

Bug Out Location Basics

If you're new to prepping, you probably heard the term **bug out location** before (**BOL**, for short). It refers to a place that can host a temporary or a permanent shelter when SHTF.

However, most people think about permanent shelters which is only partially correct. Some think about temporary shelters away from home when they refer to BOLs but we're just gonna focus on permanent retreats and we're gonna leave temporary wilderness shelters for some other time. .

Just in case you're wondering about **my own permanent bug-out location**, it's 52 miles away from where I live. It's in a very small village with population of about 200, hidden between some of the most beautiful hills you've ever seen. That's where I spent all my summers as a kid, living with my grandparents and, since the population is steadily decreasing, this is one place where no one will look for me. (Even if they do, I can easily hide in the woods, which I've known since I was 6).

In what follows I want to talk to you about finding your own bug out location to hide when society starts to crumble. We're gonna cover a lot of aspects so let's not waste anymore time!

Getting There

Getting there is the hard part and largely dependent on the natural or man-made disaster that struck. Depending on the distance, you can get to it by foot or using [a bug out vehicle](#).

You're gonna need to know as many different routes as possible to reach it. Keep in mind that some of the main routes may be blocked due to calamity or by the police/national guard so you absolutely need to have alternate ways to reach it. Secondary routes and even the rail tracks are two options that come to mind.

Will You Be Moving There Permanently?

This is a good question to ask. If you've been contemplating moving somewhere quiet for a long time or if you simply want to be far away from civilization when *it* happens, you're probably gonna want to move there full time. If not, you should keep in mind that you'll only be visiting your location every once in a while and things might happen while you're away.

The most dreaded scenario will be the one where you get there and your location has been looted. Protecting your BOL is just as important as protecting your home. Learn more about this [here](#).

The Ideal Bug-Out Location

If you're contemplating purchasing land for your retreat, let me give you a few pointers.

The ideal BOL should be close enough to your home to quickly get to it, yet far enough from the turmoil that is about to happen. 50 to 100 miles should be enough if you're planning to get there by car, 25 to 50 miles if you're planning to get there on foot.

If you happen to have something low-key really close and/or you don't have the money for a car, the second option will do. I should add there are other cheap [bug out vehicles](#) you can have, such as:

- mountain bikes
- skateboards go karts
- boats or even inflatable
- boats!
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Caveat: some people want their location to be as far away as possible because many disasters such as hurricanes affect entire regions so it would make sense to go as far away as possible. I agree with this logic as well but it's up to you to decide where you want it to be.

You want your location to be at least 50-100 miles off any coast. If a tsunami hits, you don't want to be in its way nor in the way of those who will flee in your direction. It should also be at least 100 miles away from any nuclear threat.

The ideal BOL should be low-key. It shouldn't be something terrorists might think of bombing or the enemy soldiers might think of conquering (although if you're in a village no matter how small, that might happen anyway). If it really is a small village, you should consider bugging out into the woods should this secondary location get compromised.

That being said, if you can build something in the woods that no one knows about, that's even better. If you can, you should definitely make sure it's not visible from above, should a helicopter or a plane scout the area.

The land should have several water sources available. A river on your property is a Godsend gift or, at least, a well (or the possibility of digging one) is mandatory. However, you don't want your shelter to be visible from the river or from other water sources such as lakes and ponds. Make sure no one can spot your house or cabin from any point around those water sources.

You should also check the rainfall averages and think about means to harvest that water.

It should be able to fit every member of your *survival dream team*. If you have 3 kids and a spouse, that's 5 people who'll live there for months or even years. This isn't just about square feet; you need to make sure everyone will have a place to lay their head at night.

You should be able to grow farmyard animals. Cows need a lot of food and water but chicken, goats and sheep are a lot easier to feed and handle. When choosing which animals to raise, keep in mind they might make noise that could attract hungry "zombies".

You need access to wood and tinder. If there are trees on your property, you could build your retreat in such a way that it's camouflaged by them. And if there's a forest nearby, that's free fuel for your fireplace that'll keep you warm during long, cold winters.

You need to think about growing a garden there. 1/4 acres should be enough to feed an entire family but the quality of the soil is also important.

There should be game available for you to hunt. You never know when you'll run out of food or, even worse, you can wake up with your bug-out location ransacked when you get to it.

The land has to be reasonably flat. If it's not, you're gonna have a hard time building on it. Keep in mind you might also need to build a shed, a chicken coop and plant crops and veggies.

The land should not have a high risk of being affected by natural disasters such as flash floods, mud slides or avalanches. Ask around when the last time something like that happened was and don't be surprised if the owner is going to hesitate giving you an answer.

The land should not have any legal restrictions on it - this is very important. Sometimes you might be surprised to find out you can't grow livestock or that you don't own the water or even the timber on your property.

Make sure you have year-round access to it. For example, if your property is inaccessible during winter and disaster strikes during this season, you're gonna have a very tough time reaching it on foot.

The location should not be visible from the main road. My grampa's house is positioned is a good example since it's positioned about 160 yards from the main road. Not a lot, I know, but the secondary road is curvy so you're not able to see the house (this is also due to the very large walnut planted in front of it).

Types of BOL Retreats

A number of establishments can make good permanent bug-out shelters. A brick and mortar house or a wooden cabin are the most common choices, although a select few prefer to bug out on a boat. Some people prefer to build true fortresses using nothing but sandbags. These are called earth bag domes and you should watch this VERY interesting video on how to make them:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S7rLp7ogeg>

Of course, if you're up to it and have the budget, you can always build a bunker. Bunkers have somewhat of a bad reputation due to the fact that they're expensive and not necessarily better at protecting you. Plus, if you're surrounded by your attackers and have no place to go, they can just smoke you out or wait until you need water or food.

My advice to you is this: if you really have the money to build a bunker, get two properties and build to bug-out cabins so you have two places to go. Ideally, you want these locations to be in different directions from where you're currently located.

How To Make Your Bug-Out Retreat

This is obviously not trivial. It gets more complicated if you also need to lay a foundation so I'm not going to go into details here. One important thing you need be aware of is that you might need to clear the land first as there might be trees on it.

You should design your house it in such a way that it faces south. Keep in mind that you might not have electricity post-SHTF so you'll need all the sunlight you can get. Do the same with your barn and chicken coops.

Of course, one of your main concerns would be to properly insulate it. During winter, keeping as much of the heat inside as possible is going to be a top priority. Do it right from the beginning so you can save fuel later on.

Your next concern should be to properly hide your foods, valuables and [survival weapons](#)... if someone finds your location while you're not there, they're gonna have all the time in the world to ransack it so be sure to spread your stockpile across your house, yard, barns and so on.

Don't forget to slope your roof. When snow plies up, it's going to exert a lot of pressure on it and, unless you're there every time to shovel the snow off of it, you risk its collapse.

How To Prepare Your Bug Out Location

When you get there, you probably won't have anything more than a half-empty bug out bag. All your possessions from your primary location may be lost and the food and water you had was consumed getting there.

Needless to say, **you need to have food and water ready and available**. The trick is to split your food and water supplies between your home and your bug-out locations because you never know in which one you'll end up living post-collapse.

Speaking of water, you should definitely have [means to harvest rainwater](#) because it's free and you can never have too of. Have the containers in place to collect all the rainwater they can from the rooftop.

Next, **you're gonna need plenty of fuel**. Propane, wood, coal, even solar panels, you should have as many options to heat your location as possible.

One thing you want to be really careful with is **the possibility of house fires and even wildfires**. You should always have means to put out a fire. Always have non-potable water on

hand and even a few fire extinguishers. Keep in mind the fire can start in your shed (like it happened to one of my neighbors a few years ago - me and a few others were already pouring bucket after bucket of water before the fire marshals arrived).

Next, you're gonna make sure you hide your preps really well. Since you won't be there most of the time, you need a way to make sure no one finds them should they decide to break in.

Last but not least, think about protecting your retreat, both now and after TEOTWAWKI. Without the rule of law, people might eventually take a shot at you, your supplies or at your family. Check out [this article](#) I wrote on home defense, it's a good starting point.

Don't Forget to Stockpile

If you're gonna store some of your stockpile there, you're gonna have to eat it before it expires. This ensures you always have delicious food when disaster strikes that will last you as long as possible.

Of course, maintaining a food supply at your bug out location is not easy. You'll need to take constant trips to your BOL there to move food and water back and forth. Ideally, you should be using this location in the weekends to just go there, relax and practice living off survival food. That way you'll get yourself familiar with the surroundings as well as with all the various roads to get there.

Additional Tips

Think About Having More Than One Bug Out Location

No, I'm not saying you should purchase 3-4 properties and build cabins on each of them, that could get expensive... but don't expect your bug out location to be the place you actually go to should something happen. Make sure you have relatives you can crash to in various parts of the country or even abroad. One thing you can do (if they also believe in prepping) is to talk to them and offer to return the favor in case they're the ones in need of a place to bug out to.

Know Your Neighbors

Even if your closest neighbors are 500 yards away, you should still meet them. They probably share the same ideas you do about survival so they have no problem with preppers or with people walking around with a home defense firearm. Get to know them and put up a plan post-apocalyptic home defense plan. Plus, your neighbors might be able to check your house from time to time when you're not there to make sure everything's ok.

