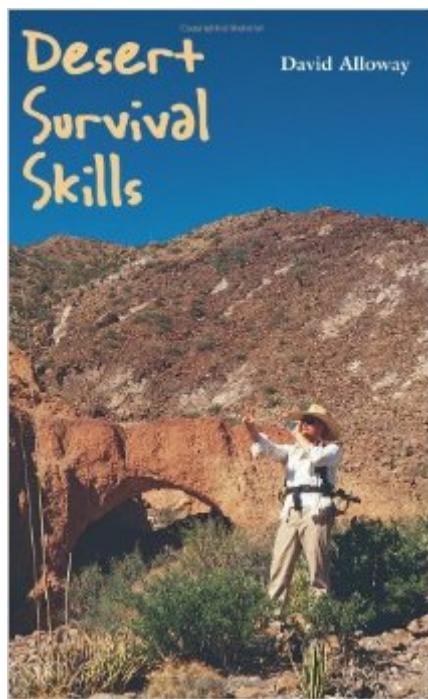


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# Desert Survival Skills



## Synopsis

Remote desert locations, including the Chihuahuan Desert of northern Mexico, southern Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, draw adventurers of all kinds, from the highly skilled and well prepared to urban cowboys who couldn't lead themselves (much less a horse!) to water. David Alloway's goal in this book is to help all of them survive when circumstances beyond their control strand them in the desert environment. In simple, friendly language, enlivened with humor and stories from his own extensive experience, Alloway here offers a practical, comprehensive handbook for both short-term and long-term survival in the Chihuahuan and other North American deserts.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: University of Texas Press (July 15, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0292704925

ISBN-13: 978-0292704923

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #818,181 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 inÂ  Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Deserts #1261 inÂ  Books > Sports & Outdoors > Hiking & Camping > Instructional #10634 inÂ  Books > Sports & Outdoors > Outdoor Recreation

## Customer Reviews

"Desert Survival Skills" is a both a great read and a book that might save your life. The author is a naturalist for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and he's posted at the Big Bend Ranch State Park. He knows what he's writing about. The Big Bend area contains some remote real estate, which is part of the Chihuahuan Desert. I live in the Mohave Desert, and sometimes work in the Sonoran Desert. They're similar to the Chihuahuan. All of these areas are hot in the summer, cool at night, and downright cold at times in the winter. Rainfall is obviously scant, except the dry spells are sometimes punctuated by rains that cause flash floods, which can get you into trouble FAST. (Given that our deserts have sparse population, drowning in the desert is surprisingly common. Water doesn't soak into the ground as it does in more humid regions.) Deaths occur most frequently when those unfamiliar with the Southwest venture off-road without carrying water, suffer a mechanical breakdown, or get their vehicle stuck. The passengers decide to hoof it out in the middle of the day,

become confused because of dehydration, and then perish. For the average American, lack of food isn't usually a problem--most of us can go a month or more without eating--but not having water IS. The author, David Alloway, covers the bases extremely well. He tells you how to survive until help comes, and he even teaches you how to debrief the folk from Search and Rescue so the next poor soul doesn't have to go through what happened to you. I was pleased to see that he dispenses of a lot of myths, like the one that all cacti are full of water, and edible, so eat away. They're not, so listen to the man. If you must eat, the author shows you how to do this with the least possible risk. A word to the wise: You don't have to be far from a settlement to get into trouble. I remember several years ago when a man and wife died less than a mile from Pahrump, Nevada. If they had waited until evening, they could have seen the lights from the town, and then walked out. "Desert Survival Skills" would be a handy thing to keep in your 4WD. However, it would be even better if you read it before you venture out.

This is a good book on desert survival, though it is a little uneven. It is at its best in describing survival in the Chihuahuan Desert (Texas, New Mexico) of North America. Its usefulness in other desert areas is limited; in particular the sections on finding water and food, or plant and animal dangers, are really targeted to that particular bioregion.

Ok so I might be a bit biased since David Alloway is my brother but this book is a god-send to anyone venturing out into our part of the country. David has been a desert rat for the last 30 some odd years. He knows what he is talking about. His helpful advice comes from years of practical experience. The techniques supplied to you in this book have all been field tested by the author and meet his high standards. It never ceases to amaze me how David has compiled so much knowledge about the Chihuahuan desert into one complete guide.

This is strictly a desert survival book, not a desert hiking book; i.e. it is mostly about surviving until rescue once things have gone very wrong. But don't look for a lot of information on how to plan a desert hike, learning to navigate, recognizing and avoiding all types of poisonous snakes, or checking out groundwater sources so as to avoid having to use those survival skills. Desert Survival Skills is written by the late David Alloway, who learned his desert skills at Big Bend National Park. It is a good resource for survival skills in that part of the country, though it is true that some of his book doesn't translate to other deserts of North America and the world. I give it three out of five stars.

I must say that since I live in the same bioregion that the author does, I was quite glad to see this book about the Chihuahuan desert in particular. I'm also a fan of the beauty of the Chihuahuan desert, but that's neither here nor there. This book is really filled with a lot of practical knowledge. The authors warnings on leaving instructions with others about where you're going and general preparedness (for a variety of situations) are valuable lessons unto themselves. The info on the uses of the plants native to the desert SW and the Chihuahuan desert in particular are, in themselves, lessons with the price of admission. However it really hits its stride when he goes into the actual examples of how knowledge either helped people, or the lack of it was the end of them. Granted, hearing of people dying isn't pretty, but the author is able to go about the "lessons learned" in a professional manner thanks to his SAR (Search and Rescue) experience.

"Desert Survival Skills" is enjoyable to read and very informative. While written specifically about the Chihuahuan desert (mainly Texas, New Mexico and Mexico), much of the information is applicable to other US deserts. The section on navigation is limited, but then the topic is desert survival, not land navigation. He provides a great deal of excellent instruction regarding plants (for food and medicine) and animals. You will also gain a good understanding about things you should not do (assuming you don't enjoy snake bites). In addition, he provides sound guidance on selection of survival equipment and how to help Search and Rescue teams locate you. Also of interest are true-life stories of others who have found themselves in desert survival situations. Some of these ended well - many did not. These (very brief) accounts are sprinkled throughout the book and help illustrate his points. I found the book easy to read and well worth the money.

A good combination of practical advice combined with the author's own experiences make this an excellent book on desert survival. As a student from one of David's desert survival courses, I can assure you his advice and teachings not only work but are practical in everyday situations. David's approach of blending with the desert as opposed to trying to beat it should appeal to everyone. These skills are being lost and they shouldn't be.

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