

Overnight Backpacking Checklist

(Choose items that match your trip plans and the expected weather conditions)

The 10+ Essentials		Hiking Clothing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Map of area (in waterproof case)	<input type="checkbox"/> Compass	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick-drying pants/shorts	<input type="checkbox"/> Fleece jacket or wool sweater
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses (with retaining strap)	<input type="checkbox"/> First-aid kit	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick-drying short-sleeved shirts	<input type="checkbox"/> Wicking long underwear (top/bottoms)
<input type="checkbox"/> Headlamp or flashlight (with extra batteries/ bulbs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra food	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick-drying long-sleeved shirts	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick-drying underwear
<input type="checkbox"/> Matches (in waterproof container)	<input type="checkbox"/> Drinking water	<input type="checkbox"/> Warm pants (fleece or wool)	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick-drying swimsuit
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire-starter	<input type="checkbox"/> Fleece or wool vest	
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra clothing layer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pocket knife		
Outerwear		Footwear	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rainwear (top/bottoms)	<input type="checkbox"/> Fleece or wool gloves/mittens	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking socks	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra laces
<input type="checkbox"/> Wide-brimmed rain/sun hat	<input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof gloves/overmitts	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking boots/shoes that match the terrain	<input type="checkbox"/> Gaiters
<input type="checkbox"/> Warm hat (fleece or wool)	<input type="checkbox"/> Bandanna	Other Items	
Camping Gear		<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper	<input type="checkbox"/> Lip balm (with sun protection)
<input type="checkbox"/> Backpack	<input type="checkbox"/> Cook set	<input type="checkbox"/> Duct Tape	<input type="checkbox"/> Plastic Bags (One small, one larger)
<input type="checkbox"/> Pack cover /large garbage bag	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra plastic garbage bags	<input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Fisher Space Pen Co. All-Weather Writing Pen
<input type="checkbox"/> Tent, tarp or bivy sack	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping bag (in waterproof sack)	<input type="checkbox"/> Whistle	<input type="checkbox"/> Rite in the Rain® Shirt Pocket Memo
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping pad	<input type="checkbox"/> Water filter/water-purification tablets	<input type="checkbox"/> UMS Ruler	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 roll of plastic grid ribbon
<input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof compression sack	<input type="checkbox"/> Food - enough for four meals, no cooking required.	<input type="checkbox"/> Orange safety vest	<input type="checkbox"/> Gloves leather - for heavy brush work
<input type="checkbox"/> Stove and fuel	<input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle	<input type="checkbox"/> Wristwatch	
<input type="checkbox"/> 50 feet of 500 LB line	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking poles		

1. Map:

Always carry a detailed map of the area you will be at and a waterproof map/chart holder. Consider the 7.5-minute USGS maps--they reveal considerable detail. For traveling on trails, the 15-minute series Green Trails is a good choice. The point is to carry a map appropriate for the area you will be in and know how to use it!

2. Compass:

Carry a compass, at all times --and know how to use it! Some features to look for:

- 0 to 360 degrees, preferably, in 2 degree increments;
- liquid filled, which protects the magnetic needle and its jeweled bearing and minimizes fluctuation;
- a base plate--3" to 4", in length-- which can be used as a straight-edge for taking map bearings and determining distances on maps;
- an adjustable declination to account for the difference between Magnetic North and True North. The compass responds to Magnetic North, whereas, maps are based upon True North. Therefore, the compass needs to be adjusted to compensate. An adjustable declination feature lets you turn a small screw to "permanently" adjust declination to match the geographic area you will be in, so that you don't need to calculate your bearing each time.
- a fold-out mirror for sightings. The mirror allows for more accurate readings because you can position the mirror such that the mirror and the distant objective are both visible at the same time.

Suunto MC-2G Navigator; weighs 2.6 oz.

Silva Ranger; weighs 3 oz, (same features as Suunto MC-2G, only without the luminous bezel).

3. Flashlight / Headlamp:

Flashlights and/or Headlamps are important . You never know when you might need make that last mile or so after sunset. Here's some features to look for:

- lights which are water resistant--they function reliably in all weather. Look for rubberized bulb housing and battery compartments, or at least adequate rubber gaskets.
- lights which come with extra bulbs stored inside their housing.
- lights which have rotating head or body as the on/off mechanism. Avoid lights with on/off switches which can accidentally be turned-on as it is jostled about in your pack.
- lights which come with or will accept bright beam bulbs such as xenon, krypton, or halogen. Also, always carry several spare bulbs--they are light.

It's a good idea to carry a small lightweight hand-held light in addition to a headlamp. In the hand held light use a regular bulb, which requires less battery juice than the bright-beam bulbs. Use this light for simple chores, to conserve batteries. In the headlamp, use a halogen (or other bright-beam bulb) and use this light when you are path finding or otherwise require a bright beam.

Suggestions for a small, lightweight, high-quality hand held light:

- Photon Micro Light; weighs 7 grams.
- Mini-Maglite AA; (2 AA batteries) weighs 4 oz., twist top on/off, comes with extra bulb.
- Princeton Tec LED; 4 AAA batteries, weighs 2.5 oz, 3 LED bulbs.

Suggestions for a small, lightweight, high-quality headlamp:

- Petzl Zipka; (3 AAA batteries) weighs 2.2 oz, built-in retractable head strap. Strong beam from 3 LED bulbs.
- Black Diamond ION; (1 6 volt battery - included) weighs 1.1 oz, uses 2 LED bulbs

4. Extra Food:

Bring extra food in case you are delayed by emergencies, foul weather. The mountaineers suggest a one-day supply. At the very least, bring one good meal more than what you need. The food should require little or no cooking. If your extra food will require cooking, make sure you also carry extra fuel for your stove.

5. Extra Clothing:

In addition to the basic layers you would normally take on an outing, bring extra clothing which would get you through the worst conditions you might come up against. Extra clothing means a little extra beyond what you would normally carry, just in case of emergencies.

1. A heavy-duty polypro or polarfleece BALACLAVA. This will keep their head from getting cold, which is the primary cause of hypothermia, since the head radiates up to 30% of all the body's heat! It is probably also a good idea to take along a thinsulate stocking cap as well. In the Summer, a balaclava will generally be quite enough.
2. Some kind of very light RAINGEAR, preferably covering the entire body. This will keep them reasonably dry, also diminishing the danger of hypothermia, and just plain miserableness.
3. A SPACE BAG. It only weighs a couple ounces and has saved many a life!

4. Thinsulate MITTENS. Hands too radiate a huge amount of heat and must be kept as warm as possible in dangerous hypothermic conditions.
5. Insulated Wool, Fleece or Polypro SOCKS. Nothing is worse than freezing toes during an unexpected overnight!
6. INSULATED UNDERWEAR, both Tops and Bottoms. Once all of the extending heat radiators -- head, hands and feet, -- are taken care of, it really helps to keep the legs and torso warm too, and nothing does as good a job for its weight as polypro or fleece underwear.

6. Sunglasses:

Your eyes can experience damage from the intensity of mountain skies, ultraviolet rays, and light reflecting off of snow. As elevation increases so does the intensity of ultraviolet rays. Adequate eye protection is a must! For traveling on snow, get a pair of glacier glasses with side shields which reduce reflective light reaching the eyes.

Bolle' makes a lightweight pair of glasses with a virtually indestructible polycarbonate lens. They are optically correct and have emerald green lens for true color. They are rated 100 % UV protection. Cost is about US \$40.00.

There are many other brands of sunglasses and glacier glasses which are less expensive and provide adequate protection. Shop around, but be careful. Try to stay with reputable brand names. Your eyes will know damage, long before you feel discomfort.

7. First-Aid Kit:

What to carry? A good book to reference is "Mountaineering First Aid" 3rd edition, by Lentz, Macdonald, and Carline, published by The Mountaineers.

This booklet was used as a text for the Mountaineers' MOFA (Mountaineering Oriented First Aid) course. It is easy reading, small (5 1/4 x 8 1/2 inches), brief (95 pages) and inexpensive (\$8.95). It identifies what items to carry, as well as what to do in emergency situations.

Once you are familiar with the supplies you need, you can purchase a kit or make your own. If you purchase one, you'll most likely need to add to it (items like CPR mask, rubber gloves, etc.) since most commercially prepared kits are inadequate.

Airway Management

- 6 - Airways (sizes 1-6)
- 1 - MDi micromask

Infection Control

- 6 - Disposable gloves
- 1 - Alcohol gel
- 1 - Biohazard bag
- 1 - Pair Excalibur glasses

Bandages and Dressings

- 3 - Triangular bandages
- 1-10" x 30" trauma dressing
- 2 - 2" flexicon gauze

2 - 4" flexicon gauze
10 - 4" x 4" gauze pads
2 - 5" x 9" ARD pads
3 - 1/2" x 5 yds adhesive tape
10 - STAT strips 3/4" x 3"

8. Pocket Knife & Tools:

Your basic backpacking tool kit. A good example of a single piece of gear which has multiple uses. For example, a Wenger "Master" Swiss Army Knife has a locking blade; "slip-joint" pliers/wire crimper/wire cutters; springless self-sharpening scissors; wood saw; nail file/cleaner; corkscrew; awl/reamer; can opener; cap lifter; tweezers; and toothpick--all at a weight of about 6 ounces. Swiss-Army knives are available with more and less features.

At a minimum, knives are useful for first aid, food preparation, cutting moleskin strips, cutting rope and making repairs. However, scrutinize your needs before you go out and buy a honker like the Victorinox Swiss Champ which has many tools you probably don't need and weighs 1/2 pound ! If you don't actually use a feature, then you probably don't need to be carrying it around.

9. Waterproof Matches:

Carry matches which have been waterproofed or wind and waterproofed, or else carry extra strike-anywhere matches--along with something to strike them on-- in a waterproof container. Keep these matches separate from your regular match or butane lighter supply. Keep them available for emergency situations.

There are many commercially prepared waterproof/windproof matches available on the market, e.g., "REI" "Hurricane" and "Cyclone" brands of wind & waterproof matches and Coghlan's waterproof safety matches.

10. Firestarter:

Fire starters are useful for quickly starting a fire, especially in emergency situations. They are also useful for igniting wet wood. There are several commercial fire starters available: magnesium blocks w/striking flint; chemically-treated fire sticks, etc.

In addition, numerous home-made fire starters work just fine: plumber's candles (wax); compressed balls of dryer lint mixed with or covered with melted paraffin; small strips of waxed cardboard (from old produce boxes); small flammable containers--individual egg-carton cups filled with mixtures of wood shavings, wax, & lint; etc.

11. Water / Filter / Bottles:

Carry plenty of fresh water.

If you aren't bringing your water from home, treat the water you draw from the backcountry, regardless of the source. Everything is suspect.

Use water filter, purifier, chemical tablets, or boiling to treat the water before consuming. For transporting inside your pack, use lightweight water bottles, such as Nalgene 16 oz and 32 oz lexan polycarbonate or high-density polyethylene wide-mouth bottles. Some use other containers such as old plastic pop bottles. That's okay too. Be careful they don't crack and/or leak, though.

SteriPEN By Hydro-Photon weight with batteries (4-AA) 6.7 oz

It requires relatively clear water to start with; this is not a filter, only a purifier.

It works by using UV light to sterilize the organisms, thus preventing them from multiplying.

It works in less than two minutes on up to 1 qt (1 L) of water, 16 oz (0.5 L) at a time.

The SteriPEN measures 7.6" x 1.5" x 1.5"

Katadyn Mini Filter

Ceramic microstrainer removes bacteria and protozoans, including giardia and cryptosporidia. Silver impregnation inhibits bacterial growth inside filter pores.

Comes with 30" intake hose, cleaning brush and case. Use iodine or chlorine where viruses are suspected, weight 8 ounces, Dimensions 7 x 2.75 x 1.75 inches

Katadyn Micropur - 20 Pack

Features the same proven technology used in municipal water supplies; effective against viruses, bacteria, Giardia and Cryptosporidium. Destroys viruses and bacteria in 15 minutes, Giardia in 30 minutes and Cryptosporidia in four hours. Meets the U.S. EPA purification guidelines; active ingredient is chlorine dioxide. Each tablet is individually wrapped and sealed. While a four-hour wait time may be inconvenient, alternative disinfectants do not claim to destroy Cryptosporidium. Twenty-pack supply provides five gallons of water

12. Whistle:

Caution: Metal whistles, with a pea, can be a problem in the mountains. Your "pea" can freeze up, and what happens when you put your lips on frozen metal?

A better choice would be a pea-less plastic whistle like the Fox 40. It is ultra-light and very shrill. Cost about \$6.00. REI

13. Insect clothing or repellents:

Three ways to deal with the biting flies, mosquitoes, gnats, etc. are to (1) let them eat you (2) use repellents or (3) wear clothing. Since the first option doesn't cut it, there are numerous commercial repellents on the market. Most of them are DEET based. REI Jungle Juice works okay but the stuff gets everything oily. There are many good creams but they need to be reapplied more frequently. There are extended duration DEET products which do not soak into the skin as fast and provide up to 12 hours of protection--such as 3M Ultrathon (now only available as "Hourguard 12" thru Amway).

14. Sunburn preventatives:

Remember, the higher the elevation, the greater the intensity of the sun. Although each of us has a different capacity -- a.k.a. different pigmentation -- for withstanding the sun's onslaught, the message is the same--the penalty for underestimating your need for protection is severe.

In sunny conditions, wear light-colored clothing and cover exposed skin, at least, with SPF rated sunscreen appropriate for you, at least 15. Wear coverings over the neck and ears. OR (Outdoor Research) and other manufacturers make baseball-style caps with skirts which cover the neck and ears. Carry an SPF-rated lip-balm, as well, and reapply frequently.

HIKING BOOTS

Appropriate for the terrain you'll be in. Remember to treat them, before you go, with Nikwax or some other waterproofing agent. The Montrail Torre GTX hiking boots, lining Gore-Tex/nylon, average weight 3 lbs. 4 oz. is an excellent boot. I have used them for the past 3 years, and they have kept my feet dry during all types of weather.

Breaking in

The key to breaking in new hiking boots is to take things slowly. Remember -- your feet aren't as tough as your new boots, so if you rush things, your feet are likely to pay the price.

Different boots will require different amounts of break-in time. Lightweight models may feel perfect right out of the box, while heavier, all-leather models may require weeks to soften up and form to your feet.

NOTE: Most hiking boots stretch out slightly as they break in. But the break-in process will not turn a poor fit into a good one! Make sure the boots you buy feel snug yet comfortable before you take them home.

The basic break-in procedure

- Begin by wearing your boots for short periods of time inside the house. Wear the kinds of socks you're likely to be wearing out on the trail. Lace your boots up tight, and make sure the tongues are lined up and the gusset material is folded flat. The creases you form as you break-in your boots will likely remain for the life of the boot.
- Your new boots will be a little stiff at first, which is fine. But if you notice significant pinching, rubbing or pain right off the bat, you may want to take the boots back and try a different style.
- If after several short indoor sessions your boots seem to fit comfortably, expand your horizons. Wear your new boots to the local store, around town or while working in the yard. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend in your boots and the distances you cover. Make sure your boots feel good at each stage before increasing

your distance.

NOTE: Make sure your new boots fit comfortably before you wear them outside!

- Be vigilant throughout the break-in process for any pain or discomfort. As soon as you notice either, take the boots off. Remember -- small problems can become big ones very quickly. If everything feels good, try adding a little weight on your back as you hike, and/or hiking on more challenging trails.
- If your boots feel good throughout the break-in process, but a single pinch or a hot spot remains, you may be able to correct the problem area by visiting a shoe-repair shop or your local REI store. Most have stretching devices that can help alleviate localized boot-fitting problems.

No such thing as a "quick fix"

There is no fast and easy method when it comes to breaking in new hiking boots. To do a good job, you have to put in the time.

Avoid "quick-fix" approaches like getting your boots soaking wet then walking long distances. They're too hard on your boots and they'll be murder on your feet. Also make sure you follow the manufacturer's care and water proofing instructions carefully

Surefoot Get-A-Grip Xtreme

This slip-on traction device is specially designed for larger and oversize winter boots, providing excellent stability on ice and slick surfaces. Six replaceable carbide spikes are centered in forefoot and heel for grip Rubber base has bi-directional tread molded into the forefoot for added slip-resistance. Specially formulated rubber retains elasticity in all temperatures and won't stretch out.

BASE LAYERS: (NO COTTON!)

- ___ Lightweight thermal underwear top
- ___ Lightweight thermal underwear bottom

INSULATION: (winter)

- ___ Light Fleece Jacket--200 or 300 weight
- ___ Light Fleece Vest--200 or 300 weight (optional, use your good judgment)

SHELL:

___ Windproof, waterproof, highly-breathable Parka or Jacket--pit zips, 2-way zipper, & pack pockets for ventilation; adjustable hood & hem; and large enough to allow layering underneath.

___ Windproof, waterproof, highly-breathable Pants--full-length side zips for easy entry & ventilation.

OTHER BACKPACKING ESSENTIALS:

___ Hiking Socks & Liners (+ extra pair)

___ Quick-drying hiking shorts (wear over the thermal underwear in cool weather)

___ Thin fleece gloves (e.g., lightweight Patagonia)

___ Fleece Cap or Balaclava (must cover ears)

___ Baseball cap (wool, synthetic--cotton ok in warmer weather)

___ Toilet Paper

FOOD: (Take enough for the day & extra for one meal)

___ Gorp (nuts, seeds, dried fruit, M&Ms)

___ Hard Cheese (lasts longer)

___ Jerky (beef/turkey) or salami

___ Cookies

___ Crackers

___ Tiger's Milk Bars

___ Licorice Sticks

___ Kudos

___ Bear Valley MealPacks

___ Power Bars (Berry)

___ Chewing Gum

___ Gatorade

___ Bagels, English muffins

___ String cheese (individually wrapped)

___ Chocolate & candy

___ Dried fruit (raisins, apples, pears, peaches, bananas)

___ Dried meat and fish

___ Giant pretzels

___ Raw fruit / vegetables

___ Nuts

___ Pop Tarts

___ Fig/Peach/Apple Newtons

OPTIONAL:

___ Bandanna (cotton ok)

___ Gore-Tex Socks (in damp environs, keeps feet warm & dry)

___ Gaiters (long for snow or short for screen dirt & mud)

- ___ Pack Rain Cover
- ___ Parachute cord (many uses)
- ___ Duct tape (many uses)
- ___ Moleskin (if not part of First Aid Kit)

BACKPACK

- ___ A pack with approximately 3000 to 4400 cu in is satisfactory. You'll need to experiment to find what works for you.

SLEEPING SYSTEM:

- ___ Sleeping Pad (Big Agnes Air Core Mummy Pad – Regular 1 lb. 3 oz., Comfort rating to 35°, dimensions 72 x 20 x 2.5 inches, weight 1 lb. 3 oz. Big Agnes Insulated Air Core Pad – Regular Comfort range to 15°, dimensions 72 x 20 x 2.5 inches, weight 1 lb. 8 oz.)
- ___ Sleeping Bag: 3-Season (light 20 degree bag should be enough most of the time)
- ___ Sleeping Bag: Winter (If you have only one bag, e.g. the 20 degree bag above, you can add warmth to it by using it together with a bivy sack and/or by wearing some or all of your clothes to bed.)
- ___ Tent (3 -season)
 - (REI Half Dome 2 HC Tent 2 person, 34 square feet, average packaged weight 2 lbs. 6 oz, floor dimensions 115 x 112 inches, peak height 41 inches, rainfly fabric coated nylon ripstop)
- ___ Optional if going light & fast overnight with Bivy: Lightweight Tarp for rain/snow cover
 - (Sierra Designs Origami 2 UL Shelter 2 person, 52 square feet, average packaged weight 5 lbs. 11 oz., floor dimensions 90 x 54 inches, peak height 58 inches, canopy fabric coated polyester taffeta)

COOKING:

- ___ Lightweight Trail Stove (Whisperlite, Weight (w/ no fuel) 13.12 ounces, fuel type: white gas; Primus Alpine Ultra Light Titanium Stove 3 oz. w/o piezo igniter attached fuel type: LP-gas canisters)
- ___ Stove Fuel--white gas or butane/propane canister (keep butane/propane canister inside your sleeping bag if temperature is below freezing), if melting snow for water, take extra fuel.
- ___ 1 medium pot w/lid & pot handle
- ___ Lexan or Titanium spoon

FOOD: (Here are some suggestions for you to choose from)

Breakfast:

- ___ Hot chocolate
- ___ Coffee, Tea
- ___ Instant Hot Cider
- ___ Instant Oatmeal (variety)
- ___ Instant Cream of Wheat
- ___ Malt O' Meal (w/brown sugar)

- ___ Granola
- ___ Nature Valley Granola bars (variety)
- ___ Dried fruit (apples, raisins)

Lunch:

- ___ Gorp (nuts, seeds, dried fruit, M&Ms)
- ___ Bagels
- ___ String Cheese
- ___ Hard Cheese (lasts longer)
- ___ Jerky or salami
- ___ Cookies
- ___ Crackers

Dinner:

- ___ Instant soup (Lipton's Chicken Noodle & Cream of Chicken)
- ___ Freeze-dried dinners (preparable in their own foil container)
 - Mountain House: Lasagna, Spaghetti, Pasta Primavera, Chili Mac
 - Mountain House (All Natural): Noodles & Chicken, Chicken Polynesian, Beef

Stroganoff

- ___ Mountain House Freeze-dried desserts (Fruit Crisps--peaches, strawberries)

Dinner Spices (keep dry in small transparent canisters)

- ___ onion powder
- ___ garlic powder
- ___ pre-mixed, ground dried herbs
- ___ pepper (red or black)

Other Non-Cook Nourishment--Good for Snacks

- ___ Tiger's Milk Bars
- ___ Licorice Sticks
- ___ Kudos
- ___ Bear Valley MealPacks
- ___ Power Bars (Berry)
- ___ Chewing Gum
- ___ Gatorade
- ___ Bagels, English muffins
- ___ String cheese (individually wrapped)
- ___ Chocolate & candy
- ___ Dried fruit (raisins, apples, pears, peaches, bananas)
- ___ Dried meat and fish
- ___ Giant pretzels
- ___ Raw fruit / vegetables
- ___ Nuts
- ___ Pop Tarts
- ___ Fig/Peach/Apple Newtons
- ___ Crackers

Tenacious Attitude:

Ruthless scrutiny of each piece of outdoor gear is key. First, evaluate each item of gear for its necessity and functionality -- some pieces of gear can serve multiple purpose, some are along for the ride, just in case. The longer you look at each piece with an attitude -- i.e., is it worthy of being in your pack, ON YOUR AGING BACK -- the more its value will increase or decrease. The only "just-in-case" pieces of gear that I carry fall within the "Fourteen-Essentials" category -- e.g., first aid/last aid kit, emergency fire starter, etc. Everything else is a critical piece of gear that provides at least one function, every day.

Once you've selected the items of gear that are absolutely necessary AND have unduplicated functionality, then start your search for its smallest and lightest manifestation. Here is where complications arise. You may have the attitude, but no bucks in your pocket. Compromise! Buy (and/or make) the smallest, lightest, highest quality you can afford.

My experience has been that most of the high-end expensive items that I have purchased have endured much better than their low-end counterparts, such that the expensive stuff is actually cheaper in the long run. Like I say, that's my experience. You'll have to engage in your own mental gymnastics for what you can justify and what you can't.

Pay attention to the ounces & the pounds will follow

Look for Multiple Functionality in Gear

Many items of backpacking gear can be used for multiple purposes. The practice of using one piece of equipment for more than one purpose will often allow you to leave other equipment items at home. Again, take the time to scrutinize each piece of gear as to the possibilities.

Multiple Purpose Gear:

Parachute cord--clothesline, securing splints, line for traction splint, food bag line, Swiss Army Knife--knife, scissors, saw, awl.....

Candles--light for reading/writing, wax as fire starter, wax as waterproofing agent

Duct Tape--moleskin substitute, bandage wrap, gear repair (packs, boots, poles...), splint wrap, emergency sunglasses

Sleeping Bag--emergency stretcher or litter

Cooking Pot--bowl for eating, cup for hot drinks

Water Bottle--cup for hot drinks

Backpack Metal Stays--splints

Hiking Poles--avalanche probe, splints,

Snow Shovel--sled for fun, sled runner for emergency litter,

Stuff Sacks--pillows,

Socks--hand warmers,

Safety Pins--securing bandages and cloth slings, clothespins, fish hook, hook for hanging items,

Clothing--slings, pillow stuffing, adds loft to sleeping system.

Stove Aluminum Wind Screen--candle light reflector, funnel for pouring liquids.

Dental Floss--sewing thread, ties,

Zip-Loc Freezer Baggies--carry items, bowl for preparing & eating food, carry-out container for garbage.

Backpack w/weather shroud--emergency bivy sack (for the lower half of the body).

Compass sighting mirror--personal mirror, emergency signaling device.

Tent Pegs--slender tent pokers with relatively sharp ends (like the titanium pegs sold by Simon Metals Company) can be used as a piercing tool- for instance, to pierce thick fabric or leather in order to run a cord through, to make a repair. Also, for grilling food over a flame.

(source: backpacker's base camp weekly wisdom 8/25/97).

Look for Innovative Ways to Reduce Backpack Weight:

Take time--before, during, & after each hike--to peruse your gear, your packing habits, even the clothing you wear, for ways to reduce the weight that you must bear. You may be surprised at the amount of unnecessary weight that you inflict on yourself. Keep in mind, though, it is a process. A long-term commitment and challenge. You will, undoubtedly, think of something new practically every trip.

Here is a compilation of Backpack Weight Reducing Tips Some are original, some are commonly known and used

3 lb Pack, 2 lb Sleeping Bag, 3 lb tent

This is, perhaps, your biggest opportunity to reduce backpack weight. Seek out a good 3 lb pack that is relatively comfortable with 35 to 40 pounds in it. Since, most of the time, you will be carrying *less* than that, the suspension of that 3 lb pack should be adequate for you. Get a good 2 lb, 20 degree, goose-down (or comparable synthetic) sleeping bag and a good 3 lb 3 season tent. Let's see, 7 lbs minus 3 lbs (pack), 3.5 lbs minus 2 lbs (bag), 5 lbs minus 3 lbs (tent)--that's a weight reduction of 7.5 pounds. SEVEN AND A HALF POUNDS!!!

Seek out TITANIUM products

Pots, stoves, backpack stays, tent pegs, anything metal, if made of titanium, will be significantly lighter than any other metal. For example, my Snow Peak Titanium 3-Piece Cookset weighs 7.1 oz. That compares to 14 oz. for comparable MSR or SIGG lightweight stainless steel and about 10 oz. for Traveling Light's Aluminum entry. My REI Ti Ware SporkSo (titanium). Unlike plastic and polycarbonate, TiWare won't melt if you get it too close to your stove and weighs 0.62 oz. That compares to 0.5 oz. for comparable GSI Piranha Foon (Lexan® polycarbonate resin construction). In my experience, strength and durability of titanium products seem to be more than adequate.

Toothbrush / Tooth Powder / Dental Floss / Sewing Kit

Assuming you use more than just your finger to clean your teeth, here's a tip or two. First find a toothbrush with a short head, say 3/4 inch. Next, cut off the handle--leaving about two inches to hold onto--and finish it off by sanding-down the rough edges. Oh yeah, drill a few holes in the remaining handle -- if it's a fat handle, hollow it out with your drill. Be creative: tooth powder is lighter than paste, and can be meted out much easier. Measure a small palm-full for each day on the trail and store it in a very-small, very light plastic container which resembles a 35mm film container but is about 1/2 the size and weight. I use Aurelle TOOB Brush with paste 1oz.

If you are going to carry dental floss, two suggestions. Take the floss, leave the plastic container behind. Rather than packing a sewing kit, use the waxed floss as emergency thread for gear repair. Put a sewing needle or two in your first aid kit or somewhere else safe.

Water Is Heavy

So only carry what you need. Here are two potential ways to reduce the amount of H₂O you're packing. (1) If you know the area you're in and can be sure there are watering holes up ahead, pack only enough to get to the next water hole. Also, (2) if you drink as much as your innards can hold before you hit the trail and at each water fill-up, thereafter, you won't need to carry as much, after you get going.

About Stuff Sacks

I carry much of my gear in color-coded stuff sacs and Zip-Loc freezer baggies. Where I use stuff sacs, I adhere to the following. (1) Use the right size sack--wasted space means unnecessary weight. (2) Allow just enough draw cord so sack can have full opening--cut off the rest and melt the ends so they won't unravel. (3) Use the strongest-smallest plastic cord-locks you can find. All this may seem insignificant, but it adds up after a while.

Mete-Out Appropriate Portions!

Sunscreen, bug-juice, toothpowder/paste, condiments, prescription medicine, antacid, vitamin I (ibuprofen), toilet paper, and anything else for which you can measure usage according to time (weeks, days, hours). Mete out portions of these items that will be appropriate for the time you'll be in the backcountry. For some items, estimate conservatively so that you'll have a little extra if conditions turn out to be different from what you anticipated -- (for example, worse bugs, more sun, bigger headache, etc.). I use little plastic vials that are similar to film canisters but smaller -- but have same tight-fitting lids.

NOTE: I don't use film canisters because of the chemicals used on film & possible residual in the canisters.

Clothes

Cut off unnecessary lengths of cord. If garments have cord locks, replace them with lighter versions, or instead, use small doubled-up patches of light-weight leather with slits. I've noticed that some manufacturers have been doing this, also.

Backpacks

Shorten nylon webbing straps wherever possible.

Boots, Shoes & Laces

Two tips here. The first, definitely do it. The second, consider it a potential way to significantly reduce relative pack weight, but don't take it as gospel. Analyze your own situation, experiment, and do what's safe and healthful.

Firstly, on shoes and boots, I cut off excess shoe lace--for two reasons (1) excess shoelace means unnecessary weight and (2) excess shoelace means safety hazard in the bush. Ever have a big lace-loop catch on an exposed root or tangly bush? After you cut them, scorch/burn/melt the ends so they won't unravel.

And secondly, as your pack weight goes down, your requirement for heavy boots is reduced, as well. Since each pound on your feet is supposedly equivalent to 5 pounds on your back, you can reduce the relative weight of your pack by getting a pair of lighter weight boots.

Consider the implication. Assuming the "1 pound on the foot is equal to 5 pounds on the back" theory is true, **Pillows**

Instead of carrying a pillow, stuff your clothes in one of your larger stuff sacs--makes a dandy pillow. Your clothes will be dry & maybe even warm in the morning.

Scouring Pads for dirty Pots & Pans

Use sand, dirt or moss instead of a scouring pad. No soapsuds in the water & no dirty pad to mess with.

Batteries

Replace the AA Alkaline batteries in your flashlights with AA Lithium batteries. Lithium AA batteries weigh 50% less than alkaline and last about 3 times longer. They only cost about \$5.00 for two, so you actually come out ahead in the long run.

Water Filter

After using your water filter, pump it to flush out remaining water.

Using Your Gear for Emergencies

Rather than carry triangular bandages, SAM splints, bunches of medical tape and such, consider the following:

You can fashion a sling by using a safety pin (or pins) to (1) attach a shirt sleeve or front shirt-tail to the top of the shirt or (2) attach two legs of a pair of fleece pants or thermal underwear bottoms which have been draped around the victims neck.

Improvise a splint by using a sleeping-pad, backpack aluminum stays or hiking poles.

Improvise an emergency litter or stretcher using (1) a sleeping bag with hiking staffs or wooden branches for carrying handles or, (2), a closed-cell foam, self-inflating mattress.

Use parachute cord to fashion traction devices for traction splints and for securing improvised splints.

Duct tape is also useful for securing splints, as well as holding protective bandages in place and as an effective alternative to moleskin.

If your sunglasses break, especially if you are in the snow, cut small peep holes in duct tape or paper and secure to your head. If you happen to be carrying cardboard, that works well, also.

Carry Less Stove Fuel

Test how much fuel your stove uses to cook your favorite meals & drinks, plan accordingly, and only take the necessary amount of fuel. If you are using white gas, factor in extra for priming purposes. Also, regardless of what kind of fuel you use, factor in a little extra if you are going to higher altitudes where the air is thinner.

Always cook with a lid on your pots. This enables better heat retention, so the water boils faster, which uses less fuel, which reduces the weight on your back!

Also, try to take foods which don't require cooking. Lunches and snacks, especially. This will reduce the amount of stove fuel you will need to carry.

Blacken Your Pots !

Another tip for using less fuel is to blacken your cooking pots. A blackened pot will absorb heat faster than a shiny surfaced one. Most pots do not come pre-blackened, but over time may become that way, especially if you use them in an open fire.

Eat Heavy Foods, First !

Foods such as, mealpack bars, fresh fruits & veggies, canned foods, semi-dried sausages, etc., add the most weight to your pack. Eat them first to lighten your load.

