

The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook (Book Review)

Bushcraft survival is something that a lot of folks in the prepping community have an interest in. Most of us spend some time outdoors away from our homesteads. Knowing how to survive if SHTF in those situations is quite important. In his book *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook*, Antonio Akkermans walks you through the different ways to construct shelters and how each can be used appropriately given your situation.

Book Set-Up

The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook is written in a chronological manner. That means that it starts with talking about the fundamentals of shelters and then progresses through shelters from natural materials, shelters from modern material and then store-bought shelters. Finally, the book sums up the shelter process with a chapter on mental preparedness. The chapters are:

Chapter 1 – Shelter Fundamentals

Shelter fundamentals is an important base of knowledge to know before you go headlong into building shelters. This chapter is full of information on shelter knowledge – starting with clothing (your first line shelter), move onto to sleeping equipment and finishing up with information on where to build a shelter and what materials to use. There are two “bonus” sections on how to make cord and a hammer from elements found in the backwoods.

Chapter 2 – Making Debris Shelters With Your Bare Hands

This chapter gets into the fundamentals of what it takes to use natural (backwoods) material to build shelters. As you might imagine, different areas of the country and different seasons dictate the use of different shelters. For that reason, the author has provided how-to knowledge on the following types of shelters:

- Natural Shelter
- Rock Shelter
- Debris Hut
- Lean-To
- Stacked Debris Wall
- Round Debris Wall Shelter
- Bent Sapling Shelter
- Subterranean Shelter
- Snow Shelter

Additional information is provided on improvements and furnishing such as fireplaces, shelving, and bedding.

Chapter 3 – DIY And Modern Material Shelters

Antonio moves into more modern shelters which involved man-made materials. The topics covered in this chapter include shelter bags, emergency foil blankets, bansha/tarp shelters, Scandinavian Lavvu and a ger or yurt type shelter.

Essentially, this chapter starts with “cowboy camping” situations and finishes with more permanent structures that are built to last more than a night or two. I was most interested in this chapter due to the breadth of knowledge represented here. My interest was probably also due to the fact that living in a permanent structure for a long duration

interests me greatly.

Chapter 4 – Modern Store-Bought Shelters

All you campers will like this chapter. In it, Antonio talks about your basic camping gear including standard hiking tents, hammocks, bivy bags and bell tents. The pros and cons of each option are discussed. In addition, there is a good amount of time spent talking about the best way to use each and how to set each up properly. I'm an avid camper and try to spend a good amount of time sleeping outdoors. I agreed with a lot of what was written here but did disagree with a few minor points. In all honesty, though, my disagreements were so minuscule that they are not worth discussing. They were more personal preference than technical disagreements.

Chapter 5 – Mental Preparedness

Antonio wraps up *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook* with a smart talk about mental preparedness when it comes to shelter. He talks about how you should drill (or practice) any shelters you may use as trying to build them under stressful situations is nearly impossible. In addition, he talks about ways to handle the stress involved with surviving in a shelter and how to gain confidence as you go. Adopting the right mental attitude is key to surviving in a shelter.

Why I Liked *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook*

Antonio Akkermans takes a very large topic and boils it down to a simple presentation. The way he systematically approaches shelter building and living is intelligent and

easily digestible. One chapter builds on the next.

The other great part about this book are the pictures. *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook* is picture heavy which makes understanding the topics presented much easier. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

What I Didn't Like

There were two things about this book I didn't like.

First, as odd as it may sound given the section above, is the pictures. While they are plentiful, the pictures are all black and white. Most are also quite washed out meaning they don't have good contrast. This fact makes them hard to read and sometimes lacking in information. I understand that color pictures cost more during printing, but it would definitely help to better convey the quality information provided in this book.

The second thing I didn't like about *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook* was the writing. The knowledge presented in this book was top-notch but it often read like a textbook. That fact alone made getting through this book difficult at times. A writing approach that was a bit lighter and more story-telling might help make this an easier read.

Overall Thoughts On *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook*

I think *The Complete Survival Shelters Handbook* by Antonio Akkermans is an overall interesting read. The knowledge base is top notch and the information presented may help save your

life one day. It's presentation, while dry at times, is successive in its presentation meaning one part builds on the previous. While I do not necessarily think this book is a "must have" for a prepping library, I would definitely put it in the "nice to have" category. It lends itself more to the bushcraft crowd and, for them, I would lean more towards the "must have" category.

Overall, I enjoyed reading this book and think you would too if you have any interest in being in the woods for any reason.



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