

Outdoor LIVING



Cleaning Your Rifle

Any hunter knows the importance of cleaning and maintaining weapons. But that point really hits home when you're out in the field with a suddenly jammed rifle, immovable because of poor maintenance.

Especially during cold-season hunts, moisture can collect and freeze in the dirt living inside your rifle.

Fortunately, by following some simple cleaning tips, you can make sure your weapon remains at your side. Before you go on your next big hunt, take a few minutes to consider the following recommendations.

KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME

One of the most important factors in keeping your weapon clean is routine maintenance. When cleaning your rifle, remove the bolt and look in the muzzle. If there are any signs of built-up powder residue, clean it immediately.

Your shooting accuracy can be impacted as your barrel accumulates this residue. If you want an accurate shot, it's time to grab your cleaning tools.

A THOROUGH CLEAN

If it's time to clean the inside of your rifle, it's probably time for an exterior cleaning, as well. Your entire weapon — including the magazine follower and spring — likely could use a light application of solvent to remove grease and oil.

A good blast of carb and choke cleaner also will work wonders. Let the cleaner evaporate and check out the per-



© FOTOLIA

fectly bare metal that will improve the functionality — and look — of your favorite weapon.

Finally, don't forget to follow any cleaning instructions that came with your rifle.

IN-THE-FIELD ADJUSTMENTS

If you're hunting in the elements, it's important to be prepared for any type of weather condition that can compromise your weapon, especially

rain or snow. A few tools to remember to bring into the field include a rod and solid brass tool in case the barrel gets plugged, a can of oil and cotton rags for cleaning on the spot.

No matter what type of weapon you have at your disposal, keeping it clean should be a priority.

A clean gun makes for accurate, smooth shooting and keeps you safe.

Plan A Fly-Fishing Trip

You've saved your money for your dream fly-fishing trip, but how can you ensure that your trip lives up to your expectations?

Researching your destination before you get on the road can save you money, time and frustration. There is much to learn, including information about ease of access, terrain, available water, available species, weather and local catch laws.

The more you know in advance, the more enjoyable your trip will be.

KNOW YOUR FISH

Decide which species of fish you'd like to catch and plan your trip accordingly. Just because a lodge lists many available species, don't assume the species you're after is always available. Call ahead and ask to save yourself from an unpleasant surprise later.

If you're looking to catch trout but it's not a time of year when they are ample, you'll have to choose another date on the calendar.

KNOW YOUR LODGE

Research the lodges you're considering. Look online, but also talk to folks who have spent time there.

Here are some basic questions to ask before booking your lodge:

- Will I have access to a fly shop and experienced guides?
- Does the lodge specialize



© FOTOLIA

in a particular species during the time of year I will be visiting?

- What kind of amenities are available in the lodge?
- What should I bring from home?

- Can you provide me with

a list of references who recently visited your lodge?

- What percentage of your business comes from repeat customers?

EXTRA FEES

When choosing a lodge or

fishing destination, ask about extra fees that may be associated with your stay to avoid sticker shock at the end of a fun trip.

Be sure to find out if there is a minimum requirement for the amount of nights you

stay, and don't forget to inquire about bringing pets or additional guests.

The key is to make sure you know what you want to get out of your trip before you throw down a sizable deposit on a lodge.

All-Weather Gear

Every angler, hunter or extreme outdoor fanatic has found himself in the elements. It's a foregone conclusion: If you play outside, you're going to get wet — or dirty or cold.

All-weather gear must protect from rain, wind and snow, but it also must offer ventilation options to help our skin “breathe.” The best gear is constructed in a way that enables the wearer to have this comfort, along with free range of motion for a variety of activities.

MATERIALS

Thirty years ago, most all-weather gear was made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or some kind of plastic sheeting. Today, most gear is made of nylon- or polyester-based fabric with a variety of waterproof coatings.

PVC gear is still popular among fishermen because its slick, easy to clean and relatively cheap. Look for non-breathable PVC fabrics to offer stain-resistance and easy maintenance, as well as for secure, heat-welded seams for total waterproof protection.

BREATHABLE FABRICS

Breathable fabrics allow water vapor to pass through them without letting in water. Breathable fabric transfers moisture to the outside of the clothing instead of let-

ting it become trapped against your skin.

The more effective the fabric is at removing moisture, the more breathable the clothing system and the less likely you will feel cold, clammy, hot or sticky. All-weather gear that utilizes breathable fabric is substantially more comfortable in warm climates and can keep you dry and comfortable in the cold.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Planning on spending the night outdoors? Maybe in a primitive campsite? You have more to consider than what clothes you will wear for your trip. You also need to think about your sleeping arrangements.

Getting a good night's sleep in the outdoors isn't always easy. Sleeping bags and pads with ample ventilation and insulation will go a long way toward helping you achieve this goal. Look for heavy, premium pads for the most comfort and warmth. Ask your local outdoor dealer for guidance on what type of bags and pads will work best with your upcoming outdoor activities.



Outdoor Safety for Kids

Is there a more beautiful sight than watching a child gain great enjoyment from the outdoors? As parents, we are encouraged to let children explore the outside world so they can experience what lives and breathes around them.

There also are some real responsibilities that come with the fun of the outdoors, responsibilities that parents must make sure their children understand. By setting some basic boundaries and remaining vigilant of your child's outdoor exposure, now is the perfect time to set up the next generation for a lifetime of love of all things nature.

IMPORTANT LESSONS

There are certain rules children should learn to make sure they stay safe and sound outdoors. These include helping them become aware of the environment and the creatures that live there.

You also should teach your kids more specific fundamentals, such as how to recognize poison ivy, poison sumac and poison oak. Let them know the importance of staying away from these pesky plants, and also to find you if they come into contact with them.

Here are some other tips on what your kids should be learning from you, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children:

- Children should always watch where they put their hands and feet, and if they leave shoes outside, make sure they know to check them



© FOTOLIA

before putting them back on;

- Be cautious when lifting boards or rocks to find animals and insects, and be careful to observe what is living there without disturbing its environment; and

- Don't leave behind the

essentials when you hit the trail, packing plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen and a first-aid kit for a day of hiking.

WEATHER PREPARATION

You should prepare your child to encounter rain, snow,

heat and cold when they are spending time outdoors. Wearing the right clothing is important to staying safe, warm and dry when the weather turns.

Hydration also is key, especially on hot days. Don't let

your kids get so distracted by nature that they forget essential hydration techniques, such as drinking enough water. Ultimately, spending quality time outdoors is about finding the natural balance between enjoyment and safety.



© FOTOLIA

Campfire Safety

It's important to minimize our impact on the great outdoors.

From the trees to the wildlife, there are many species that can be affected by how we choose to start, maintain and put out our campfires.

Making sure we stay cognizant of their needs and habitats is the first step to proper fire safety.

The best, safest place to start a fire is within an existing fire ring. The ring should be located in an appropriate place — away from trees and buildings.

Remember to keep your fire in the ring. You should only keep the fire burning for the amount of time you are using it. In other words, never leave your fire unattended.

Here are a few tips on fire safety from

the Center for Outdoors Ethics:

- Avoid using hatchets or saws, or breaking branches off standing trees. Dead and downed wood burns easily, is easy to collect and leaves less impact.
- Use small pieces of wood no larger than the diameter of an adult wrist that can be broken with your hands.
- Gather wood over a wide area away from camp. Use dry driftwood on rivers and seashores.
- Don't bring firewood from home. Either buy it from a local source or

gather it responsibly where allowed.

- Burn all wood to white ash. Grind small coals to ash between your gloved hands, thoroughly soak with water and scatter the remains over a large area away from camp. Ashes may have to be packed out in river corridors.
- Replace soil where you found it when cleaning up a mound or pan fire.
- Scatter unused wood to keep the area as natural-looking as possible.
- Pack out any campfire litter. Never burn plastics and foil-lined wrappers.



Gifts for the Outdoorsy Woman

Our wives, sisters, mothers, daughters and friends all deserve something special for major events and holidays, including their birthdays, anniversaries or just because.

© FOTOLIA

If the woman in your life loves the outdoors as much as you do, finding that perfect gift can be fun.

From knives and guns to socks and sweaters, there is no shortage of gift ideas related to the great outdoors.

KNIVES

Knives make versatile gifts for hunters, campers, anglers and basically any woman who finds herself enjoying the outdoors. Given their smaller size, you

can spend a little extra to find a premium option that will get the job done.

Look for knives that come with a built-in finger guard for extra grip and safety. Check with your local outdoors shop to make sure you know if the knife comes pre-sharpened or if you need a sharpener as a bonus gift.

FUNCTIONAL BACKPACKS

No matter what your favorite lady loves to do in the outdoors, they can

benefit from a new functional backpack. Perfect for hiking that 20-mile trail or taking a short stroll around the lake, backpacks are great for storing all the items we need to enjoy the outdoors. Find options that are simple to use and offer large capacity for extra storage. You can find all sizes of backpacks to fit her needs. Smaller pockets are perfect for knives and first-aid materials, so the more nooks and crannies the better.

HEAD LAMPS AND FLASHLIGHTS

Consider a gift to help keep the woman in your life safe. LED head lamps and flashlights can help make sure she is prepared for the dark, whether she is working on a flat RV tire or cooking food over the campfire.

Every outdoor enthusiast knows light can be your best friend when the sun goes down. These gifts are inexpensive and come equipped with long battery life, making them worth every penny.



© FOTOLIA

Houseboat Trends

For many water lovers, the houseboat serves as a home away from home and a mode of transportation in the summer.

Considering that our homes and automobiles are more technologically advanced than ever before, it's no wonder the houseboat industry has become inundated with the latest toys and gadgets, as well.

When floating around on our favorite lake all summer long, we want to live the luxurious lifestyle. We want the wind at our back as we feel pampered by the onboard amenities. Boat makers have taken notice, loading up their newest models with all the bells and whistles.

Even if you don't plan on spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a

brand new houseboat, there are many simple additions you can make to a used one.

LUXURY KITCHEN & BATH

Mahogany cabinets. Under-mount sink and icemaker. Natural stone countertops. No these ideas aren't only fitting for the home. Your houseboat deserves these elegant touches, too.

Take one look at an interior design magazine and start translating your favorite ideas into how your boat looks. From the kitchen to the bathroom — and every room in between

— you can incorporate luxurious touches into your houseboat design to make a real splash on the water.

Watch as your guests marvel at your high-end patio furniture, full wine cellar and recessed lighting. Little touches such as intricate woodwork around the kitchen bar also can be show-stoppers. You're only limited by your own creativity.

ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

Every day, we are getting closer to becoming a nation of digital natives. Our children will never know the days of living without a mobile computer in

their pockets that enables them to be constantly entertained.

Consider installing a decked-out entertainment system as a gift to your kids. Of course, you too can benefit from a touchscreen laptop, flat-screen LCD television and integrated music system. Let your guests in on the action, too. Install a fully custom, Bluetooth-enabled music speaker system to let you and your guests choose songs as you mosey along the lake.

Watch Blu-ray movies in one room. Play your favorite video game in another. Turn it all off to enjoy the natural beauty of the outdoors.