

Backpacking Checklist

(Beginner and Intermediate)



THE TEN ESSENTIALS

1. **Navigation:** Map, Compass (GPS optional)
2. **Hydration:** Water, Container/Bladder, and Treatment Method
3. **Nutrition:** Extra Food for emergency (extra nutrition bars)
4. **Sun Protection:** Sunscreen, Sunglasses, Hat, Lip Balm
5. **Insulation:** Hat and Gloves, Light weight jacket, Extra layers
6. **Warmth:** Lighter/Matches, Fire starter or Stove and Fuel
7. **Illumination:** Headlamp/Flashlight, Extra Batteries
8. **First Aid (for self and gear):** Bandages, Knife, Medicine, Duct Tape, Zip Ties, etc
9. **Shelter:** Tent, Sleeping Bag, Sleeping Pad
10. **Safety:** Whistle (For emergency signals)

Specifics for One or Two Nights

Remember: Your pack should not weigh more than 20-30% of your body weight unless you are an experienced backpacker and know your abilities.

Clothing:

(Prepare with layers; It is helpful to put all extra clothing in gallon Zip Lock bags or dry bags)

- 3 pr. Wool Socks and liners (one you're wearing, one dry, and one drying)
- Hiking Boots
- Wicking T-Shirt (wear the same one)
- Light weight durable pants (avoid jeans and shorts)
- Fleece/Long sleeve silk or wicking shirt
- Light weight jacket or vest
- Hat and gloves (especially for at night and early morning)
- Trash bag/Rain poncho (also to cover pack in rain)
- Silk Underwear (late fall and winter months, for sleeping)

Gear:

(Pack light and compact. Everything must have a "survival purpose" or multi-use)

- Overnight Pack
- Tent
- Sleeping bag (with appropriate temperature rating for evening lows)
- Sleeping pad (highly recommended for both comfort and insulation)
- Water bladder/Water containers (1.5 to 2 liters minimum)
- Water purification method (discuss sharing a method with other backpackers)
- Navigation (See Above)
- Sun Protection (See Above)
- Illumination (See Above)
- Whistle

- Fire starters (lint, wax, matches)
- Stove and fuel
- Mess Kit (multi use as both cooking pan/pot and bowl)
- Plastic-ware (Note: Polycarbonate-ware will not melt in boiling water)
- First Aid Kit (personal)
 - Mole skin
 - Duct tape or sports tape
 - Bandages, balm, antiseptic wipes, triple antibiotic ointment
 - Pocket knife/Rope
 - Individual Medical Needs (inhalers, prescriptions, etc)
- Personal Hygiene Needs
 - Toilet Paper/Paper Towel/Feminine Hygiene Products (Optional)
 - Handkerchief/Tissue Paper (keep in mind no garbage is to be left on the trails)
 - Toothbrush/Paste
 - Deodorant, small amount of soap
- Extra Batteries (make sure non-battery operated devices are fully charged)
- Extra Zip Lock bags
 - for water damageable items (cell phones, papers, tissues, electronic devices)
 - to store trash items
 - used to line inside of shoes on wet trails
- Hiking poles (optional, but highly recommended on strenuous uphill hikes)
- Bandana/Hair Ties (good multi-purpose items)
- Camera (Optional)
- Watch (Optional)
- Bug Repellant (optional depending on season)

Do Not Bring

(Weight is crucial on backpacking trips, and your safety depends on your ability to pack wisely)

- Pillows (use your sweater or jacket instead)
- Folding chairs (use rocks, logs, sleeping pads, or ponchos to sit on)
- Perishable Foods (unless you'll eat it the first day)
- Cotton clothing (heavier than polyester and does not dry easily)
- Pots and pans (use a backpacking lightweight mess kit and backpacking stove)
- Anything luxury or single purpose in nature.

Meals Per Day:

(Pack light, but remember that more is better than not enough)

- Snacks (Power Bars, Cliff Bars, Granola, Trail Mix, Jerky, Powder Drink mix, etc)
- Lunch (Pouched Tuna/Chicken/etc, Sandwiches, Dried Fruit, Boiled Eggs)
- Dinner (Dehydrated meals high in protein and carbohydrates but low in sodium)
- Breakfast (Oatmeal, Hot Cocoa/Instant Coffee/Tea, Snack Items, Dried Fruit, etc)

NOTES AND TIPS

1. The pack should **not** weigh more than 20-30% your body weight, including water.
2. Storing clothing in zip lock bags or dry bags has two benefits. First, it protects them from getting wet should the pack fall in water. Second, air can be compressed from the zip lock, thus allowing for more space in the backpack.
3. Socks that are too loose will cause blistering, so make sure you have good tight socks and liners, and good hiking boots. Also make sure you have extra socks because wet socks will cause blistering and add weight to your shoes.
4. Any contents that can be stored in baggage containers or travel containers smaller than the original container, should be. This reduces both space and weight. Keep small squeeze bottles like eye drops, contact solution, nasal spray, etc. They're good for storing all sorts of things like soap for your pots and pans or toothpaste.
5. Bring a change of clothes (to leave in the car) that you can change into for the ride home.
6. Bring gas money for your carpool driver, and for meals or emergency use.
7. Bring proper forms of identification (drivers license/state ID, insurance card, ID bracelet, etc. Provide any medical information in a sealed envelope to keep on you, only to be opened if you should need medical assistance)
8. On the trail, take note of landmarks in case something goes wrong and you have to backtrack. Also, be sure to know where your start and end locations are (i.e. trailhead names, road names, town names) in case you get separated from the group and someone outside of the group is trying to assist you. Keep an accurate map of the trail with you.
9. Also avoid fruity scented lotions, deodorants, and soaps as they attract bugs and animals.
10. Make sure any items you bring are double duty. For example, a bandana can be used as a hair tie, potholder, shade to keep the sun off your neck, and as a bandage for injuries.
11. Cotton sweatshirts are warm when dry, but don't handle moisture or compress well. Pack weight really has two factors: Actual weight as measured by a scale, and leverage as it gets farther and farther from your body. A compressed item close to your back feels lighter than a fluffy item away from your back. These are small differences with individual items, but they add up.
12. For TN weather (spring and summer), a t-shirt, long-sleeve shirt, rain jacket, and sleeping bag will keep you plenty warm. And it gives you options for layering.
13. Brimmed hats are great for sun and eye protection from branches, spider webs, etc.
14. If you pee before you go to bed, you'll sleep a lot warmer, cutting down on additional clothing/bedding needed at night. It also helps to eat a packet of sugar before bed as your body will create heat while breaking down the sugars.
15. Keep in mind basic leave-no-trace guidelines. Trail etiquette is not just "don't leave trash behind." An easy one to remember *always step on durable surfaces (rocks, roots) whenever possible*, instead of dirt, moss, etc. It's not just a don't-hurt-the-plant-life thing, but it helps keep down erosion of the trail.
16. Be sure that at least 2 other people, not in the group, know where you are and when you expect to back. Also be sure that your trip leader has your emergency contact information, any known allergies and medical conditions, and a list of prescription drugs that may be needed to save your life on the trail.
17. Finally, know your group members' names, and never be afraid to ask the group to stop for a rest or to slow down during a hike.