



Navigation Training

Big5Protection offer Navigation training, either as a stand alone course, or as part of the Tracking or Long Range Patrol courses. Usually aimed at rangers to enhance their anti-poaching operations, our courses can extend to anyone who has the need, or desire, to learn map and compass navigation, or to hone the skills they already have. We can run courses from our base in Herefordshire or in Africa, or a combination of the two, with the classroom basics run in the UK, followed by practical experience in beautiful African locations. The training can be combined with the training of rangers for a true anti-poaching experience.

For remote countries, we can advise and help with the sourcing of 1:50 000 scale mapping, compasses and other navigational aids.

An overview by Simon Leak - Generally speaking, the world has forgotten the rudimentary basics of navigation without total reliance on satellite navigation systems. Those of us from the pre GPS era, had to learn the hard way - map, compass, pacing, time and distance, we developed an ability to view the contours of the map in 3D and quickly relate that to the ground and select the best route from point A to B. The first GPS systems to arrive in the military, were the size of house bricks and took ages to warm up and receive enough satellites to be useful. I never used one in my entire time in the military, other than in vehicle-borne desert operations, where the GPS could be permanently mounted with the external power source.

Jungle operations called for the very highest standards of navigation. GPS never worked under the canopy anyway. Visibility was down to 20m max and, because the cartographers had only aerial photographs of the top of the canopy, the detail at ground level was very often inaccurate. It took me many years of operating in jungles, on every continent, to feel I was as good as it's possible to be, or at least I was where I thought I was, more often than not. I learned many techniques to assist in route selection and to predict when it was the map that was wrong and not me.

Now that GPS systems can be worn on the wrist, have long battery power and are quick and easy to operate, I wouldn't be without one - but it is only ever a backup, to check your position at a glance and confirm your location. It is still quicker (with the right training) to plot a grid reference, take a bearing, measure distance and pick a suitable route, gaining a mental picture of the features around, than it is to enter the destination as a waypoint and walk in a straight line over whatever terrain is in the way. But that's what everyone seems to be doing. Digital maps or Google earth viewed on a phone screen, are what most people rely on, because they don't know any different. Map reading is a dying art, because the few of us who honed these skills without today's technology, often in the most difficult terrain on the planet, are dying out. And like veterans from the great wars, there'll soon be none of us left!

Further information available on request.....