

Super-Rich Survivalists Are Preparing for an Apocalypse

Have you ever imagined what you would do in the event of a zombie apocalypse without the zombies? End times without the return of the savior? A nuclear winter? An environmental catastrophe? A bloody revolution?

Most of us have, but preparing for the apocalypse seems pointless. At most, we might drive to the local warehouse store to buy an extra case of bottled water or canned ravioli. It's probably never dawned on us to purchase a 3-million-dollar condominium in a former missile silo as 'apocalypse insurance' or a 'safety hatch' island with helicopter pad to escape from major population centers.

A growing number of millionaires and billionaires are anticipating the apocalypse by making these kinds of high-dollar investments, reports [Evan Osnos of the New Yorker](#). In his article, titled "[Survival of the Richest](#)," Osnos profiles about a half dozen super-rich "preppers," each trying to buy himself security and peace-of-mind in case the end of days is right around the corner.

Osnos interviews one man who bought a pair of luxurious hideaways in New Zealand, a popular destination for these wealthy preppers:

An American hedge-fund manager in his forties—tall, tanned, athletic—recently bought two houses in New Zealand and acquired local residency. He agreed to tell me about his thinking, if I would not publish his name. Brought up on the East Coast, he said, over coffee, that he expects America to face at least a decade of political turmoil, including racial tension, polarization, and a rapidly aging population. "The country has turned into the New York area, the California

area, and then everyone else is wildly different in the middle," he said. He worries that the economy will suffer if Washington scrambles to fund Social Security and Medicare for people who need it. "Do you default on that obligation? Or do you print more money to give to them? What does that do to the value of the dollar? It's not a next-year problem, but it's not fifty years away, either."

New Zealand's reputation for attracting doomsayers is so well known in the hedge-fund manager's circle that he prefers to differentiate himself from earlier arrivals. He said, "This is no longer about a handful of freaks worried about the world ending." He laughed, and added, "Unless I'm one of those freaks."

Freaks or not, these affluent preppers tend to be conservative, usually libertarian, and obsessed with how they'll survive the coming apocalypse, while the masses (yes, that's most of us) die. They stockpile weapons, motorcycles and generators like the rest of us fill our basements with canned food and bottled water.

For what kinds of disasters are they preparing? In an [interview with National Public Radio](#), Osnos elaborates:

Some of the things that they talk about are the kind of stuff of ordinary disaster movies, but there is some real element to it. The idea that there could be a pandemic, if the Ebola virus, for instance, had affected a much larger part of the population, or an earthquake on the San Andreas in San Francisco, that's not a completely unreasonable fear.

Or the possibility of some sort of civil unrest. They take what they've seen in some American cities and extrapolate onto a larger scale and they said, "Well, what would happen?"

The preppers are not without their critics. [Max Levchin](#),

[creator of PayPal](#), thinks the Silicon Valley survivalists are off their rockers. He lampoons them for fearing the “pitchforks,” or that the poor will rise up against them, the filthy rich. Levchin recommends that these “H.N.W.I’s (High Net Worth Individuals)” expand their philanthropic activities (e.g. giving to homeless shelters). Osnos summarizes Levchin’s reservations: “In his view, this is the time to invest in solutions, not escape.”

While it’s fairly clear what the ultra-wealthy will do in the event of an apocalypse (with or without the zombies), the looming question is: What will the rest of us do? Personally, I’m heading to the store to buy some water and ravioli.