

Buffalo Soldiers on Campaign

Attention Buffalo Soldier!

The United States military has had many roles and duties throughout its history in Texas. One unit that played an extremely important role during the days of the Chisholm Trail were the units of African American soldiers known as the Buffalo Soldiers. But what exactly made the Buffalo Soldiers unique? And how did they get their nickname? Join us today as we explore the history of these famed units and what it took to be a soldier while on campaign protecting the trail.

A Proud Record of Service:

While African Americans have served in every American war up through the Civil War, they had always done so as members of volunteer units and never as part of the regular peacetime army. Following the end of the Civil War in 1865, and the shrinking of the once massive federal army, Congress in 1866 authorized the creation of six all African American units (though the commanding officers would still be white in the beginning). This action resulted in the creation of two cavalry units (troops fighting on horseback) and four infantry units (troops fighting on foot). Eventually, budget cuts would bring the number of infantry units down to two, and these new units would be known as the 9th and 10th cavalry, and 24th and 25th infantry regiments. These units would instantly begin service in the Southern and Western regions of the country, and would prove to be some of the bravest units in the following conflicts the US would find itself in. For much of its early history the Buffalo Soldiers main objective was protecting the frontier from Native American raids. However, these units would also find themselves fulfilling other roles such as stringing telegraph wire, surveying and mapping the frontier, becoming the first park rangers for the national parks, and protecting the trails used for the cattle drives. While much of a Buffalo Soldiers time was spent guarding and protecting the various forts found throughout Texas, they would often find themselves having to set out on campaign to find any trouble that might be occurring on the frontier. When it came time to pack up and hit the campaign trail, these soldiers had to carry everything they needed to survive with them.

It is now your turn to find out what these soldiers needed to survive the Texas frontier, and see if you have what it takes to make it as a Buffalo Soldier.



The Five Essentials:

There are certain requirements we all need to survive from day to day, and outdoor travelers have always needed to make a decision on what they can carry to meet these needs. What you choose to carry today is going to look very different to what a Buffalo Soldier in 1867 would have carried. However, your needs and will be the same as theirs, and we can compare the modern pack to that carried in the past. But first, we need to find out what those needs are.

- Food: We all need to eat to keep up our energy, and this is especially true while walking in the outdoors. You'll need to carry food, but also carry items that will help you cook your food. What sort of items do you think you'll need to help make a meal while on campaign?
- Hydration (water): Water is one of the most important items we need to survive, with two quarts (liters) of water needed for a daily minimum when hiking in the outdoors. But carrying water can get heavy pretty quickly and how much do you need to bring when in the heat of Texas? Choose carefully how you carry your water, and let's see what you come up with.
- First Aid Supplies: It's important to carry and know how to use a first-aid kit, but do not let a first-aid kit give you a false sense of security. The best course of action is to always take steps to avoid injury or sickness in the first place. What do you think your first aid kit will contain?
- Sun Protection: This is very important for those hot Texas days, you'll need something to keep the sun off you and avoid serious sunburns. What do you think a Buffalo Soldier would have used to keep the sun off them?
- Shelter: Temperatures and weather can take a turn quickly, and it is important to have a place to go to stay warm and dry. But remember, you need to travel light, so keep that in mind when deciding what to take to make a shelter.

What to Carry

Essential	Buffalo Soldiers Gear	Modern Gear
Food	Hardtack, Beans, Matches/Flint & Steel, Frying pan	Pre-packaged food, power bars, chips, trail mix, MRE's
Hydration	Canteen	Water Bottle, Camelbak, thermos
First Aid	Cloth Bandages	Bandages, Compress, Gauze Pads, Hydrocortisone ointment packets, Tweezers, Scissors, First Aid glue
Sun Protection	Wide Brimmed Hat	Sunscreen, Sunglasses, Wide Brimmed Hat
Shelter	Shelterhalf Tent, Blanket	Emergency Blanket, Tent

Challenge:

Now that we know what we need to pack to survive on campaign, it's time for you to see what you would take with you and if you can carry what it takes to survive.

In your home, find one item from each of the five categories (these can be items from the list or that you think meet the criteria) and lay them out in front of you.

Once you have gathered all your items, find a backpack or bag that you think would work well for hitting the frontier trail.

Now, attempt to pack all the items you'll need to survive. Remember that you'll need to distribute the weight of the items, and it's possible not all items will fit.

If you want to see how you compare to a Buffalo Soldier getting ready, check out our YouTube video showing one of our educators packing all their items up as a soldier would have in the 1870's.