtz, you know, et cetera, et cetera. Thornwood Ford. is coming onto the scene now and making some you know really nice, um, you know British made hand forged axes, you know people are buying these, but their skills are not great with those tools and I would say try and develop a higher level of skill, practice more. It's not just about collecting equipment and going out and kind of play acting at it, if you want to learn the subject seriously and be very competent, then you have to approach it with a high standard and and hold yourself to that standard.

[00:11:25,980] And that might mean you know observing other people to see where where you're at, it might mean going on courses, and by all no means I'm trying to sell courses, but you need. Some way of benchmarking yourself could be your mate—indeed, if you're really really good at that particular skill set, go and spend time with them. Spend time with people who are good at the skills, watch videos on YouTube, take courses, spend time with friends or mentors, and approach it with the mindset of being particularly good. Lisa Fenton spent a lot of time talking about this in the past and researching this, but bushcraft came about in part due to expeditionary warfare and expeditions in remote wild places. And so you've got a skill set that's portable and applicable.

[00:12:16,740] And then, along the way, they also picked up skills from locals. So you have to have a high level of skill that you can deploy in different places. And be flexible to deploy those skills. And then you also have to be open-minded enough to learn from other people you encounter along the way. And at whatever level you're at, you can always learn. Learn something from other people. There's always someone out there who knows something that you don't. And if you're open-minded, as well— some really quite well-known bushcraft experts aren't. I have to say, I'm not going to mention any names. But if you're open-minded, then you're always going to be able to learn more. So I would say that's also an important part of the mindset of getting good at bushcraft.

[00:13:00,230] Have that beginner's mind. If we want to use a martial arts analogy, a Zen analogy— if you like, have that beginner's mind all the time. Be open-minded to learning from people along the way. So those are my thoughts. There's probably some other things that might spring to mind as I continue my walk today. But those are things that I think are important. The students I see doing well are the ones who are open-minded, who are patient, or even if they're impatient, they go away and have a word with themselves, come back and try again. Something we see not just in bushcraft training, but also say in canoe training, which I think is an allied skill set. It's a physical skill that takes some time and requires some interaction with the natural world.

[00:13:47,560] The people who do best ultimately, even if they're not especially gifted, are

not naturally talented, maybe they're not the most coordinated people. The people who do best are the ones who stick at it and have the most goes. They have a lot of repetition until it clicks. Until it gets to the point where they can do it well, they've got fluency, they've got fluidity in the technique that they're doing, and it starts to become part of them, making the skills their own. Whereas the people who are maybe a little bit more coordinated and can pick things up more quickly don't practice as much, ultimately don't get as good as the people who just stick at it.

[00:14:31,610] So yeah, just perseverance, patience, open-mindedness, and be willing to actually learn the broad base of skills at least at the fundamental level that you should have as a bushcraft person. And be willing to learn from nature and understand that once you get past the very very basics, it's about a study of nature, it's about a study of animals, it's about a study of how they behave. It's about a study of tracks and sign. It's about a study of plants, botany, trees, how they can be used, how they're identified. identified plants how they can be used how they're identified which ones are poisonous and should be avoided etc the vast majority of nature-based Understanding which is really what bushcraft is it practical nature based skills is about understanding nature It's not about knives and axes Ferro rods, that's just the very very basic level and then beyond that it's a study of nature and it's a willingness to Even if you weren't good at biology or science or anything at school.

[00:15:36,790] It's just a willingness to try and learn as much practical knowledge as you can from people who know more than you as you go. So, for me, those are all aspects of what a good bushcraft mindset are. Hopefully, that's useful to you. Let me know what you think in the comments below the the video on YouTube of this or below the home page page for this episode on my site. All right, let's have a jump into the next question. So I spent quite a lot of time on that. It's a good question and it's probably a big area we could spend more time on. But I think those are some basic things.

[00:16:18,360] Independent winter travel. Here we go. This is from Tom. *Hi, Paul. Tom from Herefordshire. Here. My question is in regards to winter camping in the northern forests. I've done two week-long courses up in the north of Sweden now. I'm confident with the fundamentals of winter camping and journeying, but I'm struggling to get my own unsupported trip off the ground. Especially with regards to selecting an area, considering so much of winter travel relies on local knowledge. Do you have any advice taking steps away from instruction? To making your own journeys in the northern forests? Many thanks.*

[00:16:57,090] Good question, Tom. Um, it's good that you're actually wanting to go out make journeys, particularly in the winter. Winter's a wonderful time in the boreal forest, it's peaceful, it's serene, it's beautiful, it's also harsh and challenging, potentially. But I think you an understanding of that.

[00:17:16,839] I know you've done some stuff with Adam and Jamie, and I'm assuming you're looking at going to Scandinavia. But of course, you could go further afield. There's the Boreal Forest right around the northern hemisphere. You're probably not going to

Russia at the moment, but you know there's the whole of you know Canada much to to play with. There's a strip of Boreal Forest right across um the northern part of Canada, northern part of North America. So yeah, getting your own journeys going. That's trickier than it sounds, and I know this from personal experience. I had worked with Ramirez and Lars Falt on Arctic courses in the north of Sweden. I and some of my friends had a desire to go and actually make some journeys in that environment.

[00:18:08,160]I'd actually already undertaken a number of um ski tours in Norway, so I had. But that's more like backpacking, more like hiking, but you're on skis, you're with a backpack. And yes, some people do that with pokes, but what we were interested in doing is not the ski and poke thing. I'd done that ski touring. I'd also done a bit of traditional skis and polks in Sweden, hut-to-hut touring above the tree line. In Norway, what we are interested in doing the Boreal Forest. I think what you're interested in doing the Boreal Forest—this is the kind of hot tent snowshoe toboggan style traveling. Um and so, what we had to do initially, because there's nowhere— nobody in Scandinavia— really that has that gear.

[00:18:58,630]Um, we had to acquire our own snow shoes, toboggan, and hot tent, and then we had to get it to Sweden. So we had to ship it out, and we found the cheapest way of doing that was to ship it by road. Um, like courier it out, if you like, because a lot of it was heavy and bulky, you know, stoves, toboggans, etc. Even if you're going on your own, you've got one modern plastic toboggan which rolls up. It's still not something that's easy to take as hold luggage on a plane. Metal stoves take up quite a lot of room. Then you've got maybe some cooking kit. You have the tent— a canvas tent like a snow trekker, something like that. It all starts becoming quite bulky.

[00:19:45,360]And yeah, you could probably pay for it as excess luggage, but we found, with a number of us going and needing a number of toboggans and snowshoes and whatnot, that we basically put it in a big wooden box and shipped it out to somewhere someone. That we knew in Sweden where we could day and unpack the box and get sorted so yeah, that's probably not the most helpful thing in terms of you might be thinking, 'that's tricky that's tricky to do, but I think you probably already know some people in Sweden from what you've done and so that's something that you could do. You could ship some stuff out there and then you could Um, hire a car, drive up there, get your gear, drive to somewhere where you wanted to start.

[00:20:29,100]And so I think the bigger question you had is choosing an area. Obviously, country to country, it varies what you can do in different zones. If you like, whether they are national parks, provincial parks, whether they are eco parks, whether they are just common land, whether they're land for everyone to use, whether they're any restrictions on what you can do, then generally, there's even in provincial parks and national parks, there's less restriction on what you can do in winter than there is in summer. People are less worried about you having fires because there's less fire risk. People are happy if you're in some parts of the world. And I'm talking very generally here because you asked a general

question.

[00:21:18,820] Park authorities are often happy for you to camp wild, away from designated camping spots that they would maybe want you to use in the summer and in fact would encourage you to go there in the winter. Because they know you're going to be using firewood, and this is the case in some of the provincial parks in Canada, where they know that you're going to be needing dead standing wood for your stove. This is the style of camping that you're doing, and therefore they do not want you to be camping close to the camping spots that they want people on in the summer. So that they can be controlled as a safe place to have a fire, and they don't want you using the firewood in the vicinity of that.

[00:21:55,490] In the winter, however. So it's not there for the summer, so they you kind of off the beaten track— even more so. Those are options that maybe you didn't think about. That even some of the places that are quite restricted in summer have got more flexibility in what you can do in the winter. So that opens up some of the provincial parks in Canada for you potentially, but check the rules and regulations for each one because they do— they do vary. They do— they vary within provinces and they also vary from province to province. So, do check that. But that's something—um— also to think about. Um, that there are maybe more flexible options available for winter travel. Than there are for summer.

[00:22:38,130] The other thing I would think about is whether or not you want to go on your own or whether or not you want to go with other people. Winter travel is demanding, it's challenging. And if you're just starting out, you're more exposed if you're on your own than if you are part of a pair or a family. three or a four or what have you you can share the load with some of the gear that you're taking as well you don't necessarily need to double up on a tent you know you can take a three-person tent and you know put the tent on one person's toboggan put the stove on another person's toboggan and you know you you don't need necessarily a split each you can take one splitting axe for the heavier firewood between the three of you and you can share the load and then also if you've got a problem if you're injured if you're

[00:23:28,890] you know if you have an accident or anything then you have other people that are able to you know raise the alarm look after you help you etc so do think about whether or not you want to go on your own I'm not discouraging you from going on your own but I'm just you know highlighting the fact that you are be more exposed if you're on your own. And that's something to consider, particularly when you are starting to make journeys. Thing I would say is don't bite off more than you can chew. You can start off relatively small and that's fine if you're not used to it. To doing everything on your own or even as a small group and journeying that way, then I would recommend that you keep it relatively small and build up.

[00:24:14,030] Maybe you're not even even sure how far you can travel in a day. Maybe you're getting used to new equipment. Maybe you're having to do, particularly if you go to

the north of Sweden, for example, you to deal with very short days and you might be having to put the tent up in the dark and take it down in the dark in the morning before you set off, because you want the daylight for traveling. Those are things that you then are quite restricted by. Going back to the group point as well is that you often, especially in the far north, you're going to be spending a lot of time in the dark— possibly in your tent— and you need something to entertain yourself.

[00:24:54,543] Definitely, you need a good book if you're on your own or having some friends there that you get on well with. To you know, play cards with and chat with and tell stories to and stuff. So that's another consideration about going as a group versus going as an individual. That there's a lot of hours of darkness in the winter. That's not necessarily what you specifically asked, but they are some considerations. So start to think about the shape of your trip. What's the style of travel you want to do? Do you want to go as an individual? Do you want to go as a group? That can then help you inform how far you can go, how you travel, how remote you want to go, without support, and those sorts of things?

[00:25:40,210] Then think about what what's your intention is, what do you want to achieve? It doesn't have to be the same on every trip you do. Do you want to just cover this? Do you want to try and cover as much distance as possible? That can be, you know, quite a tough trip. Or do you want to just go, enjoy the winter environment, enjoy being out in a beautiful, beautiful, peaceful environment, and just do a short distance each day, go slow, savor what you're doing? Particularly at the beginning. Have the time to set up camp and not be rushed as you're learning the rope, so to speak, and with your own gear. Um, or do you want to go and set up a base camp, explore, go off and do side trips day by day?

[00:26:22,060] Do you want to go and spend a couple of days in one spot, maybe buy a lake, do some ice fishing? Think about what you want to do, because that also informs where you go, how much space there needs to be. If you're not going that far, and you have all the resources you need in a relatively small space, then that's one thing. If you need, if you want to be covering kilometers and kilometers and kilometers, then that informs perhaps a different space that you need to enter to be able to do that. And again, that will help you decide where to go. But most of the boreal forest is quite empty. So you know, whether we're talking about northern Scandinavia or whether we're talking about North America, there's plenty of room to cover distance.

[00:27:11,600] The difficulties often get into those places in the winter, and that's where the cost is involved. I've done fly-in trips in. The winter I've done drive-in trips in the winter I've hired people with snow machines skidoos to take us into a certain area to drop us off we've explored an area and then hiked out we've done trips where we've been skidoosed in we've had a more static camp in an area where we're just doing side trips and exploring and ice fishing and things we're not packing the tent every day we're just you know maybe doing a number of camps and then we've been picked up and pulled out again at the end so there's a number of different options there but I would say the fundamental thing is to decide what you want to achieve and beyond just going To the boreal in the winter, it's like:

do you want to cover distance, do you want to work on particular skills, do you want to have a really tough journey?

[00:28:09,830] Do you want to have a journey that eases you into journeying in that environment so that you can then layer on top of that later on? And I would advise against biting off more than you can chew, because even if you're ambitious about what you want to do in the winter, it does take some time to transition from, you know, being in a base camp, learning skills, doing a little bit of journeying to journeying every day, setting up camp, finding firewood, chopping it, feeding the stove, cooking. You always have enough time to sleep. It's the time in the day. You've got to get up before it gets light, pack the tent down, be moving at first light, putting it back up again, probably after dark.

[00:28:59,400] Certainly in northern Scandinavia you're a little bit luckier in Canada because you can do those sorts of trips further south and you've got more daylight so again think about length of day, distance traveled, what you want to achieve. Personally, we found the trips that we were doing the happy medium. However, we got into the bush, and we generally didn't move on every day because we found that we had little time to do anything else and we wanted to work on winter bushcraft skills. We wanted to work, and we wanted to spend some time ice fishing and just exploring nature. If you are moving on every day, then that's pretty much all you are doing. By the time you've got stuff packed away, you move on, set up, get your firewood, get the stove on, get settled in.

[00:29:54,510] Repeat, rinse, and repeat, rinse, and repeat. You don't have much time for anything else, and but if that's what you want to do, then you can cover more distance. But it's a harder trip, and it's helpful. Uh, Tom. Um, it was a very general question, and that's quite a general answer. If you've got more specific questions, and I can help you with, you know, where I am. You can message me, and we can get into more of the the weeds with the detail. But hopefully, that's that's useful. That's how I'd be thinking about it initially. Set the scene about what you want to achieve and who you want to go with, and then you can start to use that to inform where you can go. And don't ignore going to places that maybe you hadn't considered before, because there may be more flexibility in what you can do there in winter than there is in summer.

[00:30:45,260] I thought this would be quite a short session tonight, today, but um, I think these will be maybe a bit quicker. Those were quite meaty questions, certainly quite a lot to think about. This is from Gordon.

[00:31:01,780] *Hi, Paul. Gordon from up in the Highlands here. My question is regarding the additional buoyancy you would add into your canoe for a journey, specifically the stern and bow airbags or foam blocks that you add in. Um. At what point would you suggest, well, is there a point at which you would say, 'nah, I'm not going to bother with those today?' Or is it? Foolhardy to venture out without additional buoyancy. For a kind of frame of reference, I generally paddle in calm locks and calm sections of river. And as calm as possible sea lochs and taking taking into account tight direction and wind direction and*

stuff— not that that makes a difference when accidents happen, but is there a point where you're like, 'nope.' Additional gear. That'll be fine. I've got large barrels that are relatively watertight and obviously in those, in between all of the items, there's quite a lot of buoyancy in those things. So is there a point at which you would say, 'no, don't bother,' or is this entirely foolhardy to remove buoyancy? Thank you very much. Cheers, man.

[00:32:28,420] Good question, Gordon. So, um, for people watching this who don't know, I've done a fair amount of canoe tripping and I'm a qualified canoe leader in the UK. I'm also a Level Three canoe coach in the UK and I have done plenty of paddling— day paddles, multi-day paddles, in the UK.

[00:32:50,440] I've also done quite a lot of several-week journeys in Canada, and clearly, there are people who've done much more than me in those environments. But I do think I can speak to a lot of these questions with some authority. So, if you're not familiar, Gordon is talking about bags that you, they're kind of like triangular shaped, like wedge-shaped bags or blocks of buoyant material that go into the ends of canoes. So they could be an airbag that you inflate and tie in, or they could be like a block of foam that goes in and again, you tie in. And the idea there is it gives your canoe more buoyancy. What a lot of people don't think about is that it also if you've got that in your boat

[00:33:44,980] the reason it gives the boat buoyancy is because it can't be displaced by water and so a lot of people think that they're only really necessary for white water and they are certainly if you're doing a lot of hard white water in a canoe and you're not using a spray deck then the more airbag you've got in there and the less open boat then you're gonna less likely be fully swamped in in big waves and things and so certainly if you're doing sort of day trips and you're doing kind of difficult you know grade two and grade three stuff in an open boat then big airbags certainly should be in the boat because you don't have a lot of other gear maybe you've just got a day

[00:34:26,409] bag and then you've got your spare paddle and the rest of the boat you want you want full of full of airbag or something I would say you know if you if you're if you're play boating in that sense if you're going out for the day and doing some um interesting white water um a lot of people think it's only for that though um one of the things that extra buoyancy in in the ends of your boat does even on open water is it makes it easier for you to turn your boat over and it also means that when you turn your so if you've capsized you've fallen in a lock or a lake and you turn your boat over it's going to be easier to turn it over and it's also going to have less water in it to bail out once you've turned it over because some of that space is taken up by those those bags or blocks at the end.

[00:35:20,140] It also does sometimes make it harder to get back in the boat on your own because it pivots more from the ends. slightly higher point. But there are ways around that. But fundamentally, it does make life a bit easier in that situation as well. It's not just for white water; it's also something could be useful in open water. And I wouldn't necessarily treat open water as safer than moving water. You talked about calm lakes, calm lochs, calm

sea lochs, calm sections of river. If the wind gets up, lochs and lakes can be more dangerous than moving water. They can be more dangerous in the sense that the conditions can change more rapidly. And they can be more dangerous in the sense that you can find yourself out of your boat a much.

[00:36:08,230]A much greater distance from the bank than you ever will on a river and so getting to shore, if you can't get back into your boat, is going to be harder. There is a certain distance away from shore that you won't be able to swim to shore even in relatively mild conditions and certainly in cold conditions you want and in cold, choppy conditions you want to be keeping quite close to the to the shore as Cliff Jacobson famously said in an interview and I'll see if I can find a to it. And but basically answering the question of, well, Cliff, what do I do if I fall out of my canoe in the middle of a big lake and can't get back in? His answer is, you die, and that's the seriousness of the situation.

[00:36:51,040]Whereas generally, if you fall out of your canoe on a river, it's often in the bouncy bit, it's often. In rapids and the rapids are generally where the river is constricted. That's why you've got moving water and, as long as the moving water is not so large that it's going to drown you, if it is, you shouldn't be. Um, you shouldn't be paddling it anyway. You're not going to be paddling grade 4 and grade 5 in an open Canadian canoe. You're going to be on technical grade 2 and, possibly, volume grade 3, mostly at most, you can swim to the side. Whether or not you get your boat back is a different matter, but we're kind of going off on a bit of a tangent there.

[00:37:31,320]But the point is, they buoyancy is useful both in lakes and on rivers and you shouldn't necessarily treat lakes and locks and sea locks as any safer than moving water they're often it's often more dangerous so With that in mind, Then there's also the question of if you are doing journeys and you have gear. Um, can you decide to not put the buoyancy bags in? The answer to that is the short answer to that is yes. Um, now I've just recently done a couple of trips on the river Spey in Scotland. We guide trips on the river Spey every year, work with Ray Goodwin to do those, and we take groups down and wild camp. So we are taking camping gear, we're taking food barrels, we're taking you know personal equipment and all of those canoes have got buoyancy bags in them because there's room.

[00:38:28,710]It's a you know it's a four-day, three-night trip and we haven't got that much gear with us. When we do trips in Canada, like say the Missinibie River or the Bloodvane River, first off, the rental canoes that we get from the outfitters generally don't have airbags in them. So that's the starting point. We can kind of get quite comfortable with setting our own boat up— how exactly we want at home— and then you're going to get a fairly bare bones boat if you're hiring a canoe. but then that's not necessarily the the end of the world because if you're doing a two-week trip you've got more food and you need more room in the boat and you might end up putting your

[00:39:12,470]personal bag you know like your day pack the bow paddler puts their day

pack in the front of a tandem boat and the bow paddler might put their day pack in the in the rear in the stern of a tandem boat and then the portage pack with a camping gear goes in the middle along with you know food barrels for example and if that's tied in well that will give you know in totality plenty of buoyancy to the boat um in terms of avoiding swamping um or you know making life easier if the boat does somewhat swamp you know you can paddle a boat and I did it, for example, I'll link to Ray Goodwin's video of a

[00:39:53,490]of the Porcupine River that we did in Northern Saskatchewan that was quite chunky and everyone got a lot of water in their boats and because we didn't have spray decks on that trip and a couple of boats capsized but myself and my bow paddler were able, even though we were completely swamped by the bottom of the rapid, to paddle the boat to the side and then bail, because we had our gear tied in in such a way that it didn't float free of the boat— it wasn't on leashes, it was tied in so that the buoyancy of the portage pack and the food barrel helped keep the boat um Somewhat stable and as long as you keep a paddle on each side of the boat and you don't do any aggressive maneuvers, then you won't capsize.

[00:40:41,080]We were literally had the gunnels in the middle of the boat under the water. It was like a submarine. And then we got to shore. I got out. The gunnels came slightly above water and then we were able to. Bail the boat and there wasn't as much water in there as there would have been had we not had all that luggage in there tied in, because obviously, if it can float, free that space is going to be taken up by water. So I would say, if you don't have buoyancy bags, buoyancy airbags, or buoyancy blocks, then tying multi-day trip equipment in the middle of the boat can go a long way to giving you the buoyancy that you need, and particularly on big trips, you won't have room necessarily for the buoyancy bags anyway.

[00:41:22,830]Um, you mentioned barrels. Barrels are fine; they will give you a lot of buoyancy. The thing is, barrels can be quite awkward to tie in to boats. Um, and, in my experience, when a boat fills with water, barrels, even if they've got rope over the top of them, will pop out. They are tied in more securely, and the easiest way of tying in more securely is by a barrel harness. Which you know people in Canada will be very familiar with, because you typically all your food barrels will have barrel harnesses. Because you're going to carry them on portages. But the other thing a barrel harness does is make tying the barrel into the boat much more secure. And you can secure it at both ends.

[00:42:07,520]Because these big blue barrels they typically have a handle close to on either side, close to the top. And you can tie that in. But if that's the only attachment point, they'll just pivot from that tie-in point. And the space where the barrel was will fill with water. So what you want is if you can put a barrel harness on, and you put the barrel in with a harness up, and tighten the straps. Then you can put cords from you know thwarts across and tie that in on both sides so the barrel is constrained underneath the cordage and it won't pop out and that'll give you plenty of buoyancy in the boat so that's a good thing to do for sure and if you don't have buoyancy bags in your boat then that would be my first

[00:42:50,040] port of call and getting the portage pack with your camping gear and the food barrel tied in properly so it gives plenty of buoyancy in the middle of the boat so hopefully that answer your question um Gordon hopefully that's useful and of course there's plenty of information about tying stuff in in Ray Goodwin's Book canoeing as well. Well, I'll link to that below. I'll link to an Amazon link to that below. If you're at all interested in canoeing and you don't have Ray Goodwin's Canoeing Book, then you should order that book below, wherever in the world you are. That if that book's available on Amazon near you, that link below will work. The link in below the video on YouTube or the link below the recording the video or the audio on the page on my website it'd be Paulkirtley .co. UK forward slash askpaulkirtley93 askpaulkirtley93

[00:43:48,580] Okay, last question, only four questions today, but we've covered a lot of ground in those ones that we've covered already. So let's listen to this one from Robert.

[00:44:00,490] *How do I get one of your knives?*

[00:44:05,730] Let's play that again. That was pretty short.

[00:44:11,260] *How do I get one of your knives?*

[00:44:16,000] Okay. So how do you get one of my knives and so I'm assuming you're talking about the PK1 or the PK2 knives. I'm assuming I made a video about those a while ago and that was surprisingly to me, quite controversial video. Um, A lot of people seem to take some dislike to the fact that I designed a knife for a maker that was making a very premium product in terms of the fit and finish. In the UK.

[00:44:52,940] Making them by hand and what Raven are charging for them. And I don't set the prices. I just designed the knife. And I don't particularly promote them because they're not for everyone. And I said that in the video. But some people do want them. And they are good tools and they're extremely well made. And the way you get them is you order them from Raven. You order them from Simon and his team at Raven Armory. I am not in that process at all. Stock them, I don't retail them, I don't um. You know, sell them at shows or anything like that. I, I am the designer. Um, it's a little bit like you know, the criticism that I got for that video.

[00:45:37,920] It's a little bit like criticizing the designer that's designed a Ferrari or a Porsche for designing that car. I mean, and criticizing Porsche's pricing. It's like, well, I'm just doing my job as a designer. Yes, it's possible that that design could be made more cheaply by a different maker. But remember, the maker approached me. To design the knife and I designed it for them and they sell it and that's that's that's the score. Um, and I also didn't. I wanted people to feel like they must have one of those knives because I use one. There's so much product placement and so much product endorsement. YouTube, in particular, these days, and some people got the wrong end of the stick, thinking that I was

somehow pushing these knives. I wasn't.

[00:46:32,730] People asked me about the design, and people asked me about the story of how that knife came about. That's what I was attempting to explain in that video. I wasn't at all saying, 'Oh, buy this knife.' Some people are even like, 'This is the worst move you've ever made. Now you will go downhill. You've lost my respect. I'm like, 'Mate.' This knife was designed in 2011. It's been for sale for nearly 15 years. You've only just found out about it. Um, so yeah, very bizarre. The reaction that some people have. And I know that wasn't your question. Robert. You. It's very easy to get hold of the knives. You just put an order. In with Raven Armory, and I'll link to that below as well.

[00:47:17,400] But equally, you know, the analogy that I make, and maybe I will make a video with the visual aids. If I can get all the visual aids that I need. But the analogy I would make with knives, it's like pens, like writing instruments, right? You can have a Bic biro pen, like a Bic ballpoint that costs pennies, right? It really doesn't cost very much and it does a great job. And there are plenty of knives. Like that, you know, I would say the Morax companion is the kind of Bic biro of the Bushcraft knife world. If you like, um, and then you might want um, a slightly nicer ballpoint pen. So you might want, I don't know, a Parker pen.

[00:48:05,790] And that might be a slightly more expensive Morax knife, and then you know, a bit higher spec, higher spec sheath, etc., thicker blade, blah, blah, blah. Then maybe you want a cross pen. That could be a ballpoint or it could be a fountain pen. And that might be starting to get into. You know, castroms type knives, you know, nicer or Kellam knives, and nicer made knives that are still not super expensive, but have some real nice quality to them. And then maybe you want a really handmade, bespoke knife, made by a top maker. And that's like, you know, something like, I don't know, a Montblanc Meisterstück fountain pen or one of the versions that's got, you know, even more, you know.

[00:48:57,510] fancy materials on it and you know it's hand finished, a handmade you know, but all of them do the same job. They all write, yeah, they all allow you to sign your name and write notes and etc. etc. Do you need to have a really expensive pen to write your name or write your signature? No, you can get by with Amora. And this is my approach. To knives and it's the same with guitars. You can buy, you know, if you think about an acoustic guitar, you can buy, you know, something like a Yamaha, I think, like a 310 or something like that for probably about 100 pounds. It's a nice sounding, nice playing, you know, inexpensive, um, guitar. Or you can go into, you know, Martins, and you know, expensive Gibson's, and you know, whatnot.

[00:49:50,986] There's a whole range, but to fundamentally do the same thing, and there's yes, there's some refinements and nuances and things, but it is diminishing returns. And it's the same with nine, diminishing returns. Yes, you get something more for paying more, but the fundamental function is there with the cheapest ones. That there are some horribly crap things out there as well, but generally, you know, something like a Mora or a Bic pen

or an inexpensive Yamaha acoustic guitar will get you 90 of the performance of the really, really expensive ones. But sometimes people want to pay the money to have the nicest things and that's fine too. You don't have to get aggressive about it. it so Robert if you want to get one of the Raven knives go and speak to Raven they have both of my designs the PK1 PK2 available

[00:50:42,050]they often have the PK2s in stock PK1 is more often made to order but you can certainly order them there and that is it for today even a little bit of philosophy in that question there at the end And I will look forward to seeing you on the next Ask Paul Kirtley before too long. And if you've not seen these series before, maybe check out the playlist. Previous episodes here and you can work your way through some of those. Ask Paul Kirtley's there, thanks for watching. Take care. Remember to leave me some more questions. I'm running a bit low on questions as I record this one. Um, I can only make these shows if you actually ask questions. And so hopefully I get some more questions soon. I will see you in another one of these before too long, or you can hear me if you're listening on the podcast. Of course, it's available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts, etc. If you prefer to listen that way, all right. Take care. See you soon.

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