

Find North Using Big Dipper!



Ever try to photograph the Big Dipper? I gave up and photographed the front of an Alaska baseball cap instead! It isn't perfect, but it tells the story!

In the Northern Hemisphere, the Big Dipper is in the Northern sky. After you find it, look for the dipper bowl. The last two stars of the dipper bowl point toward the North Star.

Look at the distance between the last two stars of the dipper bowl. Multiply that distance by 4-1/2 times. Using the last two stars of the dipper bowl as a direction finder, look away from the Big Dipper. About 4-1/2 times the distance between the last two stars of the dipper bowl, you should find a small, unremarkable star. It is the North Star, the star around which the heavens turn.

That's where most descriptions leave you. You need to know more. From the North Star, drop a vertical line to the horizon. Find a prominent feature where this line intersects the horizon. That feature represents True North from where you are now.

Face North and put your arms out. Your left hand is West. Your right hand is East. South is directly behind you.

If you travel at night, go toward a prominent object on the horizon. When you reach it, find the North Star and reorient yourself to travel farther.

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