

# American Alpine Institute<sup>Ltd.</sup>

## Washington Backpacking Equipment Checklist

This equipment list has been developed specifically for the conditions you will experience in the Cascade Mountains during the summer season. The equipment you bring must function well in a wide variety of conditions. While each piece of gear you bring is crucial to your success and safety, what you leave out of your pack can benefit you in similar ways by lightening your load, allowing you to move quickly and efficiently over rugged terrain. Our aim is to have you bring only the essential gear for your mountain adventures. Please understand that weather varies throughout the season and that this list is designed to outfit you for severe conditions you may not actually experience during your course. The vast majority of the items you bring should fit inside your backpack while still allowing for some space for group items such as cookware and food.

Temperatures and weather conditions in the Cascades are often conducive to great backpacking conditions. Nighttime low temperatures in the high peaks often drop to slightly below freezing while daytime highs range anywhere from 35°F to 70°F. Mountain breezes are not uncommon and should be taken into consideration when planning your clothing system.

Please take the time to carefully prepare and understand your equipment. If possible, it is best to use it in the field beforehand, perhaps on a backpacking trip or training hike. Take the time to properly label and identify all items of personal gear. Many items that hikers bring are almost identical. Your name on a garment tag or a piece of colored electrical tape on miscellaneous items are easy ways to label your gear; fingernail polish is universally excellent. If using tape or colored markers, make sure your labeling method is durable and water resistant.

At AAI we take equipment and its selection seriously. Our Equipment Services department is well stocked and its seasoned staff can help guide you through this complex undertaking. Please contact us to select equipment for your course.

***Equipment items that are available for rental are designated with an (R). Please contact the Equipment Shop at 360-671-1570 for assistance in selecting equipment for your course.***

### Clothing & Footwear

**Base Layer Top:** Bring two, one short sleeve and one long sleeve. This will be your base layer and should be "lightweight" or "silk weight" synthetic or wool. No cotton.

- Weight: 5 - 8 oz / 140 - 225 grams
- Materials: Synthetic, wool.
- Example: Patagonia Capilene 2

**Base Layer Bottom:** Look for the same features as your Base Layer Top. One pair is sufficient.

- Weight: 5 - 8 oz / 140 - 225 grams
- Materials: Synthetic, wool.

**Undergarments:** Most backpackers wear them underneath their base layer. 1-3 pairs depending on personal preference for changing.

- Materials: Synthetic, wool

**2nd Layer Top:** A lightweight fleece or wind shirt. A chest pocket is a helpful feature.

- Weight: 13 - 16oz / 368-454 grams
- Materials: Nylon, micro weave fabrics, fleece, wind stopper
- Examples: Patagonia Houdini, Outdoor Research Marvel, Patagonia R1

**Soft Shell Jacket:** A thin, light, stretchy, breathable but wind and snow-resistant layer that is comfortable to wear is ideal. Hoods are optional but highly recommended. Size your jacket to be trim fitting, but large enough to fit over your base and second layers. Light to moderate insulation/thickness is recommended. This layer will go over your base and insulation layers, but under your shell and parka.

- Weight: 18 - 26 oz / 510 - 737 grams
- Materials: Schoeller, Powerstretch, Powerdry, or similar
- Examples: Arc'teryx Gamma MX, Patagonia Figure 4 and Ready Mix, OR Mithral

**Hiking Pants:** Look for the same features as your soft shell jacket. This will be your outermost layer most of the time for your legs. A thigh pocket is a useful feature for storing small items. Your base layers need to fit under these pants comfortably.

- Weight: 16 - 30oz / 450 - 850 grams
- Materials: Schoeller, Powershield, Powerdry, or similar
- Examples: Patagonia Guide pants, Black Diamond Alpine Pants, Arc'teryx Gamma LT Pants, Mammut Champ

**Shell Jacket:** Choose the lightest, most packable, waterproof shell that will still get the job done. Avoid extra pockets (one or two chest pockets is all you need), 3-layer Gore-Tex, and hanging linings. Your shell should be sized to comfortably fit over your other base and mid-layers (minus your insulating layer).

- Weight: 8 - 20oz / 227 - 566 grams
- Materials: eVent, Gore-tex, h2No, or similar
- Examples: Rab Latok Alpine, Patagonia Jetstream, Marmot Precip

**Shell Pants:** Made of a waterproof/breathable material, your lightweight shell bottoms should have full or hip-length side zips. This garment should be extremely lightweight and packable. A zipper fly is a nice optional luxury.

- Weight: 8 - 16oz / 227 - 453 grams
- Materials: eVent, Gore-tex, h2No, or similar

**Mid-weight Insulation Jacket:** A warm puffy jacket with an optional hood. These come in many shapes, sizes and temperature ratings and are often called "belay jackets." If you tend to get cold easily, opt for a slightly warmer and more substantial parka.

- Weight: 20 - 40oz / 566 - 1133 grams
- Fill Materials: Primaloft, down

- Shell Materials: nylon, epic, eVent
- Examples: Patagonia DAS Parka, Montbell Flatiron Parka

**Mid-weight Fleece/Schoeller/Leather Gloves:** The most desirable glove is one that is comfortable and dexterous, so that it can be worn all day. It should be durable enough (leather palms) to handle ropes, ice axes, and a bit of rock scrambling. Choose a mid-weight model.

- Weight: 4 – 8 oz / 110 – 200 grams
- Materials: softshell, windstopper fleece, leather or similar

**Shell Gloves:** A waterproof shell sized to fit over your liner gloves, these will be worn during any cold/stormy weather and need to be dexterous enough to manipulate carabiners, harnesses, and tie knots. The highest priority with these gloves is to keep your hands and liner gloves dry. No mittens allowed.

- Weight: 6 – 10 oz / 170 - 280 grams
- Shell Materials: Gore-tex, Schoeller 3x, or similar

**Beanie Hat/Toque:** Bring a warm hat that covers your ears.

- Weight: 2 – 4oz / 56 – 112 grams
- Materials: fleece, wool, windstopper, or similar

**Sun hat:** A baseball cap or visor. Models with a “tail” provide increased sun protection.

**Socks:** Bring two or three complete changes. Some hikers prefer to wear a very thin liner sock underneath a thicker hiking/mountaineering sock. Adjust your sock system ahead of time to perfect your boot fit. No cotton.

- Materials: wool, synthetic

**Gaiters:** (R) Ankle high gaiters are perfect for keeping out scree and snow. Check the fit of the gaiter to your boot in advance.

- Weight: 4 – 12 oz / 110 – 340 grams
- Materials: Schoeller, nylon, Cordura

**Backpacking Boots:** (R) High top, lightweight mountaineering boots or heavyweight-hiking boots are required. Leather/nylon combination is fine as long as they offer good ankle support. Some of the trek is on very rough and rocky trails. Please break these in thoroughly before your expedition.

- Examples: Kayland Apex Rock, La Sportiva Trango S, Garmont Tower GTX

NOTE: There are many of makes and models out there and not all are created equal. Please consult with our Equipment Shop if you are uncertain about the acceptability of your chosen model.

## Camping Equipment

**Tent:** (R) A lightweight 3-season two-person tent is recommended. It should be able to withstand intense rainstorms. Single-wall models are lighter, but suffer from more condensation than heavier double wall models. Generally, your shelter should weigh no more than 3 lbs. per person.

- Weight: 3.5 – 5.5lbs / 1.6 – 2.5 kg

**Sleeping Bag:** (R) Rated to around 25°F from late June to mid September. Bring a 15° to 20° for early and late season trips. Down is less weight and bulk, but more expensive and it requires more care to keep dry. To help keep your sleeping bag dry, bring an extra large garbage bag with which you can line your sleeping bag stuff sack and use for storage in the tent.

- Weight: 16 – 42 oz / 453 – 1200 grams
- Materials: Down, Primaloft, Polarguard 3D

**Compression Stuff Sack:** Used to shrink your sleeping bag into the smallest size possible.

- Weight: 2-4 oz / 56 – 110 grams
- Materials: SilNylon, eVent, or similar

**Sleeping Pad:** (R) You will likely camp on dirt during this course. Bringing two pads is recommended-- preferably a lightweight inflatable pad and a closed cell foam pad. If bringing only one pad, look for one with an insulating "R-value" of approximately 4. Please bring a patch kit for inflatable pads.

- Weight: 8-20 oz / 225 – 565 grams
- Example: Thermarest Prolite 4

**Internal Frame Pack:** (R) 65-85 Liters is ideal. It should be comfortable for carrying loads up to 50lbs. Make sure it will hold all of your personal equipment with room to spare for your share of the group equipment that will be divided during your course.

- Weight: 3.0 - 6.5lbs / 1.6 – 2.9 kg

**Eating Utensils:**

- Spoon: Bigger is better. Lexan is lighter, but metals spoons are more durable.
- Thermal mug: 16-20oz with a lid. Optional.
- Bowl: A lightweight Tupperware-type bowl is recommended. The new, ultra-light folding plastic contraptions are excellent.

**Hydration:** 3 liters of water capacity minimum. One solid 32oz water bottle, like a one-quart Nalgene, is required. Hydration bladders with a hose are recommended.

**Water Purification:** Bring tablets or liquid purification. Filters are overly heavy and should not be used.

- Examples: Aqua Mira, Potable Aqua

**Food:** Provided. Feel free to bring a pound or two of your favorite snacks, if desired.

**Personal Medical Kit:** Please include duct tape, moleskin, bandaids, blister care supplies, and prescriptions at a minimum.

**Personal Toiletries:** Bring a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, etc. Bring half a roll of toilet paper or less. Travel sized containers are excellent.

**Hand Sanitizer:** Any alcohol based product for hand sanitizing work well.

**Sunscreen:** With SPF 30 or higher. A couple of 1 oz. tubes are adequate. Several small containers are better than one large one.

**Lip Protection:** Bring 2 containers/applicators with the highest SPF available. Some models of chapstick have SPF 45 or higher.

**Sunglasses:** Choose a model with 100% UVA/UVB protection. If you have an extra pair, bring them too. Those using contact lenses should bring a pair of prescription glasses if available.

**Garbage Bags:** Bring two or three large ones to line your backpack and to pack out garbage. Trash compactor bag, if available, are more durable.

**Headlamp:** High output LED models are preferred over older halogen models. Bring one set of extra batteries. Flashlights are not acceptable.

- Examples: Petzl Tikka XP, Black Diamond Spot

**Repair Kit:** At a minimum this kit should include a Thermarest repair kit (for Thermarest pad users), 10 to 20 feet of lightweight nylon cord, small sewing kit, duct tape (wrapped on water bottles or trekking poles), and a pack waist buckle.

**Multitool:** Bring one if you have one. Any multitool similar to a Leatherman is great. One can be shared amongst tent-mates.

## Optional Equipment

The items listed below are not required, although many are nice "luxury" items that can make your course more enjoyable. Remember that a few ounces here and there add up to extra pounds on your back and knees during your course.

**Handiwipes/Wet Wipes:** The mountain shower. For personal hygiene and general use.

**Bandana:** A cotton bandana has many uses on the mountain.

**Pee Bottle:** A nice luxury for those cold nights. 1-quart size minimum. A collapsible 2L Nalgene is recommended. If you choose to bring one of these, use it carefully and make sure the capacity is adequate. Label your pee bottle well. Women should also bring a pee funnel; Freshette makes a tried and true model.

**Entertainment:** Books, cards, are great for evenings in the tent. iPods are popular.

**Ear Plugs:** Defense against snoring and high winds in the area.

**Camera:** We recommend a small point-and-shoot cameras that can easily be carried in an outside pocket or small case outside your pack. If you can't comfortably and safely carry your camera outside your pack, even in bad weather, you'll miss the best photo opportunities. Though some climbers bring them, SLR cameras are not recommended because of weight and bulk. If bringing a digital camera, consider your battery needs.

**T-shirt:** Light colors are best. This shirt can be synthetic or cotton. If you plan to hike in it, synthetic is better. A cotton shirt can be a nice break from the synthetics while at camp.

**Shorts:** Lightweight shorts are nice for warm days.

- Weight: 4 - 8oz / 110 - 227 grams
- Materials: Nylon

**Buff:** Buffs are a multifunctional neck gaiter that can substitute for a lightweight balaclava.

**Foot Powder:** A very small bottle will allow you to treat your feet daily, keep them dryer, extend the life of your socks, and help you avoid blisters/rashes from chronic wet feet.

- Weight: 1 - 2oz / 28 – 56 grams
- Examples: Gold Bond, Dr. Scholls

**Sandals/Flip flops:** These are great for relaxing in camp in the evenings.

**Shower Supplies:** For use after the trip. This will be left in your vehicle during the trek.

**Post-Hiking Clothing:** A clean set of clothing is an excellent item to leave in the vehicle to change into upon your return.