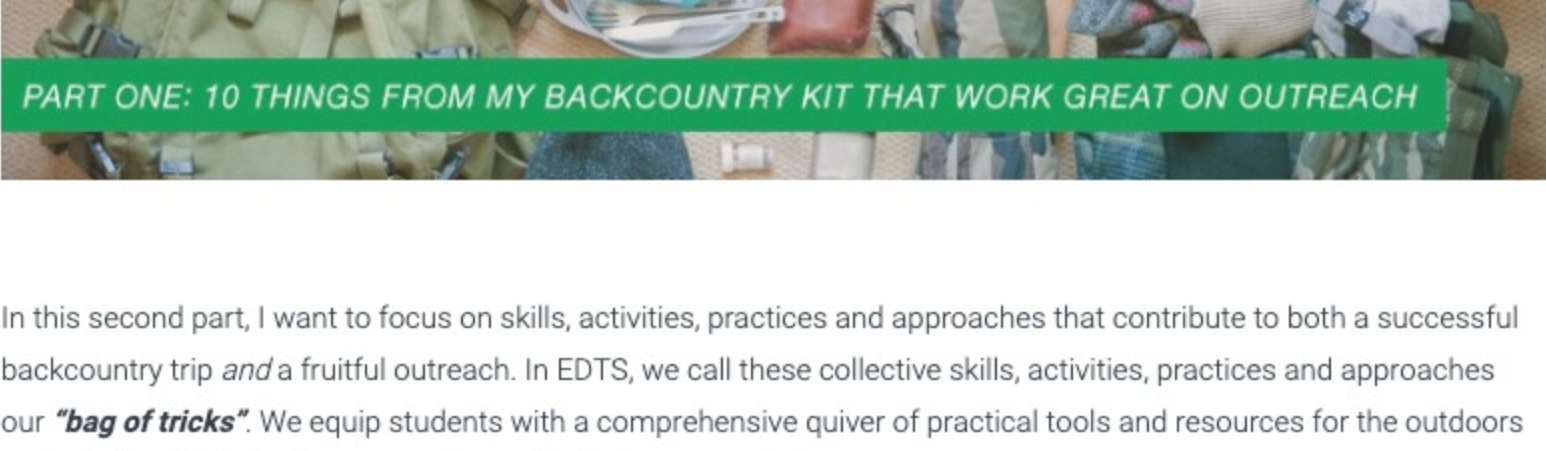




# 7 BACKCOUNTRY SKILLS I TAKE WITH ME ON OUTREACH

What follows is the second installment in a two-part series on things that translate from backcountry use and practice onto the mission field. The first piece I wrote detailed my [top 10 pieces of gear that translate from a backcountry kit to the mission field](#).



In this second part, I want to focus on skills, activities, practices and approaches that contribute to both a successful backcountry trip and a fruitful outreach. In EDTS, we call these collective skills, activities, practices and approaches our **“bag of tricks”**. We equip students with a comprehensive quiver of practical tools and resources for the outdoors and mission field that they can pull out of their bag as needed.

What follows are a handful of tried and tested things from my EDTS bag of tricks. And, as always, I’m excited to talk about some gear that will help you best utilize each trick!

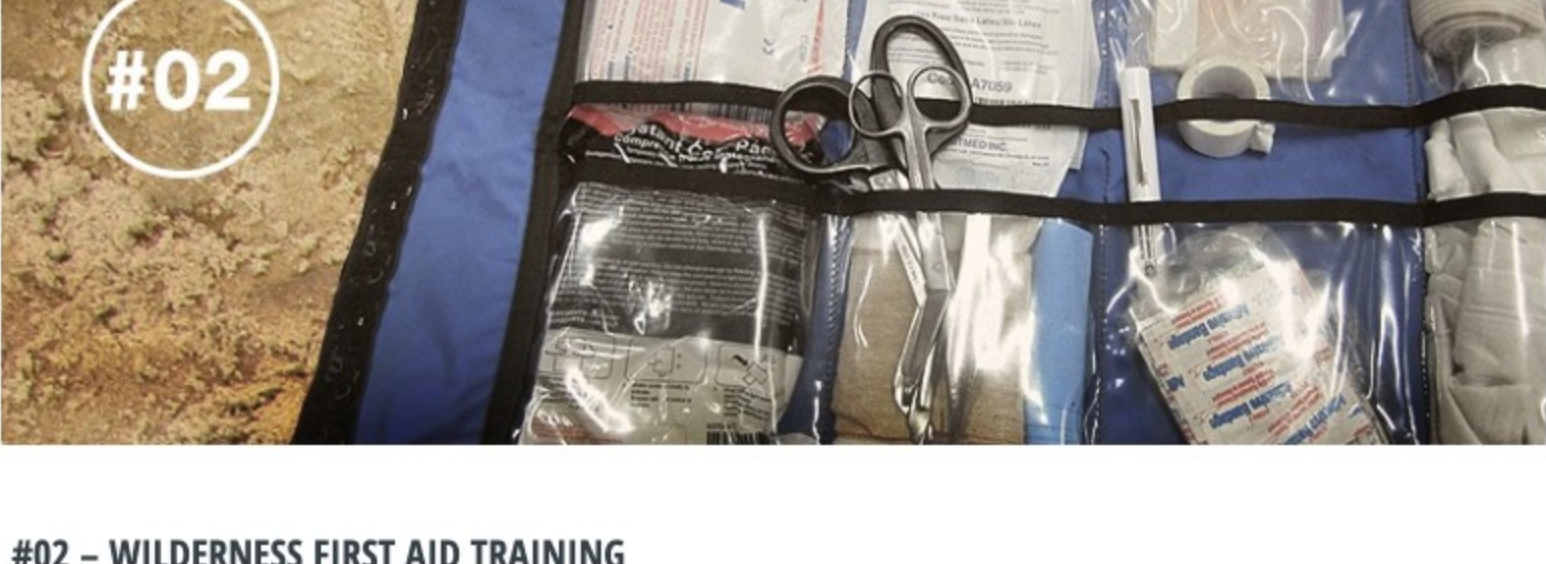


## #01 – STORYTELLING

This might not be one of the first things you think of when you think about a backcountry skill. But think about time spent at your campsite, base camp, host-home or around a campfire. It is a place of rest, relaxation, being yourself, sharing good food, practicing hospitality and fellowship, and usually engaging with people. Good story telling (and *good listening*) is a skill to be learned, honed and practiced. I like to have a few stories in a few different categories in my bag of tricks... Stories of my adventures and travels, stories from the mission field, and my personal testimony. Supreme to all of those, however, is the story of God and the good news of Jesus – that’s the one I want to be able to articulate the most if the opportunity presents itself both in camp and on outreach.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

Have a good book or magazine in your pack that other backpackers and travelers might also be reading. It’s a great conversation starter

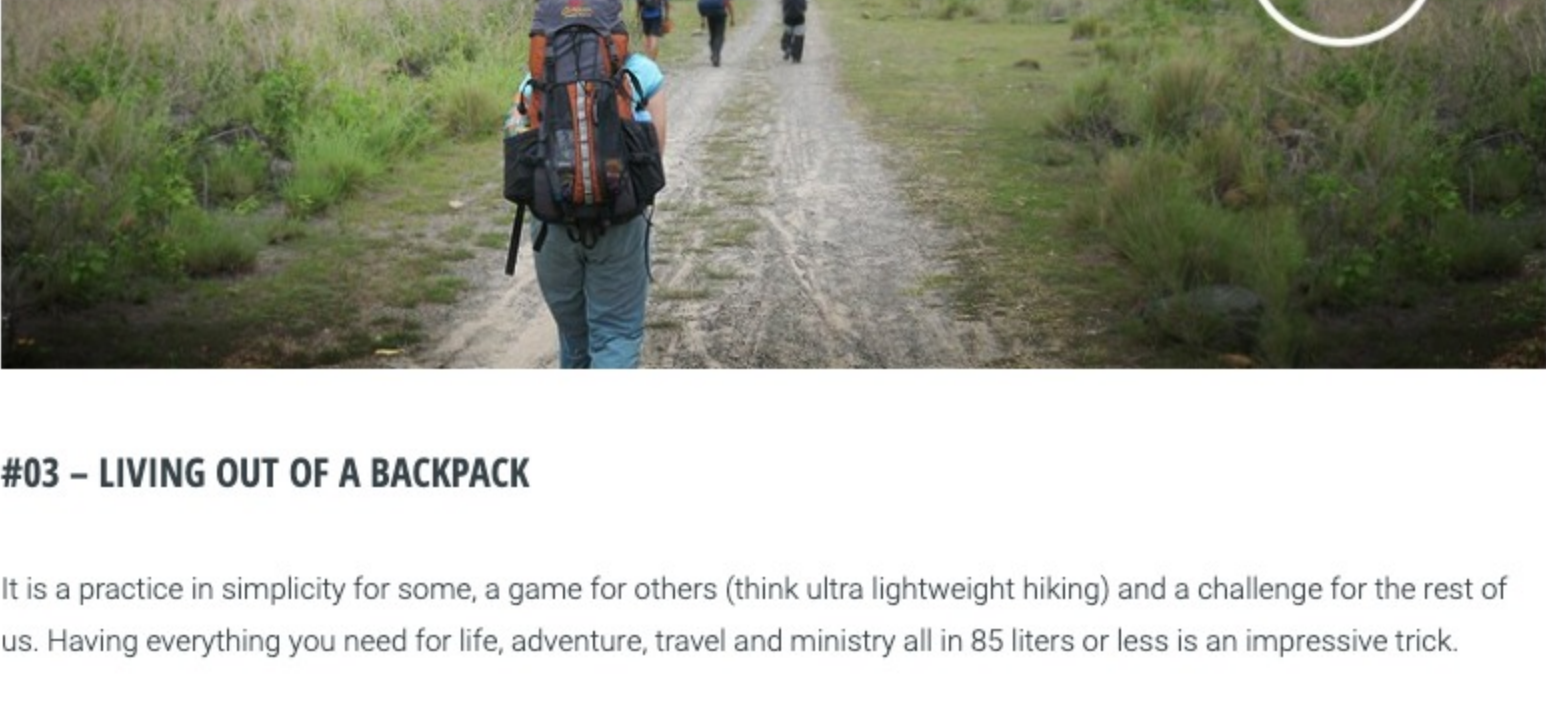


## #02 – WILDERNESS FIRST AID TRAINING

I can’t say enough about this. All of our students go through a 4-day Wilderness Advanced First Aid through an internationally recognized wilderness medicine agency and walk away from EDTS with a 2-year certification. Members of our staff team hold Wilderness First Responder and EMT certifications as well. Ask anyone on our team and they’ll tell you that wilderness/backcountry medicine scenarios mirror what we find on the front lines of the mission field in villages and cities alike. Most importantly, this skill is an avenue for loving and serving people. Wound management, in particular, is a tangible way to show the love and compassion of Christ to others.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

A well-stocked group/expedition first aid kit with smaller, supplemental kits for day hikes or short trips. Encourage everyone in your group to have a small stash of band-aids and hand sanitizer that they carry themselves. The \$.99 cent first aid kits found in the travel section at a store are great. The container is small but still large enough that you can add a few other things like a small lighter, clothes pin and antibiotic ointment to beef it up.



## #03 – LIVING OUT OF A BACKPACK

It is a practice in simplicity for some, a game for others (think ultra lightweight hiking) and a challenge for the rest of us. Having everything you need for life, adventure, travel and ministry all in 85 liters or less is an impressive trick.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

A well-fitted backpack with appropriate volume and capacity for the activity.



## #04 – GROUP GAMES AND TEAM BUILDING EXERCISES

Build unity, community, trust, communication and teamwork with your backpacking group and have some fun while you’re at it! Debrief each activity and stash into your bag of tricks. Pull these out and adapt for children’s ministry, drawing a crowd, icebreakers, running mini camps and equipping aspiring outdoor educators.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

An 8’ x 8’ tarp, slackline, tennis balls, hacky sack, Frisbee, retired climbing rope. Learn some foundational experiential education and facilitation approaches like challenge by choice, the comfort, growth and danger zones, and how to brief/debrief activities.



## #05 – BACKCOUNTRY COOKING

Let’s just say that we’re glad that we had a student back in 2012 who was comfortable butchering chickens. On outreach in Cambodia that year, *that* trick came in handy! Meal/menu planning, shopping, dehydrating, packing, storing, transporting, serving, consuming, clean-up all translate.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

Here are 5 personal recommendations that we pass along to our EDTS students each year and that we stick to both in the backcountry and on the field.

- 1. Always carry a well-stocked spice kit!
- 2. Carry instant coffee. Folgers Singles, Starbucks Via, Nestle “Turbo” are among our favorites.
- 3. Know your units (English/metric conversions for measurement, altitude, distance, volume, weight, etc) – use precision and accuracy when preparing meals and planning trips.
- 4. Ask these questions before each trip... What am I cooking? What am I cooking it in and what am I using to actually cook it (i.e. Spatula, spoon, tongs, pocketknife)? What am I using to eat it?
- 5. Always have one good cooking knife with you (separate from your pocketknife if possible)

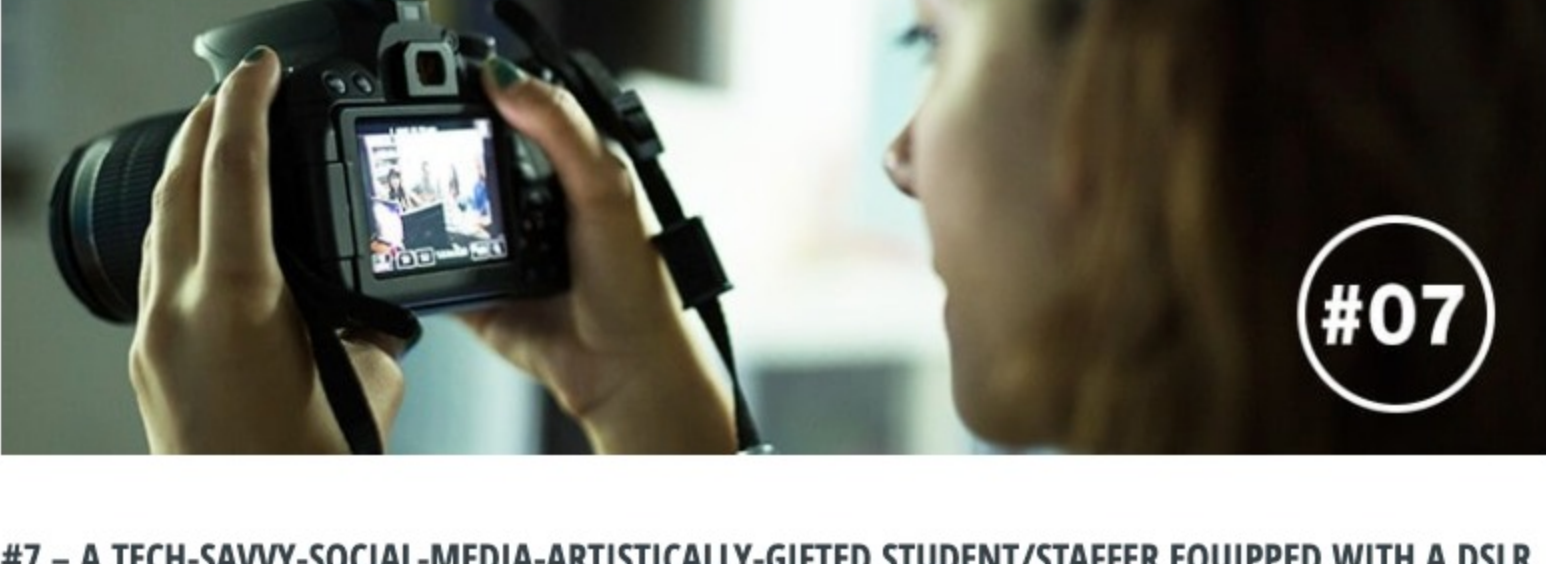


## #06 – WATER SANITATION & PERSONAL HYGIENE

Nothing puts a damper on a camping trip or outreach like communicable diseases spreading through your group like wildfire. The trick to this trick is getting your team to maintain both *individual* and *group* accountability to sanitation practices. The best way we’ve figured out how to approach that accountability is by seeing our bodies/mind/soul, healthy living and healthy community through a correct Biblical worldview – which is also something that your team can teach about on outreach.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

- Appropriate water treatment devices and methods.
- Tools, equipment and know-how on creating hand-washing stations.
- Tools to implement and practice Leave No Trace principle #1 – *Plan Ahead and Prepare* as well as principle #3 – *Dispose of Waste Properly*.



## #7 – A TECH-SAVVY-SOCIAL-MEDIA-ARTISTICALLY-GIFTED STUDENT/STAFFER EQUIPPED WITH A DSLR WHO IS ALSO MECHANICALLY INCLINED

You might not find all of this in just one person, but you get the point. Capturing the story of your trek, adventure, expedition or outreach, and effectively communicating it through relevant media streams is something that, if done well, will serve your program, goals, and further the kingdom. These are the means by which we partner with others in ministry, keep them updated, market and recruit for schools/programs, but most importantly they’re one of the ways in which we testify to God’s faithfulness and to how the gospel and truth of Jesus Christ are changing people, communities and nations.

### Recommended Gear Pairing:

An iPhone 4s or newer. There are two big reasons that I recommend these, or similar, smartphones. First, we pair an iPhone with the DeLorme inReach satellite communicator to create a fully functioning GPS/emergency communication device on our backcountry trips. Second, I can pop a SIM card in my phone pretty much anywhere in the world and have everything I need to coordinate ministry. I’ve gotten better 3G coverage in the corners of Nepal’s Himalaya’s and remote parts of Cambodia than some parts of where I live in Montana!

The vision for the Endurance DTS outdoor ministry is to take students deeper into their own discipleship journey with Christ, and then give them the tools to reach out to others, particularly within the outdoor industry. We know that people on a trip, trek or great adventure are often seeking deeper spiritual revelation as they journey, and God has given us a desire to reach out and meet these individuals along the way. Endurance DTS aims to equip our students to engage with both the lost and trekker/adventurers, and to testify to Christ’s saving grace and faithfulness with credibility and confidence. The focus of our outdoor curriculum is two-fold... Build “translatable” backcountry skills that are applicable to the mission field, and build credible, industry-standard outdoor/backcountry skills that can lead to both outreach and future vocational opportunities post-EDTS.

For more information on EDTS and to read more about the foundations of EDTS and our specific goals, please visit the “Resource Materials” drop-down menu on the EDTS page below.

CLICK THE IMAGE BELOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EDTS!



**NATHAN RUSSELL**  
LAKESIDE, MT

### WHAT’S IN YOUR BAG OF TRICKS?

Nathan is originally from Pittsburgh, PA, grew up in Michigan and moved to Colorado as fast as he could after college! He and his family have lived in Lakeside, MT for the past 11 years. Nathan and his wife Betsy pioneered the Endurance DTS in 2011. Nathan’s heart is to be a change-agent in the outdoor industry and to use outdoor skills in all corners of the earth for effective ministry and service. Connect with all things outdoors at YWAM MT – Lakeside on Instagram by following @enduranceoutdoors

View all posts by [Nathan Russell](#)