

THINGS TO REMEMBER AND THINK ABOUT

- Give someone that cares your adventure plans and try not to deviate.
- An extra ounce in the morning feels like a pound by the end of the day.
- Pack fit is everything! A poorly adjusted pack or a pack not worn properly can ruin even an easy trip. Have new backpackers bring packs in 1 week before trip to ensure adjusted correctly.
- For new backpackers – plan on making many stops the first mile to adjust packs, retie gear, ... etc.
- Drink water constantly – when you feel thirsty you have waited too long. Water is heavy!!
- Stuff shouldn't hang on the outside of the pack.
- Keeping stuff dry is of utmost importance.
- New Scouts to invest in a good mummy bag up front rather than a car camping bag.
- Liner and hiking socks – no exceptions.
- Ziplocks rule!!
- Hiking boots not tennis shoes – few exceptions. Make sure they broken in before hitting the trail.
- Dry feet at all times – hiking on wet feet is a recipe for disaster – be kind to your feet.
- Treat hotspots and blisters as soon as they occur – don't wait for camp.
- Know and practice Leave No Trace principles!!
- A good target pack total weight with 35 lbs including water. Tough to do at first.
- Repack food out of boxes to save weight/volume.
- Review what you didn't use after each trip.
- Backpacking in bear country requires extra precautions – bear bags, smellables – be safe!
- Don't wear bluejeans or cotton shorts out backpacking – they don't dry or come clean.
- Typically let slowest person lead single file down trail. Sometimes let experienced Scouts go forward to known point and wait. Scouts always lead, read map, know terrain, and use compass/GPS. Bushwacking is great fun, but know what you are doing.
- Carry a good first aid kit for the group and carry an individual small kit as well – moleskin, bandaids, ...
- Always, always, always remember the 10 essentials when entering the woods – always. Even when doing side hikes during the day. Not just one person either – everyone.
- Know and understand the principles of wilderness survival.
- The only time someone should be alone in the wilderness is when doing their "business" and someone needs to know your general whereabouts then. No one – even adult leadership should venture out of camp without someone else knowing where they have gone. Very important!!

BACKPACKING GEAR

Introduction:

Unlike "car camping," backpacking requires a certain amount of gear. There are as many opinions on the best equipment as there are experienced backpackers, and this guide attempts to provide some insight on finding good equipment at the best price. It is not necessary to buy the most expensive, state of the art outdoors gear. Certain items should be first rate without compromise (sleeping bag, boots, backpack), while others are not terribly important. Some items can wait because they are shared (tents), and some equipment is not needed because it falls in the "community" category (stoves, large cook sets, rain flies).

General Considerations:

In general the important things to consider when shopping for backpacking gear are:

- *Function under cold/wet conditions* – almost any camping gear will serve when weather is mild and dry, but gear that fails when the weather closes in is worse than useless, it may be dangerous.
- *Weight* – Everything must go on your scout's back. The maximum weight for most young boys to carry is 1/3 of their body weight, or about 35 pounds.
- *Cost/value* – We understand that you don't want to re-mortgage the house to buy Boy Scouting gear, but recognize that it may make sense to spend more on equipment that will last for his entire scouting career.

Essential Gear Discussion

- **Sleeping Bag** – The Walmart rectangular bag will not work for backpacking. A mummy style bag able to fit in backpack and rated to 30-35 degrees is a good choice – one rated at 20 (cold weather) and another at 45 degrees (warm weather) would be perfect. Get a stuff sack for bag. Check with experienced backpackers to get the right kind of bag – there are many choices. Finding the right bag at the right price, weight, temperature, and compressability takes research and experience – use the ones that have been there. Make sure it compresses as small as possible. Stay away from down filled bags for youth – too much care and attention. Hollofill, Qualofil are cheap but don't compress – Polarguard 3D is good compromise but still don't reduce well in volume – good choice is Alps Mountaineering Clearwater bag with Micro X insulation. Buy all Alps gear through Scouters Direct – the prices can not be beat anywhere. Don't skimp on you bag – that \$20 saved may mean a big difference in your enjoyment of a backpacking trip or frustration during packing. Minimum cost for a respectable bag will be about \$60.
- **Full Length Sleeping Pad** – prefer thin light pad like a Ridgerest or foam pad – simple and light. You can get fancier but this is the best bang for buck, weight, and size.
- **Backpack** - You must have an honest to goodness, real, camping type, backpack – not a book bag or rope rig or anything of the sort – a real honest to goodness backpack. Ensure pack fit and adjustment. Top conversion to fanny pack is a nice option. Typical good capacity is 4,500 to 5,500 in³. The Red Tail or Cascade by Alps Mountaineering are nice Scout packs and affordable through Scouter Direct. Kelty sells a number of packs and www.sportsmansguide.com sells a number of excellent backpacks that won't break the bank. Plan on spending \$70 - \$150 on a respectable backpack. Stick with internal frame packs and not external.
- **Pack Cover:** A full elastic pack cover keeps your pack and gear dry when raining. A required item.
- **Hiking Boots** – high top hiking boots – no sneakers. If you don't have the boots now get them and wear them because they MUST be broken in before the hike.
- **Raingear** – An absolute requirement and a poncho will not be sufficient. A better and relatively inexpensive option is the Stearns brand jacket and pants from WalMart. Need pants and jacket. Do Not purchase PVC raingear (it don't breath and weighs a ton)
- **Nalogen, Platypus, and/or Water Bottle** – A minimum of 2 liters (quarts) for water. Suggestion is one Nalogene and one Platypus to start. Gateraide bottle works well too.

- **Tent** – two person tent maximum. Don't need 4 season tent. Alps Mountaineering has good selection. One thing to know is Philmont will not allow one man tents. Pole material is usually an indicator of quality of tent and weight for backpacking. Fiberglass poles are on cheaper tents, aluminum poles next, then composite material poles. You will want a tent with separate rainfly cover and a vestibule to store gear. Remember weight is the issue – keep your tent light. If you get a two person tent then you partner can share the load.
- **Small Flash Light or Headlamp** - Most people are turning to headlamps for backpacking nowadays. The Walmart 3 LED and one regular light head lamp works fine – uses 3 AAA batteries. No giant lights, something small and light weight.
- **Compass** – plastic base compass – typically made by Sylva or Sunnto
- **Small Knife** – a small multifunction knife is all you need. A giant leatherman or Army kbar is unnecessary.
- **Spork or Fork/Spoon** – plastic is fine as long as you can wash and reuse it. Titanium spork is the rage. Stainless or lexan from Dicks Sporting goods or Walmart is fine too.
- **Cup** – Drinking cup or possibly metal cup for hot chocolate. This is optional and depends on how and what you eat.
- **Bowl or equivalent** – One of the glad disposable containers works great – cheap and light. You can purchase or consider many options here but you will need something to eat from. Full mess kits are too heavy and unnecessary. A bowl works well because it works as a plate too.
- **Small first aid kit** – Band-Aids mainly, moleskin, tape,... There is a group FA kit but the supply of bandaids and such are limited. Walmart has small red packaged kits that work well. Just add moleskin.
- **Small plastic shovel and small toilet paper** – No toilets in the wilderness so you need to make one – cat hole. Toilet paper is most important, there will be enough shovels if you need to borrow one.
- **Liner Socks and Outer Socks** – Always wear liner socks under synthetic hiking sock while backpacking – mega important. Not an option.
- **Suggest packed clothing** – Two pair of liner and hiking sock, 2 t-shirts, fleece, sleeping cloths, camp shoes (sneakers). Cold weather – turtle neck, gloves, knit hat, extra fleece layer, long johns.
- **Toiletries** – camp suds, tooth brush and paste, camp towel (maybe), and two bandanas (wash, dry, etc.).
- **Don't Bring** – bath towel, anything cotton (except t-shirts), deodorant, extra unnecessary cloths

Where to Find Gear

The best sources locally for good quality outdoor gear are Wyles Sports, Alabama Outdoors and to a lesser extent Dicks Sporting Goods. All have a good selection of gear and tend to be comparably priced. Wyles and Alabama Outdoors have top brand gear for backpacking and a knowledgeable staff that can answer questions.

Local discount stores, such as Wal-Mart, and Kmart have a limited stock of serious backpacking gear. They may have the good prices, but most of the gear is suitable car camping – not backpacking. Flashlights, headlamps, and such are Walmart type backpacking gear.

Of course the web is a spectacular resource for information and browsing high quality gear at competitive prices. Here are a few excellent gear sites.

www.alpsmountaineering.com & www.scoutdirect.com (Alps special pricing for scouts can be found at Scout Direct)

www.campmor.com; www.cheaperthandirt.com; www.rei.com; www.reioutlet.com; www.backcountry.com
www.sierratradingpost.com; www.mountainsports.com; www.sportsmansguide.com;
www.bargainoutfitters.com

Gear Checklist

Ten Essentials: The ten essentials are what keep us safe in the backcountry. Memorize the list and make sure you have it with you have them with while in the backcountry. This is essential gear.

Pocket Knife	1st Aid Kit	Appropriate Clothing – see list in essential gear
Rain Gear	Water Bottles (2 quarts min; 3 in summer)	Flashlight or Headlamp
Trail Food	Matches/Lighter and Fire starters	Sunscreen / insect repellent
Map and Compass		

Personal Survival Kit (Essential Gear): You are surviving in the wilderness. There are many stories of people who have perished in the woods where a survival kit would have made the difference. This is essential gear.

1/8" Nylon cord - 50 ft.	Small Plastic Sheet	Large Garbage Bag
Whistle and Signal Mirror	Duct Tape (small roll)	Toilet Paper
24 feet of think wire – 18 gauge	Emergency Blanket	50 feet fishing line with hooks

Other Essential Gear: Bring these items in addition to 10 essentials and survival gear.

Sleeping Bag and Stuff Sack	Tent (or Share Tent)	Backpack and Cover
Sleeping Pad	Platypus/Nalgene's or both – 2 liters (quarts) minimum – Summer 3 liters	Tent Ground Cloth
Hiking Boots	Cloths for Season ⁽¹⁾	Cat Hole (Toilet) Shovel
Camp Shoes	Eating Utensils	Plate, Bowl, and/or Cup
Personals – tooth brush, toothpaste, chapstick,...	Rain Gear – jacket and pants	Small Toilet Paper
Camp Suds – bio-degradable	Fishing Gear	Prescription Medicines, Tylenol, etc.
Small FA kit	Small sunblock and bug repellent	Food

- (1) *Warm Weather:* Two T-Shirts, two light weight (quick dry) shorts, three liner socks, two hiking socks.
Cold Weather: Fleece, long pants (not jeans), turtle neck, knit cap, warm gloves, long underwear.

Non-Essential Gear: This is just suggested gear.

Bathing suit	Gloves	Pillow
Brimmed Hat	Playing Cards	Fanny pack
Warm Cap for Cold Weather	Paper/Pen	Camera
Sunglasses	Brimmed Hat	Bandanas ⁽²⁾
Sleep Cloths ⁽³⁾	Head Strap For Glasses	Bug Head Net
Photo ID and Money	Extra Garbage Bag	Extra Zip Locks
Foot Powder	Gaiters	GPS
Cell Phone		

- (2) Bandanas are good as a wash cloth, towel, bandage, sunblocker, water filter, etc.

- (3) It is often nice to have an extra set of cloths that are only worn when you go to bed – remain clean, dry, and not food smelly for bears.

Group Gear: Distributed among backpackers

Stoves	Rain Fly	Cooking Pots
Fuel Bottles	Water Filters	Water Jug
Rope	Folding Saw	Cleaning Supplies
Sewing Kit	Dishwashing Stuff	Ladle, Tongs, Cooking Spoons
Class 3 Forms – Leaders		