



ST. ELIAS ALPINE GUIDES, LLC

Basecamp Mini-Backpack Hiking Equipment List Individual Equipment List for Basecamp Mini-Backpack Hiking Trips

The following is a complete list of personal equipment required for our basecamp mini-backpack hiking trips. We do make some recommendations for particular brands or items, but if you are unsure of any items you own or intend to purchase, please contact us.

If you need to purchase items on this list, please make those purchases well in advance. While Anchorage has quality gear shops, consider them only as backup for emergency or last minute items (unless you are from Alaska), as they may not have the item you need in stock. **There are no gear stores in McCarthy.**

Rentals: We have a limited supply of rental equipment available. Please make arrangements with us in advance. Most outdoor stores offer rental equipment as well.

Be sure you have all of the proper equipment before coming to Alaska. If you have any questions about any of these items, please give us a call and we'd be happy to discuss it.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- BACKPACK** - A good external or internal frame pack is a **requirement on mini-backpack trips**. For these trips, the campsites are located a few miles away from the airstrip where you are dropped off, so a large backpacking pack is needed to carry your gear from the airstrip to camp. Remember, each participant should plan on carrying a bear canister and some group gear in addition to your personal gear. A pack in the 65-95L range should fit everything comfortably. We like packs made by Osprey, Gregory, or Deuter.
- DAY PACK** - A small pack to carry lunch, binoculars, rain gear, etc. during your day hikes. Many backpacking packs have a removable day pack or torso pack, which usually works great, as long as it can hold what you'll need for an all-day hike. A stand-alone pack should be frameless so it's easy to pack into your big backpack and be in the 18-30L range. Some great models are the REI Flash 22 or Mountain Hardwear Scrambler. (You may also consider just using your larger backpack for your day hikes, as most of our guides do.)
- PACK COVER** - This is REQUIRED equipment. You should buy one made for your pack, or an extra-large pack cover if you cannot find a custom fit. This will protect your pack from rain and wet brush, and at night you don't have to worry about your pack getting wet if a storm rolls in. For the hardcore minimalist, you can bring two extra-large trash bags.
- SLEEPING BAG** - It has been known to snow during any month in Alaska. A good three-season sleeping bag rated to 10 degrees is a must. The question is down or synthetic? Down loses its insulating ability once wet, but if you are careful to keep the bag dry, down gives the best warmth to weight ratio. Feel free to call us to discuss this purchase or consult your local reputable gear shop. Our favorite sleeping bags are Marmot, Feathered Friends, and Western Mountaineering.
- PAD** - A full length pad is best. Therm-a-Rests are great, but remember they can get a small puncture and leak, so we recommend bringing a repair kit. Closed cell foam pads (a.k.a. Ensolite pads) tend to keep you warmer, but are not as comfortable to sleep on. A small piece of ensolite can be nice to sit on around camp.
- HIKING/ RUNNING SHORTS** - Lightweight nylon shorts are quick drying and easy to carry. Recommended for swimming and/or river crossings.
- HIKING PANTS** - A light wool, synthetic (e.g. nylon, Schoeller) or fleece pant is required. The lightweight softshell pants such as Patagonia's Lightweight Guide Pants work very well too. You'll spend the majority of your time in these so make sure they fit well and are breathable enough to stay comfortable while you're active. Denim, canvas, or any type of cotton is NOT ACCEPTABLE so check the label to make sure before arrival.
- LONG UNDERWEAR SET** - Long underwear must be polypro or wool. We recommend bringing a lightweight or midweight set of tops and bottoms such as Patagonia Capilene. Consider 2 sets so you can have a clean set to sleep in at night.
- MID LAYER TOP** - Layers are the key to comfort and warmth while hiking and camping. This is the first layer over the polypro long underwear top. It can be wool, capilene, "expedition weight" long underwear, a light fleece, etc. Patagonia's R1 series is a good example of this.
- INSULATING LAYER** - Another layer! This one is typically used for extra warmth during rest stops or around camp. One suggestion is a warm fleece jacket - "wind-resistant" fleece is great but tends to hold in your sweat while hiking. A lightweight down or synthetic jacket can be used here too, but remember that once down is wet, it loses all insulating ability, so fleece or synthetic insulation tends to work best in Alaska.
- RAIN JACKET** - **This is one of the most important items.** Good rain gear will make your adventure much more enjoyable. We recommend bringing a high quality non-insulated Gore-Tex jacket (not your 10 year old standby—it's just too stormy in Alaska). Exceptional rain gear is made by Arc'teryx, Marmot and Patagonia. Make sure it's got a comfortable hood that allows you to see and pit zips for ventilation. PONCHOS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE. Wind and brush make them useless.
- RAIN PANTS** - Again, we recommend a high quality pair of Gore-Tex rain pants, preferably with a full side zip for ventilation and easy on/off. You can bring a separate pair of uncoated nylon wind pants to wear through the brush and in a light drizzle, if you prefer. This gives your Gore-Tex pants a longer life.



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REQUIRED EQUIPMENT CONTINUED...

- SOCKS** - You should have at least 3 pair of wool or synthetic socks. Sock selection varies on personal preference, but we recommend bringing two mid-weight socks for hiking and one heavyweight pair to sleep in. You may also want to bring a lightweight pair of neoprene socks specifically for river crossings, however they are optional. Many guides and clients find lightweight liner socks a very comfortable addition that helps with blisters. SmartWool, Thorlo and Dahlgren make excellent socks.
- CREEK CROSSING SHOES** – A separate pair of footwear is necessary for creek crossings. A pair of lightweight running shoes work fine, or a technical sandal such as Tevas or Chacos (no flip-flops or Crocs please). To save weight, these can also be used as your camp shoes.
- HIKING BOOTS** - These should be medium to heavy full leather boots (our preference is without Gore-Tex liners, but this can be hard to find these days). Merrell, Montrail, Lowa and Vasque make good boots – be sure to consider fit first, and fashion second. Each of these manufacturers is a bit more expensive, but they'll last a long time. We highly recommend that all boots be waterproofed shortly before coming up to Alaska, and Nikwax makes excellent waterproofing products. **YOUR BOOTS MUST BE WELL BROKEN IN BEFORE THE TRIP!** Please do not let the enjoyment of your trip be severely compromised by blisters. ***We strongly recommend that you keep your boots in your carry-on luggage for your flight to AK. In the event that your bags get lost or delayed, you'll have boots that fit and we can outfit you with the rest.**
- WOOL or FLEECE HAT** - Something to cover the ears and keep your head warm.
- BASEBALL/SUN HAT** - A hat with a bill keeps the rain out, too.
- FLEECE GLOVES** - A pair of good fleece gloves is a must for warm hands while hiking and for use around camp. Fleece gloves with WindStopper are best, but regular fleece or even wool gloves work fine as well.
- MESS KIT** - A cup, bowl and spoon. A plastic insulated mug is best, along with a #2 Tupperware bowl (1.7pt/850ml). **DO NOT BRING SIERRA CUPS.** They were designed to spill; burn hands & lips and eventually be gold plated for your study. Also, while the new single wall titanium gear is light, it is also an excellent heat conductor and burns lips left and right.
- WATER BOTTLE** - Carry a minimum of 1.5 Liters of water. Our ideal is (1) 32-oz Nalgene and (1) 16-oz Nalgene (both wide mouth versions). A hydration bladder (such as a Camelback) is okay to bring too but make sure you've got a backup Nalgene. The bladders don't hold up great to the rigors of backcountry travel in Alaska, and can be difficult to refill in the backcountry.
- TREKKING POLES** – A pair is required for the rigors of Alaskan terrain. There are no trails in this park, and you'll spend a lot of time walking on uneven surfaces. Trekking poles also come in handy for river crossings. A collapsible pair is best so that you can easily carry them on your backpack when you do not want to use them. The "flick lock" type of adjustment tends to be more durable than the "twist lock" type. Because these can be very expensive, we do have a limited amount available for rent – please call and let us know if you would like us to reserve a pair for your trip
- CAMERA** - Bring a good one, especially with a wide-angle lens. Don't forget extra batteries and extra memory cards for all the pictures you'll take!
- KNIFE** - The Swiss Army knife is the old standby, although the new multi-tools are acceptable, as long as they have a knife. Keep it simple and small.
- TOILETRY KIT** - Toothpaste, toothbrush, moleskin (we highly recommend Spenco Second Skin), personal medications (please tell us before the trip of any medications you are taking), and a personal first aid kit (with band aids, aspirin, etc.). Other personal items to consider are: chapstick, biodegradable soap, dental floss, wet wipes, a small container of waterless hand sanitizer, tampons or pads. Remember that we are backpacking in bear territory, so limit the number of "smellables," such as lotions or perfumes, as they must be stored in the bear cans at night.
- SUNGLASSES** – We recommend polarized glasses to cut down on glare and the use of a retention device (Croakies, etc).
- SUN SCREEN/BLOCK** - Take note that insect repellent neutralizes most sunscreens, so if you are sensitive to the sun, pick up some combination "Bug&Sun" lotion.
- INSECT REPELLANT** - Since the Wrangell/St. Elias has so much ice covering its surface, the bug problem is nothing like the Brooks Range or other tundra covered regions, but there can be areas with a lot of bugs, so Jungle Juice, BEN's, or some other good repellent with a lot of DEET is important. A mosquito head-net is also recommended, as it is light and packable, but can really be worth its weight when in bug territory.
- TOWEL** – A highly recommended item, a hand towel is generally large enough for drying off after swimming or river crossings. MSR's Packtowel is the techie alternative.



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OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- PUFFY JACKET** – An additional layer for people who are usually cold, this is a lightweight but warm layer to wear in camp at night. Synthetic works best when wet, but down provides the most insulation for the weight.
- FLEECE OR PUFFY PANTS** - Those wishing to be super warm and toasty around camp, and don't mind carrying a little extra weight, can bring a pair of fleece or puffy pants. Great if you "sleep cold."
- OVERMITTS** - These should be a lightweight pair of nylon or Gore-Tex shells that protect the hand from wind and keep your gloves dry in the rain. A good example of this is the OR Revel Shell Mitts.
- GAITERS** - This is an optional but highly recommended item but can help protect your pants from crampons, brush, mud, and keep the water out of your boots on shallow river crossings. Check with us regarding your specific trip to see if you'll need to bring a pair.
- RUNNING SHOES** - If you are OK with the extra weight, a pair of running shoes are good to wear around camp, or for a day hike if your heavy hiking boots are bothering you. Some folks carry sandals, such as Tevas or Chacos, which are great for river crossings, but are not good for hiking and not as warm around camp.
- STUFF SACKS** - Optional according to preference, but very handy. Bring an assortment of sizes for separating different clothing items. We strongly recommend that you keep your clothing, sleeping bag, and anything else you don't want to get wet in water proof stuff sacks. A large trash compactor bag (with a couple backups) can be used to line the entire inside of your pack for a cheap alternative.
- CAMP CHAIR** – To give your bottom a break from sitting on bear cans, we recommend Crazy Creek chair, or a Therm-a-Rest chair kit that turns your sleeping pad into a camp chair.
- BOOK** - Bring something relaxing to read just before dozing off or for rest days. Small, light paperbacks are best.
- DECK OF CARDS** – Our guides are always up for a game of Cribbage or Hearts before heading off to bed, or if the weather is sour.
- BINOCULARS** - Nice to have for animal sightings and views of the distant peaks.
- COMPASS** - An option for you (not for us!), but if you don't know how to use one, here's a great chance to learn! A compass such as the Silva Ranger with a compensation for declination is very handy.
- BANDANAS** – A useful item that can come in handy for cleaning glasses or washing up.

GROUP EQUIPMENT

We will provide all necessary group equipment for your trip such as tents and stoves

When packing, please note that you will need to allow enough space in your pack to carry a bear canister, your tent, and miscellaneous group gear for your trip.