

Plan properly for outdoor excursions

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Proper planning is the key to having a successful outdoor adventure.

That does not only entail where to go, but who, why, how and what to do when you get there.

I met a young entrepreneur at a writer's conference who introduced his new service



On Outdoors
By Rob Loewendick

for outdoor enthusiasts, which is sure to become a hit.

Eric Kraus, of Waterville, created a resourceful Web site, www.thenaturalresources.com, which hosts an overabundance of information for the outdoors enthusiast planning their next trip. You don't have to be a master of the keyboard to utilize the site.

Being familiar with the territory cannot be underestimated when it comes to hunting and fishing.

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Knowledge of local fencerows, farm fields or water depths isn't enough, however.

The Web site has been launched to simplify research and planning. It minimizes guesswork for recreational pursuits within Ohio's borders.

The site is aimed at six activities: hunting, fishing, boating, camping, and soon, biking and golf. This site provides the most comprehensive directory of businesses and resources, 4,000 and counting, serving Ohio's outdoor community.

According to Kraus, founder and editor of the Web site:

"So often, it's difficult for outdoorsmen and women to identify and locate the businesses and other resources needed to enjoy their outdoor pursuits. With typical online search tools or telephone books, it's too easy to miss the neighborhood archery specialist, outboard engine repair shop, or local taxidermist. And while 'word of mouth' is an important resource, it never fills in all the blanks, particularly for out-of-town excursions."

The directory's format sets Kraus' Web site apart from other collections of sources.

Rather than being organized alphabetically in a list, contact information and other helpful details for product and service

providers and public access areas are accurately placed on Google-based road maps.

U.S. Geological Survey topographical maps, or "topo" maps, as they're commonly called, and detailed aerial photography also can easily be displayed on state and local levels to add detail to a search. All visuals are interactive. They can be enlarged, reduced, or moved by simply clicking the computer mouse.

By cross-referencing and filtering hundreds of outdoor-related directories and databases, The Natural Resource has developed an extensive collection of otherwise hard-to-find information.

Each of the main activities in turn consists of numerous, more specific subcategories.

"If people can more easily find and utilize the businesses supporting Ohio's outdoor recreation, that's good for the outdoor enthusiast, the outdoor industry, and good for the state of Ohio," Kraus said.

So whether it be game check stations, shooting clubs, dealers in gun dogs or canoes, marine equipment suppliers, private campgrounds, wildlife areas or any of the other 30 subcategories currently included on thenaturalresource.com, awareness is the key.

"We want to help visitors to the site spend more time outside, in their element, rather

than wasting time flipping through a phone book, struggling with a generic Internet search engine, or driving around aimlessly looking for a bait shop that hopefully can provide all the answers," Kraus said.

"The goal of 'free time' for an outdoor lover is to hunt, fish, boat or camp, not to watch the hours pass thinking about how much fun it would be if only you could get outside."