

Backpacking on the Buckeye Trail

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In Backpacking, having the correct gear is the difference between having an enjoyable trip or a miserable one. There are several key ideas to keep in mind when packing. Two of these are weight and space. Everything you pack you must carry on your back all day, so when you are packing you need to opt for lightweight and compact items. One way to achieve this is to look for things with multiple uses so as to reduce the amount of items you must bring. Take for example, a handkerchief. Besides using it to blow your nose, you can wipe your sweat, wash yourself, and even protect your head from sunburn. You must also take the weather and the area that you are hiking into consideration. If hiking in the fall or winter you will need to bring warmer clothes than in the summer, and if you are hiking in dry areas you need a larger water-carrying capacity. This list will discuss some of the key items to bring, and is based off of my personal gear.

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Gear List for Backpacking

Hiking Gear

- **Backpack** –There are two types, internal and external:
 - Internal packs have the metal framework inside the pack.
 - External packs have the framework on the outside

I prefer internal packs, as I find them more comfortable. The load is easier to carry because the design of the pack holds it closer to your body. External packs usually can carry more weight than an internal one, and can have items strapped to the outside. The best way is to try on several packs before choosing one that fits your needs. When you are wearing your pack with a load in it, it is important that the majority of the weight is on your hip straps. The hip straps in turn should be resting on your pelvic bones. This gives you better balance and takes the weight off your shoulders, making hiking with a heavy load easier.

- **Pack Cover**-To keep your gear dry when it rains. Be sure it properly fits your pack, or water will collect in the folds.

- **Hiking Boots-** Be sure to get boot specifically made for hiking. There are several points to keep in mind:
 - Waterproof and Breathable – They should keep your feet dry if you have to cross streams or walk in puddles, but also allow air to get to your feet. (Note: When I take longer breaks during a hike, like lunch, I like to take off my boots and allow them to air out and dry off.)
 - Your toes should not be hitting the ends if you walk down an incline. This will lead to blisters and hurting toes.
 - Ankle Support- The boots at the very least should cover your whole ankle. It will prevent broken ankles if you slip.

Overall the boot should fit comfortably, and your foot should not slip inside it as you walk, as this will cause blisters. (Tip: When putting on the boots, kick your heels into the back of the boot before tying. Your foot will be less likely to slide around inside, and your toes won't butt into the front going down hills.)

Sleeping Arrangements

- **A Sleeping Bag-** Like backpacks there are two main types:
 - Down sleeping bags use feathers as the insulating material. They are lighter and compress more, but when they become wet they lose their insulating properties. I use down because it takes up less weight and space. If you decide to use this type, be sure that you keep it dry. This includes not only rain but also the water bottle you have in the tent, as well as sweat from your body. Don't jump in it immediately after hiking.
(Note: Down bags should not be stored in the compression sack, as it will mash the feathers and decrease its warmth.)
 - Synthetic sleeping bags are filled with a variety of manmade materials. While bulkier than down, they do not lose their insulating ability from water as fast, and are generally easier to care for.
Sleeping bags are typically rated for a certain minimum temperature. Be sure to choose one that fits the weather. For example, if I'm hiking during the summer, where the night temperature might be fifty degrees, a 40 degree bag will work better than a zero degree bag (which is heavier and too hot for the weather.)

(Note: Some types of bags can be very bulky. Try to get a smaller one that will take up less room in your pack.)
(Tip: Keep a t-shirt in your sleeping bag to solely use when sleeping. That way you don't have to sleep in a sweaty shirt.)
- **Compression Sack** – To carry and compress sleeping bag. (Tip: To keep your sleeping bag dry wrap the compression sack in a garbage bag.)

- **Sleeping Pad**- Foam or inflatable. Foam will be lighter while an inflatable pad might be more comfortable. They come in full body length or three-fourths.
- **A Light Weight Tent**- While you can use a one man tent, I recommend using a two man tent, and splitting up the poles and other parts between two tent partners.
- **Small Pillow** – For additional comfort, if you don't mind the weight. (Note: This is not a pillow from your bed; it should be a travel pillow, or something along those lines. Remember, lightweight and small.) (Tip: If you don't want to bring a pillow, you can use bundled up clothes as a substitute.)
- **Wool Hat**- To keep your ears warm on a cold night. You can also use it during the day.

You will be spending 1/3 of your time sleeping, so it is important to be comfortable with your sleeping gear. I always bring a small pillow, as I sleep poorly without one. While you need to remember to pack lightweight, don't be afraid to splurge a little when it comes to sleeping gear.

Clothes

- **2 Shirts**- 2 short sleeve in summer; if it's colder, switch out for long sleeve. Shirts with a sweat wicking property are the best. Should be comfortable and have good ventilation.
- **2 Pants**- Nylon or some other non-cotton material. I use zipper pants that double as shorts. This allows for both warm and cold weather options.
- **2-3 Wool Socks**- They should be the right size for your feet. It's very important that they are not cotton.
- **2-3 Sock Liners**- They go between your foot and the wool sock. They will help prevent blisters. (Note: These could be considered optional, but I recommend them.)
- **Bandana** – Discussed in Intro.
- **Fleece Jacket**- Or some other lightweight coat. For nights or colder days. (Note: I like fleece because it is also moisture wicking and fast drying)
- **Rain Jacket** – You will probably still be hiking even if it is raining, so make sure it is also breathable. In windy weather it can be used as a windbreaker. Ponchos are not ideal since they are less durable and not wind breaking, nor are heavy rubber jackets, since they are heavy and not breathable.
- **Underwear** – 2-3 pairs. They should not be cotton. Breathable and moisture wicking are the key ideas here.

The sad truth of the matter is that you will be re-wearing clothes if your trip is more than two days. Bringing new clothes for each day would be too heavy. Clothes can be washed with some Campsuds and water, and hung on your pack to dry. **You should have no cotton clothes.** Cotton holds moisture, meaning your clothes would be wet the entire trip. Additionally, cotton socks will get wet with sweat and cause blisters. Instead opt for wool or synthetic materials. Ideally your clothes should be breathable and moisture wicking, since you will be sweating from all the hiking. (Tip: I put clothes in large Ziplock bags. It keeps them dry and compact.)

Water

- **2 One-Liter bottles**
- **1 Two-Liter Platypus Water Sack**
- **Iodine Tablets**

This is what I personally use. According to FEMA's disaster preparedness website, a person will need roughly one gallon of water daily. You will also need water for cooking. Before you start your hike you need to plan out where you can refill your water; streams, wells, lakes. If you have a large distance between water sources you need to have enough water capacity cover the distance between them. It is important to stay hydrated, as it prevents heatstroke, and numerous other problems. Water taken from a stream will need to be purified before using. You can boil the water. But it is usually faster and more efficient to use an alternative method, like iodine tablets or a filter.

Toiletries

- **Tooth brush and toothpaste**
- **Toilet paper- Important**
- **Washcloth** – Microfiber or similar material.

Food-Related

- **Dehydrated Food**

Meals should be high in Calories and Carbs. Additional trail food snacks like granola/energy bars and trail mix should be brought. Lunch is normally not cooked but instead something easy and fast, like crackers and peanut butter. Dinner should be the biggest meal. I usually have a breakfast (Either hot or cold) after packing up my gear but before leaving camp, and have dinner after arriving at the next campsite and setting up camp. Dehydrated food is lighter and longer lasting than regular food, and therefore more suited toward backpacking.

- **Small Mess Kit** –I typically only have a bowl and spork. (Note: I normally have two water bottles, one I use for water, the other for flavored drinks. Depending on your meal plan you might want a small cup with your mess kit in addition to that.)

I alternate between two ways of making meals. The first is having a one pot meal, where hot water is added to one main dehydrated dish, and then divided among the crew. The second way is with dehydrated meals where you just add water to the bag and stir. These bags range from 1 serving to several servings, and can be shared among a couple people. Both ways work fairly well; the one pot method can be easier for larger groups, while the second way offers more variety.

Crew Gear

- **Rope**
- **Tarp**-These are for when it rains. It will give you somewhere to cook and put your packs.
- **Multi-tool**
- **First Aid Kit**- Usually I have a fully supplied kit for the crew, and then my own little one. Two important items to include are moleskin (blisters) and baby powder (chaffing).
- **Map and Compass**
- **Stove and Fuel**- There are many types available. You will want to do some research. I like using Jetboil stoves as they are fast and lightweight. Just attach the burner to the propane can and it's ready to go. It is not always as efficient for large groups, however, so you would also want to consider other types. You do not want to bring a large, two burner stove; It should be lightweight and easily (and safely) carried.
- **Pot/Cooking Gear**
- **Insect Repellent**
- **Sunscreen**
- **Soap** – Campsuds or another biodegradable type is best
- Hand Sanitizer
- **Bear Bag**- To hang your smellables during the night. Bags can be of any durable type. See below for more information.
- **Small Shovel**

Crew gear is items that you will share, so it is not necessary for every single person to have every single item on the list, as long as someone in the crew has it.

Bear Bags and Smellables

Animals have a much stronger sense of smelling than humans, and thus can be attracted to any item with a scent. These items are called smellables. Any clothes that had food spilled on them, as well as mess kits, toothpaste, soap and anything else with a scent need to be put in the bear bag before you go to sleep. The bag should be hung from a tree away from your tent, and out of reach of animals.

Some Equipment Sources:

[Campmor](#)
[REI](#)
[Eddie Bauer](#)
[L.L. Bean](#)

References:

BSA Boy's Life Magazine

Backpacks : <http://boyslife.org/outdoors/askgareguy/3239/internal-or-external-frame-on-backpack/>

Sleeping Bags: <http://boyslife.org/outdoors/guygear/4225/sleeping-bags/>

FEMA's Ready website

<http://www.ready.gov/build-kit/water>

Philmont Scout Ranch Gear List

<http://philmontscoutranch.org/Camping/Hikers/WhattoBring/PackingList.aspx>