

How to Not Overpack

- “What if I break it?”
- “What if there’s an extra night?”
- “What if someone else forgets something?”
- “What if there’s an extreme weather event?”
- “What if my boots get wet?”
- “What if I run out of water?”

It is very common to feel anxious or nervous about packing for an outdoor trip. A lot of people feel like they need to pack a lot of different things, just in case. This can help them feel a lot better about what might happen, because they feel prepared.

The downside to this is that people often overpack. You might end up carrying a lot more gear than you will realistically need, making your backpack heavier. The heavier your backpack is, the faster you will get tired. If you pack too much, you will work harder and be slower than you would have been.

We want you to be able to pack light and feel comfortable about what you have with you. Hopefully this guide helps you feel prepared and confident about what you are bringing.

Backpack, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, water bottles, and headlamps are available to borrow on all Sahale Outdoors trips

This is the packing list we send out, with notes on what (and why) not to bring:

- Backpack, sleeping pad, and sleeping bag, if you have them
 - You will only need one of each of these. If you are worried about breaking, tearing, or otherwise damaging them, bring a lightweight repair kit of a few zip-ties, a small roll of duct-tape, and superglue. You will be able to take care of breaks, at least short-term, in the field.
- Two T-shirts, or one T-shirt and one long-sleeve shirt
 - Two shirts might seem like way too few for a multi-day trip. The truth is, people do not change clothes every day when backpacking. You will most likely wear one shirt during the day, and another shirt at night. If you want, you can bring one more shirt, but make sure it is lightweight. It is up to you. On the trail, no one will be judging you.
- One pair of hiking pants and one pair of leggings or shorts
 - Like shirts, you will not be changing your pants from day to day during the trip. You will wear hiking pants during the day, and leggings or shorts at night. If you are not sure about temperature regulation, bring

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pants, leggings, and a pair of shorts such as running shorts that you could either hike or sleep in.

- One insulating layer (fleece or puffy)
 - You will probably only wear this layer in the mornings and afternoons in camp. The rest of the day, you will be carrying it. Only bring one of these. If it breaks, you can duct-tape it. If it's not enough and you get cold in the evening, you can get in your sleeping bag. If someone else forgets theirs, you can trade off when they have to be outside the tent so that everyone can stay warm.
- Waterproof jacket (and pants if needed)
 - These layers are usually lightweight and pack down easily. If you want to bring two rainshells in case one gets soaked through, you can. An extra rain shell can be used to cover a backpack, shield a leaking tent, or provide extra protection from wind.
- Well-fitting shoes or boots
 - You will only need one pair of hiking shoes or boots. If they break, you can fix them with duct tape. Just in case, you can bring an extra pair of shoelaces, and freezer bags to put your feet in if they get wet. Plastic bags over a dry pair of socks will keep your feet happy while your boots dry.
 - A lot of people choose to bring sandals or some other shoe to wear in camp. Feel free to bring light, comfortable camp shoes.
- 1 pair per day wool or synthetic socks
 - Socks are a great thing to bring more of. If you want, bring one or two extra pairs of lightweight socks. You will not realistically need more than one pair per day, and one or two extras.
- 2 "Nalgene" style water bottles
 - For almost all hikes, two liters of water is plenty. While it is important to stay hydrated, water is heavy. In the PNW, water sources are plentiful. If you have two water bottles and a way of filtering or treating water, you will be good to go. On our trips, we provide water filters, but if you have a small, lightweight water filter (such as a LifeStraw) and want to bring it, you can. Do not bring heavy or large water filtration systems, the chance of you needing them is so small that it is not worth the extra weight.
- Underwear (1 pair per day)

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- An extra pair or two is always nice, but, like socks, you will not realistically need more than one or two extra pairs. If you did, it would probably be a situation where you'd be wanting to head home anyway.
- Beanie and extra pair of socks for night
 - A beanie and an extra pair of socks is a great way to keep warmer without adding a lot of weight. Use the same pair of socks for each night.
- Toiletries, toothbrush, and toothpaste
 - Try to bring as few toiletries as possible. A small tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush is all many people take into the backcountry. Again, no one will judge you for being dirty or smelling. If you will be bothered by dirtiness or smelling, bring unscented deodorant that will not melt in the heat, and baby wipes to clean yourself off. Just remember that you will need to pack out whatever you pack in, and take a small garbage bag for yourself.
- Any needed medications
 - Make sure you bring all medications that you will need to take. Count out what you need for each day, add an extra day's supply just in case, and put them in a plastic bag to save space. Prescribed medications, Ibuprofen or Tylenol, and an antihistamine are usually all people need to bring. If you often or sometimes take something that helps you sleep, that can be a good idea as well.
- Headlamp or flashlight: as small and light as possible.
 - You do not need more than one headlamp or flashlight. If you are bringing your phone to take pictures, that can be a back-up source of light. If the headlamp goes out, it is an easy item to share among a group. Do bring an extra pair of batteries.
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, chapstick, and a brimmed hat.
 - Bring one or maybe two pairs of sunglasses, sunscreen and chapstick for yourself, and a hat that will protect your face from the sun.

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Food:

- Sahale Outdoors will be providing food for your backpacking trip. If you have dietary restrictions, let us know and we will tell you if there is anything extra you should bring. We will pack three meals a day, plus on-trail snacks, for everyone.
- If you do want to bring some of your own snacks, keep it light and small! A lot of food takes up space, and we will need to put all group food in bear cans at night. **Do not** hide food in your backpack: it attracts animals. Consider just bringing an extra protein bar so you feel like you have a back-up in an emergency, or one candy bar so you know you have a treat if you need extra motivation. Make sure any extra food you bring ends up in the bear can at night.

Overnight/camping gear:

- Tent: You do not need to bring a tent. Sahale Outdoors will provide tents, which you will help carry. (If you are not comfortable sleeping in a tent with other people, you can request your own solo tent.) We bring at least one tent for every three people. All our tents get checked regularly for holes, tears, and leaks. If one breaks on a trip, we bring repair kits to make in-field repairs. In a worst case scenario, if one tent was completely unusable, we would fit more people into the existing tents. It would be snug, but everyone would be warm and protected from the elements.
- Stove/cooking equipment: Sahale Outdoors will provide stoves, fuel, lighters, cooking pots for boiling water, bowls, cups, and utensils. We bring a backup stove and lighter on all trips.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask us. We know getting into the outdoors can be challenging, and it has been a long time since some of us got started going on trips into the backcountry. It is easy for guides to assume that something is common knowledge, but that does not mean that you should expect yourself to know it.

Thank you for trusting us to be part of your outdoor adventure!