

# HIKING EQUIPMENT MUST-HAVES



Are you planning to hike soon? It's a great idea, but are you sure you know everything you should take along? Every hiker must learn the list of outdoor essentials to enjoy the trail without risking too much. The guide by Cleverwander's hiking experts provides a comprehensive list of 2021 hiking equipment essentials so you can use it to prepare even for the longest trails.

## Trail Shoes

Shoes are probably the most important piece of gear for any hiker. Unlike the average ones that you wear every day, hiking shoes are designed to provide extra ankle support as well as more traction and stability. You can also choose to wear trail shoes which are lighter and usually feel a bit softer. Both types have strengthened outsoles, excellent ventilation, and extra cushioning to protect your feet from the continuous shock caused by different types of terrain.

## Socks for Hikers

Upgrading your socks is the second most important stage after choosing the right hiking/trailing shoes. Don't ever go hiking wearing your average cotton socks if you don't want to suffer all the way long. Cotton is a material that conserves moisture within a sock, making your feet sweaty. Such a mistake may ruin your day. The most popular sock material amongst experienced hikers is wool as it can regulate the temperature within the sock naturally. Such materials as nylon, spandex, silk, and polyester are usually included as well to add strength to the sock's toe, heel, and ankle.

## Moisture-wicking T-shirt

Not only will your feet sweat on the trail and similar to your feet, but your body also needs to be as dry as possible. That's why you need a special moisture-wicking T-shirt or a long sleeve. It will wick the excess moisture off your upper body and evaporate it without blocking ventilation, sticking to your skin, or adding weight. You can also opt for a T-shirt with integrated sun protection if you are going to hike under scorching summer light.

## Backpack

Going for a day hike, you should take a backpack of an optimal size to carry all the essentials and nothing more. For longer trails, it's recommended to choose between a 20 to 30-liter backpack. Such a volume will let you pack all the essentials from this listing without overweighing. Look only for those backpack models that are designed specifically for hiking and camping as you need all the features, such as rain protection and exterior pockets for bottles.

## Hydration + Water Purifier

Water stands above food in this listing by cleverwander.com as it's much more important. It's impossible to survive over 4 days without water (2-3 days in extreme heat), but you can make it up to 30-40 days when you are properly hydrated. You should drink at least 30% more water than you think you need to feel good all over the trail. Packing a water reservoir and 2 additional 1.5-liter bottles to refill it when needed is best. If there are water fountains on the resting spots on your trail,

don't hesitate to refill the bottles too.

If you head on a long trip, it's also wise to take a compact water purifier. It's usually a small pump with a filter that makes it possible to extract clean water from streams and even puddles. There are also lighter options, such as water bottles with integrated filters, portable filters, and water purification tablets (the most lightweight but non-reusable option). All of these remedies can remove almost 100% of harmful bacteria and help you stay well-hydrated in extreme conditions.

### **Main Nutrition + Extra Snacks**

Similar to the water supply, your food pack should be bigger than you expect to consume. Plan how many times you will eat during the entire hike. You should eat that scheduled snack even if you don't feel hungry, as it's important to keep yourself fueled-up the whole day long. The best solution is to take dense meals that carry more calories in smaller-size packages. These include nuts, granola and energy bars, protein bars, dried fruit, jerky, etc. You can use a hiking calorie calculator to see how much you need during the day.

### **Lights**

Taking a light source is essential even if you're not planning to hike in the dark as your route may unexpectedly take longer to pass. The best option is a headlamp as it's lightweight and keeps your hands free. Modern handlamps are equipped with LED bulbs that are very bright and usually have a strobe light mode so that you can call for help in an emergency. Don't forget to take extra batteries in waterproof packaging. If the trail will take several days, you should also consider a torch with a dynamo that makes it possible to turn on the light when you run out of batteries or lose them for some reason.

### **Sunscreen**

Remember that you may get sunburnt even on the most overcast day as UVA rays can penetrate clouds. The type of sunscreen you need depends on your skin type, but the most popular solution is a lotion with 50 SPF. Depending on the brand, you have to apply new layers every 50-100 minutes. If you have a pale white skin type, it's a good solution to wear a long sleeve to limit sun reach to your skin. A visit to a dermatologist will be a good idea if you're not sure how much protection your skin type requires.

### **Hat**

While sunscreen is very helpful, it may not protect your neck and face from hard sunlight as the skin on these spots is too tender. That's where a broad-brimmed hat will help you the best. Proper hiking hats cover your face, neck, and, most importantly, scalp from overheating. Getting a heat stroke is very dangerous, so don't neglect this step even if you don't feel the heat. A good hat will also provide extra sweat-wicking and protection from wind and rain.

### **Sunglasses**

All of us have sunglasses, and wearing them is a habit on sunny days, but the truth is that your daily shades won't cut enough sunlight when you hit the long trail. That's why you should look for wrap-around sporty models that provide full eye protection even when the sun is shining from the side. It's also recommended to take polarized lenses as they cut glare to reduce eye stress, and it's harder to scratch them. Good polarized hiking glasses cost from \$18 to \$35.

## **Raincoat**

There's no need to take a raincoat if the forecast for the coming days promises zero fallout. However, if you see at least a 10% probability or are planning a several-day hike, you should definitely take one. It weighs very low and doesn't take much space. A raincoat will also save you if you get into an extreme situation. Staying dry is very important for your health. There's also an option to use a disposable plastic cloak if you're an occasional hiker and want to save up. They're not as durable as reusable raincoats, though.

## **Extra Clothing**

In some regions of the US and worldwide, you may face frequently changing weather conditions, especially if you are hiking towards a mountain peak or along an oceanic shore. If you are going to a several-day trial, you should also remember that temperatures fall at night.

If that is the case or the weather forecast is vague, you should take some extra clothes along to be able to change if it gets too cold. It's easier to take off a coat when you're hot than to warm up when temperatures fall.

## **Power Bank**

A power bank (portable battery back) is a highly convenient accessory that lets you charge up your smartphone, navigator, electronic signaling device, or even your headlamp (if it's powered with a built-in battery). Modern power banks have from 5000 mAh to 20000 mAh, which is enough to charge up an average smartphone to the full from 2 to 10 times. Take a battery pack with the largest capacity if you're going to hike for more than one day, take pictures, make calls, and use navigation.

## **First Aid Kit**

There's no need to explain how important it is to be able to help yourself and your co-hikers if you or someone gets hurt. You can either purchase a premade first-aid kit or gather all the essentials by yourself. In both cases, your kit should include bandages, stainless-steel tweezers, liquid antiseptic and antiseptic towelettes, gauze pads, and an emergency blanket. Some experts also recommend taking bio-glue that helps to fix cuts really quick, as well as a plaster to close small open cuts.

It would also be a good idea to visit a Wilderness First Aid Class in your city to learn how to properly provide first aid in the wild. It differs a lot from average first aid and requires knowledge.

## **Signaling Device**

The simplest option is to take a blow whistle and a signal mirror. Using both tools with a fire/smoke source, you can easily let the rescue team notice you from afar. These are the essential but not certainly most effective items, though. You can also benefit a lot from electronic devices, such as satellite texting devices or industrial emergency beacons. They are quite pricey but raise your chances to get help quickly several times. Actually, even your smartphone may help. If there's no signal in the area, you still can use the flashlight on the phone as a strobe light or climb up a high tree or hill to catch up the signal. Always try everything you have to get help sooner.

## **Navigation**

Of course, modern smartphones can work as a digital compass, but they become totally useless when you leave the cell coverage zone or drown the gadget in a forest stream. That's where a classic plastic or metal compass may save your life. It's also very easy to use a compass to navigate with a

paper map. If you want to make your way with technology in any landscape conditions, it's recommended to buy a specialized waterproof and shock-resistant electronic navigator.

### **Insect Repellent**

Depending on the time of the year and area you are exploring, you may need an insect repellent to keep all the potentially dangerous and annoying insects away. Such natural remedies as essential oils from lemon eucalyptus and similar plants may help quite well. However, they're unable to provide as much protection as DEET and picaridin-based solutions. The best repellants come as sprays and lotions. Any tests don't approve the efficiency of Ultrasonic repellent devices, while popular citronella candles work only when you stay in a camp and there's no wind at all.

### **Fire**

If you are an experienced scout and you are taught how to start a fire with a couple of sticks in any circumstances, you probably don't need advice. If not, don't forget to take a pack of stormproof matches that will remain dry even if you get an unexpected bath in a pond. It's also a good idea to put some cotton wool inside the match barrel to start a fire faster when there's not enough dry material.

Other options include wind-proof lighters, magnifying glass (works only when it's sunny, waterproof military matches, average lighters, a silica fire starter. It's also great to know how to use a handmade bow drill to start a fire. In any case, you should keep the fire under strict control and start it only in permitted areas. There were many cases when lost hikers started forest fire trying to call for help. Be as careful as possible.

### **Repair Kit**

Building a shelter, looking for raw materials, and crafting/fixing anything else in normal and emergency cases require you to have at least a basic set of tools, including a duct/tenacious tape, multitool knife, and a utility cord. Having all these, you will be able to survive longer in case of an emergency.

### **Bivvy + Shelter for Emergencies**

A bivvy (short for bivouac) is a good shelter for an emergency that doesn't take much space in your already full backpack. It will help you overnight in the woods if you don't take a sleeping bag or get into an emergency situation.

### **Take Enough Gear**

Is there a need to take everything to the trails? Definitely not. You should decide on what distance you are going and understand what the weather will be during the day (days). These aspects will tell you how much gear, clothing, food, water, and other supplies you really need. The rule of thumb is the further you go, the more gear you need. Have a good hike!

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