

Hiking Equipment

Every trail leads hikers to new adventure, so every hiker should be prepared for anything. Outdoor adventurers need good hiking equipment to enjoy a safe and successful trek. Here is an outline of the gear you'll need and the gizmos you can probably do without.

Go Without the Gimmicks

Outfitting stores stock all sorts of unnecessary gadgets, tempting the hiker who isn't quite ready to rough it. Backcountry espresso machines, portable Dutch ovens, nesting pots, traveler-design towels, portable saws are all on display and ready to cash in on unknowing hikers. Gizmos that are touted as ways to ease the inconvenience of traveling in some god awful place are really little more than opportunities for you to load your pack with things you don't really need. Sure, these types of hiking equipment seem to be specially designed for travel. But wait 'til your pack is loaded and you try to heft it! The idea is for hikers to travel light. Picture yourself laboring under a heavy pack filled with all sorts of trinkets, like that first-aid kit that can outshine a third world hospital. Suddenly a skinny drifter breezes by with a slim pack that weighs half of your burden. You're pulling up the rear, and the companies that manufactured this stuff are laughing all the way to the bank. Save room for the essentials, and save your cash at the same time.

Re-Evaluate

Choosing the right equipment is all about keeping it light and carrying as little as possible. Even if you've been traveling light on most of your hiking excursions, you should re-evaluate your choice of hiking equipment before every trek. Is there something you always take, but never use? Are there items you've wished you had, but never pack? What about those things you use, but could really do without. And those extra "just in case" items you really don't need to bring along? If you're a backwoods gourmet, by all means, pack the nesting pots. If you survive on corn nuts and raisins on the trail, you can safely leave the nifty spice set and pancake flipper at home. These items can be great at a cottage, but will only weigh you down on the trail. If you do prepare meals on your hike, remember that one-pot meals can be delicious. Pack one pot and one wooden spoon, and ditch the rest.

Share the Burden

Traveling with a partner is always a good idea, plus it gives you the chance to travel lighter than usual. Chances are, both of you don't really need to carry Swiss army knives with 14 screwdrivers and portable chainsaws on them. You'll be able to share the load, and share your hiking gear so that both of you can pack simpler and lighter. You and your partner can share a first-aid kit, water filter, matches, stove, pots, guidebook and tent.

Make sure that your first lesson in packing hiking equipment isn't a lesson learned the hard way. Pay heed to the first rule of hiking, and keep it light. Beware the gimmicks and gizmos trying to worm their way into your pack. While the advertisements tease you about bringing at-home comforts to the trail, realize that they are no more than empty promises. The real beauty and excitement about life on the trail is in its simplicity. Hiking gear that smells of luxury should be left at home in the garage. You'll soon be back to relax in your camp chair and bust out your multi-pack of bandages.