WHAT GEAR TO PACK FOR A DAY HIKE IN THE WOODS

Make sure you have the right gear for an enjoyable and safe hike in the woods. Photo: Paul Kirtley.

When we head out for multi-day hikes, we’re usually quite considered in our choice of equipment.

As soon as a trip involves spending at least one night out, we’re usually found reaching for appropriate sleeping equipment, a cooking pot, a means of lighting a fire or a stove, a head-torch, and toilet paper amongst other things.

Of course there is a section of the readership of this blog who, like me, also like to spend time outdoors using less, building a fire or even a shelter to keep ourselves cozy overnight, foraging for food or lighting fire by friction.

But even those of us who have the skills and confidence to do this recognise that when a planned journey requires us to get from A to B, particularly when that journey from A to B is likely to take up a good portion of the available daylight hours, we then do not have the luxury of the time to build shelters, forage all our calories and collect all the materials for fire by friction.

We then pack a backpack with the equipment which prevents us having to undertake these time consuming activities. Putting up a tarp or tent is quicker than building a weatherproof shelter from natural materials. Creating a flame with a match or Bic lighter is quicker than rubbing sticks. Emptying a pack of pasta into boiling water is quicker than locating and digging up starch-filled roots.

When we head out for the day, however, we often give much less consideration to our kit. Many will quickly throw, say, a flask of coffee, a couple of sandwiches and a waterproof jacket in a daysack and maybe slip a Swiss Army Knife in a pocket.
In my article *A Framework For Preparing Yourself For A Survival Situation* I highlighted some headlines I’d read relating to people finding themselves in difficult situations in the outdoors.

These are not isolated incidents. At any time of the year type “lost hiker” into Google search and then click on the “News” tab. Unfortunately, whatever time of year it is, the search will return a raft of relatively recent stories of woe.

**The Crucial Day Hike Assumption**

There’s an important assumption when we head out on a day hike and it’s worth being explicit about what it is.

We assume we’ll be home by nightfall.

“Home” can be a vehicle, a tent you have pitched on a campsite, a cabin, a hotel, wherever.

But the assumption is that you won’t be spending the night out in the open.

Otherwise it wouldn’t be a day hike.

**The Day Hiker’s Paradox**

While those of us with experience of spending nights out with only very limited equipment might be equipped in other ways to deal with being benighted, specifically in terms of skills and mental preparedness, most day-hikers are not.

There are many more hikers who will head out for a day hike than are willing or confident enough to take on multi-day backpacking trips.

Even experienced multi-day hikers may have no experience of sleeping out without a tent and a sleeping bag.

Indeed, there are relatively few backpackers who will have the bushcraft/survival skills to properly look after themselves without their backpack contents.

Don’t take this as a judgement. It isn’t at all. It’s merely a qualitative statement about the make up of the population who might take a day hike.

The paradox, then, is that the day hiker who finds themselves stuck out in the woods overnight is likely to be not only light on useful equipment, it’s also more likely that they’ll be relatively inexperienced outdoorspeople.

Moreover, it seems, anecdotally at least, most stories about lost hikers are in relation to people who only intended to be out for the day, or even part of the day.

**The Reality Of Time Constraints**

Even those of us who have experience of building shelters, finding water, foraging for food and lighting fire by friction are going to have a rough time of it on a cold or wet night if we don’t get home before dark.

If the decision to stay out is forced upon you – due to time constraints, injury or another event which prevents you getting back to base – the likelihood is that this decision is arrived at with little daylight left. That’s why you are having this decision forced upon you.

The lack of daylight, injury or other limiting factors are also going to severely limit your ability to fix a decent shelter or find materials for fire lighting, not to mention enough firewood to keep you warm all night.

**Precautionary Packing For Day Hikes**

Most car journeys don’t involve a crash. This doesn’t mean, however, that you shouldn’t wear a seat-belt. Most day hikes don’t result in you spending the night out but equally, you should be prepared for it as a potential eventuality.
What it takes to “be prepared” will vary by environment and time of year. Your skills, fitness, and experience will also be factors. The size of your group and the capabilities of its members will also have some bearing on what you pack.

**Pragmatic Packing For Day Hikes**

Clearly, for a day hike you are not going to pack a large rucksack full of everything you might need on a multi-day trip. One of the joys of taking a day hike is being relatively light and nimble on your feet.

But it’s certainly worth considering packing items that would help you get out of any likely scrapes you might find yourself in.

In order to help people with their packing, I’ve made the video below talking through various items most day hikers should at least consider for their day pack.

What I’ve attempted to do, rather than just give you a plain list of items, is talk through my thinking. It would be all too easy just to publish a list of specific products as a blog post but I think the real value I can pass on is explaining the reasons why I might choose particular items and the rationale that led me there.

[You can also view What To Pack For A Day Hike In The Woods on YouTube.]

**What Else Might You Pack For a Day Hike?**

A couple of points here…

First I should say that I failed to mention a whistle in the above video. I always have a whistle on me – usually around my neck on a cord along with a Photon Microlight, unless I’m canoeing. The keyring for my house keys (in the green bag with valuables) also has a small metal whistle on it. Also, the Swedish FireSteel 2.0 has a whistle in the handle of the striker. So, there were actually three whistles in the above video but I didn’t mention any of them!

Second, even though I am based in the UK and this blog has a .co.uk address, this article and video are not intended to be UK-specific.

Third, the items in the video form a core list to work from. There may be other items you want to consider for your specific environment. In some areas, it would be wise to carry a head-net to keep biting insects at bay. Even if mosquitoes or midges are not bad during the day, they can be terrible from dusk onwards. You may want to carry additional items in bear country. In areas where there is no phone reception you might want to consider an emergency locator beacon.

Fourth, you’ll notice I haven’t really mentioned brand-names in the video. I’m not so much trying to recommend particular items of equipment but rather, types of equipment. Some people will prefer a poncho to a rain jacket. Some will prefer to carry a cigarette lighter as their trusted fire-lighting device. **The important point is that you think about it.**
So, what other items might you consider for your day pack? Let me and other readers know below.

Finally, while you might be an experienced hiker, there are many more out there who would benefit from the video and this article, including the wisdom and experience encapsulated in comments left by readers. Please share this article with others you think would benefit.

Related Material On Paul Kirtley’s Blog:

- A Framework For Preparing Yourself For A Survival Situation
- The Importance Of Leaving Word Before Heading Into The Wild
- Hypothermia And How To Avoid It
- A Personal Wilderness First Aid Kit: What To Include?

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73 thoughts on “What Gear To Pack For A Day Hike In The Woods”

**DH Dave** says:

As ever a very well-considered article and video. I agree with your choices and reasoning throughout. One thing I always have with me for any length of trip is a sitmat of some sort, either a fold-up purpose made thing, or – my favourite – a thicker kneeling pad from the garden centre (which cost £2 and is going strong after a number of years of heavy usage!) The weight and pack size of both is absolutely minimal. It’s useful during a day hike or whatever to sit on simply for a bit of comfort, to keep the seat of your trousers dry but also, importantly as insulation from the ground or whatever you are sitting on. All are probably even more beneficial during an unplanned overnighter.

Reply

**Paul Kirtley** says:

Hi Dave,

It’s good to hear from you.

Yes a sit mat is a nice comfort to have and would certainly help with insulation from the ground during an unplanned overnight bivouac.
I tend to consciously pack one for often when I’m heading for the hills than the woods but I also have a couple of packs with foam inserts which work very well for this purpose (they can be a pain to re-insert when a little damp though).

For those who have not thought about this much in the past – it’s always worth considering your pack and the parts it contains as part of your equipment. The foam insert removed from and laid down along with the rucksac itself provides a decent amount of ground cover to lay down on, certainly enough to keep your core from direct contact with the ground.

Thanks for adding to the conversation Dave.

Warm regards,

Paul

Reply

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Jon Silver says:

Excellent stuff, Paul, and going through the thinking behind your decisions is so much more useful than a kit list. I already take a similar list of items to yours but find myself questioning myself when others seem to be travelling lighter than me. It’s good to have the affirmation that I’m doing the right thing and if anything could swap a few items or take one or two additional items along just to secure all eventualities a little better. Thank you.

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Jon,

You’re very welcome. I’m glad you liked that and good to hear you are pretty much on the same page.

Others will argue about what you need to take but then some people are sloppy with personal security, etc, etc. I think there are those of us who are willing to take full responsibility for our own well being and others who prefer not to think about it too hard.

The worse extent of this is when you hear tales of people calling mountain rescue because they are “tired”.

We are never going to cover all eventualities but some are more likely than others and some are harder to deal with than others. We can easily equip ourselves to much more capably deal with these. And that’s the answer I would give to anyone who questioned what was in my bag.

All the best,

Paul

Reply

Jon Silver says:

Thanks for the reassurance, Paul.

I tend to combine the very traditional bushcraft techniques with latest technology. Some specifics I take are my firelighting kit, which always includes dry birch bark (in the South Of England you can’t always find birch trees) and char cloth. They’re
so light, and give me confidence because I know with those I'll always be able to kindle fire into life.

I also take an Anker battery pack which can fully charge my phone eight times before it’s empty. It also has a useful integral LED torch which hardly consumes any power.

If I need a stove, I choose the BioLite camp stove. Yes it weighs a full kilo, but I can get it lit with just whatever twigs I find wherever I am, and boil water very quickly indeed (under 5 minutes). On camping trips it’s provided me with sterile water and meals, as well as charging my phone.

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**Steve** says:

Hi Paul,

A really great article, thank you. I carry much the same as you suggest, but I had not thought about my folding saw or head-torch, but your rationale for carry these is very persuasive – thanks for encouraging me to think on this again.

P.S. Like DH Dave I always seem to make use of my ‘cheapo’ garden centre kneeler for tea/lunch stops. It serves as a pack stiffener in my lightweight pack as well as keeping my bum warm/dry when I sit down. Do you sit on your pack or have another solution? I imagine that the cleaner you can keep your clothing the better its ability to breath/insulate you?

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**Paul Kirtley** says:

Hi Steve,

Thanks for your comment. I’m glad it provided food for thought.

I do sometimes carry a "bum mat" but that’s more in the hills than the woods. If the pack I’m using has a pull-out insert, I’ll make use of it of course but otherwise I’m not too bothered when out on a day hike. In the woods I can normally find a log or rock to perch on.

Cheers,

Paul

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**Jeroen Berkenbosch** says:

Thanks for the excellent video again Paul!

I do have a question. Why do you prefer fleece shirts to wool? Sure, wool is a little heavier but at least it doesn’t lose all its insulation when wet. It’s also safer near a fire.

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**Paul Kirtley** says:

Hi Jeroen,

It’s good to hear from you.
Good question based on the above video. I don’t particularly prefer fleece over wool. In fact I have various wool garments including several old Swandri shirts. I don’t rate the new versions though, since they moved manufacture away from New Zealand, so it’s hard for me to recommend them now.

The other point about wool vs fleece is an interesting one. It’s become common belief that wool is still just as warm when it is completely wet. It isn’t.

Any garment which is completely sodden is going to be colder than when it is dry. There will be increased conductive heat loss (water conducts heat faster) and there will be less insulation from the garment (the insulation comes from air trapped in the garment and when this is supplanted by water, it is no longer as insulative).

What makes wool a fantastic base layer in particular is that up to a certain point it actually gets warmer as the wool fibres soak up water. This is due to an exothermic reaction which takes place. This is great when the garment is soaking up perspiration in cold conditions. Also, in very cold conditions because wool does not wick moisture away from your body as quickly as synthetic wicking base layers, heat is not sucked away from your body too quickly. This combination of slow wicking and increased warmth as it soaks up a moderate amount of water makes for a great base later in very cold conditions when you are able to regulate your activity to a level where you are not sweating too much. In high intensity activities in cold conditions such as cross country running or skiing, then a synthetic base layer may be a better option.

Back to wool for the woods, then. Once a wool garment becomes too wet (from memory around about 25% of the maximum amount of water it can hold I believe, without looking it up), the garment starts to get colder, mainly for the reasons mentioned above about having a very wet garment regardless of what it is made from.

Now the interesting thing is to look at the assumptions regarding a garment which is wet. A wool shirt will hold more water than a synthetic fleece garment. If you don’t believe me – get two garments of about the same size and material thickness, weigh them dry and then hold them in a bucket of water. Then weight them wet. I can guarantee the wool garment will have increased in weight by more. Wool garments are not only wetter when wet than fleece but also much heavier. Plus they take longer to dry.

That said, as long as you have a good waterproof jacket that will keep either dry enough, it’s then a matter of personal choice.

And you are quite correct that wool is less prone to damage near to a fire than fleece.

One other consideration, too, is that these days basic fleece garments are inexpensive. This is one reason why outdoor clothing companies introduce more “innovative” clothing, so as to maintain their margins by charging more for something which appears more “technical”.

I hope this helps to explain my thinking on the subject.

Warm regards,

Paul

Reply

Jeroen Berkenbosch says:

Thanks for the thorough reply Paul! Certainly an interesting topic, which isn’t as black and white as I thought it would be.

In any case, it’s better to keep your thermal layers dry anyway 🌿

Looking forward to your next posts!
Great video and article as always thank you Paul.

Having had to spend the night out in the woods after a leg injury while shooting I know the importance of a few extra pieces of kit. I think for anyone not used to spending time in the outdoors this is a great set up and a good start point for everyone. Personally I carry much less bulk as space and weight is at a premium when out all day crawling and being quite. Clothing is the most important choice and this is probably several articles in its self! One thing I believe is very important that regularly is overlooked is the importance of a good set of gloves that protect your hands from cuts, grazes and some thorns. Protecting your hands in my opinion is quite important when in a situation where you’re relying on them to build a shelter, make fire, tie cordage etc.

Below is the kit I carried in my pockets at the time

- Waterproof lighter with some rubber strip’s, if its dark and wet when it goes pear shaped I don’t want to messing around trying to prepare tinder. (I have had a lighter that wet it would not spark). I do also carry my fire steel separately as a back up
- Tissues in a small plastic bag
- Phone in a waterproof bag
- Multi tool on belt
- Small high output torch (120 lumens from 1AA battery) on belt
- Head torch
- Secateurs (quieter than a saw which is not a consideration unless shooting I know so replace with a saw for general use) good for cutting wands for hides / shelters
- Space blanket and fine cord (rational was for impromptu shelter if needed)
- Wool head over and hat
- Rubble sack
- Small first aid kit (couple of bandages, sanitizer and gaffa tape)
- Water and a couple of snacks – Elevenses and or malt loaf. (Read the article’s in trail magazine if you want to understand my choice of snacks 😊)
- Piece of closed cell roll mat cut to the size of my body rolled up and held to my waist by a bungee (the ground can get cold if in lying up for any time)

These served me at the time, in my opinion due my choice in clothing and the roll matt. I did not build a fire but I did set up the space blanket as a break / roof just in case of rain. One thing I wish I had at the time was a metal cup but this is something very difficult to carry if you do not have a bag. This is something I have yet to work out!

In balance if I had been in the similar situation but not shooting and I was carrying a bag I think a small tarp would be better / more durable and easier to erect. A saw if far more useful than Secateurs.

I have arranged to spend a weekend in the woods with a friend and the rule is everything has to fit into a 15L bag. I have just purchased a “blizzard bag” and want to see how affective they are. The bumf says they are like an emergency 3 season sleeping bag ….. ? but they weigh very little and pack to the size of an old VHS tape I would be interested to get your view on these or if you have any experience with them. The aim is to gain extra knowledge / experience with this type of kit

Thanks again

Martin
Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Martin,

Thanks for your comment, and in particular for taking the time to list the items you take with you while out shooting. Very interesting.

You don’t need to explain malt loaf to me – it’s great stuff! 🍩

As for the Blizzard Bag, yes they are very good. You’ll see one featured in passing and on the left hand side of the last photograph of my article here.

For those who haven’t seen them Blizzard Bags are indeed the size of a VHS cassette (if people can remember that far back!) or a typical paperback book.

The are vacuum packed when new and expand impressively when opened. They insulate very effectively by trapping air in multiple cells in much the same way a sleeping bag does. What I would say, though, is that you’ll never get it back into the same size packet once opened. With careful folding you can approximate it but it’s still not vacuum packed. Also, they are noisy to sleep in. It’s like sleeping in a large crisp packet in terms of the sound.

Don’t get me wrong, they are an excellent survival/emergency sleeping bag and I always have one in my winter hillwalking/mountaineering daypack. There are just the couple of points above to be aware of.

I hope this helps.

Cheers,

Paul

Reply

Diogo says:

Great video Paul.

The only things that I usually don’t carry with me are: the saw and the tarp. On the rest, everything goes.

Just one thing. Would’nt you consider at least to take a bandana or a mini fiber towel with you, just to clean your hands, or to any other use?

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Diogo,

It’s good to hear from you. Thanks for your comment.

What I’ve done in the above video is concentrate on things which can make a critical difference, particularly with respect to clothing, shelter and fire. But yes, there are many extra utility items or even items for comfort we could consider.
Elsewhere someone asked me about including some alcohol hand gel for cleaning hands. This is also an option. If I really need to clean my hands, then there are some anti-bacterial wipes in my first aid kit.

I do find however, that between trying to keep clean in the first place, rinsing hands with water from streams, and using vegetation, my hands stay reasonably clean.

Hope this helps,

Warm regards,

Paul

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Diogo says:

Using what nature gives to you. I understand it 😊

One thing that I also use, it’s a hat. A Karrimor Hunters Hat.

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Rov says:

A very informative video and very well presented, as per usual 😊

A few additions, for me anyhow, are an additional emergency head torch – I’ve carried a Petzl E-Lite my pocket everyday for years, which is tiny, but is used at least several times a week in “regular” life. It takes two, small lithium batteries and is good for up to 70 hours. I carry four spares as the weigh as much as a couple of two-pence pieces, if that…

Also, I carry a small Trangia alcohol stove, four 10cm nails, which act as a very stable potstand, a small (homemade) foil windbreak and a few packs of instant noodles. I always carry spare trailmix, energy bars etc., but a hot meal not only provides nourishment, it is a terrific morale-booster, something that is an important aspect of being benighted, either on your own or as part of a group.

I carry enough fuel for several brews and an emergency meal or water purification. The fuel is divided across four little plastic bottles, stored in a small tobacco tin. Being anal, I put a gasket of silicone around the tobacco tin, so that it contains any leakage. A few elastic bands further the secure the lid.

The additional weight is negligible, but depending upon climate/location, the benefits of having this extra kit far outweigh the weight considerations – a few hundred grams at most.

As ever, really looking forward to the comments on here, as they stimulate our thinking and encourage our ideas to evolve, as much as your excellent articles.

All the best

Rov

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Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Rov,
I agree – it’s always interesting and informative to read the range of comments I get here. I’m very grateful for this.

Thanks for sharing your thoughts and the specifics of your preferences for what you pack.

The Petzl E-Lite is indeed very good. There was even one stealthily placed in the above video. I keep one in my larger first aid kit, as you’ll see here: http://paulkirtley.co.uk/2011/personal-wilderness-first-aid-kit/

All the best,

Paul

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James Gohl says:

Thank you Paul for this great article. “benighted” is a new term for me, but I’ll be using it from now on.

Jim

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Paul Kirtley says:

Hey James,

It’s certainly a good one to be aware of – both as a word and as a concept. 😊

All the best,

Paul

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Andy Fox says:

Informative article and video, Paul. One thing I approach a little differently is to keep my wallet and keys in my pocket so that I always have them even if I lose my pack due to river crossing gone awry, bear attack, or it rolling down a mountain due to poor placement on a lunch break. My wallet is in a zippered pocket, and my keys are attached with a lanyard cord to a belt loop. Then, I have a plastic pealess whistle and coin cell light on the key ring along with a tiny Swiss Army knife. I also throw a button-sized compass in the pocket with my wallet as a backup.

I also always carry a map in a sealed Ziploc bag in my pants pocket. All of that assures me that I can at least make it back to the trailhead even if I’ve lost my pack for some unlikely reason.

Apologies if this is a little too off-topic on this post, but I’m curious what your thoughts are on footwear for hiking in mild, cool, temperate conditions with frequent stream and mud pit crossings. I think I read somewhere that you had focused on ultralight backpacking for a while, and I wondered if you had maybe tried lighter options like trail runners with minimal soles? That’s what I tend to use right now. (I use Inov8 Roclite 295’s.) I like the light weight and agility, but I have to admit that rocky trails and a constant exposure to abrasive dirt (which easily infiltrates through the mesh) in my shoes while having constantly tender wet feet has me considering a switch back to heavier waterproof boots. Wet feet are not too much of a problem with wool socks and a drying my feet out at night, but that combined with the bruising of rocks on my soles and abrasion due to sand and dirt combine to make me consider alternatives. Contrary to common boot wisdom, I actually find it easier to avoid
sprained ankles in the shoes because I can feel what’s underfoot and adjust quickly enough to avoid a sprain. As somewhat of a hybrid solution, I do use GoreTex socks in the winter, but those are bit bulky and even slightly constrictive circulation-wise.

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Andy,

Thanks for your comment, which I read with interest. In particular, thanks for explaining the layout of your pocket gear.

With respect the footwear, I've experimented with many different styles and weights of footwear. This extends back to pre-SPD pedal mountain biking days when I used to do a lot of mountain biking (we're talking 1990 here). I extrapolated a lot of what I was doing on my bike to what I did while hiking. In particular I had a swish, lightweight Freestyle Gore-Tex cycling jacket which was much lighter than any hiking jacket. I used this for many solo backpacking trips. I also had a lightweight Kona fleece which I got free with my 1991 Kona Explosif mountain bike. This had a Pertex lining up the front (only) which also formed the inner lining for the kangaroo pocket. A clever and material-efficient design. This also formed part of my hiking kit. Not long after this I consumed much of what Ray Jardine had written. I was particularly taken with his book Beyond Backpacking: Ray Jardine’s Guide To Lightweight Hiking. He very much espoused lightweight training shoes for hiking. This is something I've tried and overall, don't really get on with.

I like lightweight airy shoes for dry/arid hiking and have latterly hiked in areas such as the Algarve coastline of Portugal wearing footwear such as Merrell Chameleon ISOs. I also have a pair of Inov-8 Mudclaw 300 shoes which I love for running in muddy conditions.

While I don't mind getting wet feet (I've waded my fair share of streams and rivers), I don't like having chronically wet feet. This is partially personal preference but also firmly rooted in my experience. As you allude to in your comment, wet feet become soft feet. And soft feet fall apart on long hikes. Having had the skin come right off my heels after becoming softened by being wet for several days, this is a condition I seek to avoid at all costs. I understand the argument about lighter more nimble footwear not causing the same trouble to wet feet as heavier more rigid boots. That said, I've also experienced what you describe, with sandy grit entering the mesh of lightweight shoes, then abrading my feet, particularly the instep/arch area.

Even when not hiking long distances I've witnessed the problems associated with chronically wet feet. During the ‘summer’ of 2007, when we had some of the wettest summer months on record in the UK, I worked a couple of long blocks of bushcraft courses for Woodlore Ltd. I taught and lived in the woods for one block of 6 weeks and then, starting less than 2 weeks later, another of 8 weeks. It was wet underfoot pretty much the whole time. In fact during the second, 8-week block we tallied 6 straight weeks where it rained at some point every single day. Psychologically it still ranks as one of the toughest times I've spent teaching outdoor skills.

During this time I lived in Gore-Tex lined Lowa Combat Boots. These proved to be superb. I had no trouble with my feet, which remained dry pretty much the whole time. Only if my trousers got so wet that water was running down the skin of my legs, did any water find its way into my boots. By contrast, a junior colleague of mine at the time was wearing leather boots which allowed his feet to get wet and had a lining which seemed to retain water. His feet were damp, not wet, but damp a large part of the time. Even though he made some considerable effort to dry the boots by the fire some evenings, over the course of several weeks he developed the first stage of trench foot. The entire soles of his feet were white, wrinkled, puffy and painful to the touch.

The Lowas have become my standard wet-temperate boot and many of my team at Frontier Bushcraft also use them. They have a relatively high leg, they are tough and the grip is good in mud. The rubber compound of the Vibram sole is also good
on rock (for example I wore a pair during my Mountain Leader assessment).

They are not the lightest boots by any stretch of the imagination though. This summer I’ll be trying out a set of Garmont Tower Lite boots in the mountains of Scotland. More details and thoughts to follow on this blog…

I hope this helps give you some idea of my current thinking on footwear.

Warm regards,

Paul

Reply

Andy Fox says:

Hi Paul,

Thank you! I’ll have to pull out the waterproof boots and give them another try.

Reply

Mike aka midas says:

As well as the usual bits n bobs, always take my SACK... Staying Alive Cold Kit. ... Consists of two foil survival blankets, one cut n taped into a poncho... all fits into a small pouch along with 3 T lights, n lighter/matches/etc. Surprising what heat is given off by a T light. (Care MUST be taken!, place T light in your mug, n mug between your legs.)

Also have light weight Emergency Bivvy. Fist sized, fits in my mug.......

Reply

Ian L says:

Totally agree with your list. An emergency bivvy bag is a few quid (a few $ where I live now) and will keep you dry and therefore alive if you need to hole up for a while. I’ll also pack a spare pair of wool socks and an extra thermal top.

Reply

Dawid says:

As a rookie (almost) this article and video is really good. They kind of answered my questions of if I was doing the right thing and packing the right stuff.

Well, I’m probably a bit too precautious, because I’m almost always quite near civilisation.

I think the tarp is a really good thing to bring. It’s light and compact and really helpful if you have to sleep outside unplanned. It’s really time and energy consuming to build a shelter if it’s raining. Adding that most people are not trained in building shelters and that most attempts will probably end in failure, the tarp is almost invaluable.

How big is your day hike backpack?

It seems that my 25 liter backpack is always too small 😞
Dawid says:

Oh, I almost forgot. The Esbit stove is one item I always bring. It’s really small and easy to use if you need to boil water.

Reply

Alan Linee says:

A very interesting and thorough article/discussion Paul.
I Carry much the same equipment when day hiking and working outdoors, whilst working my bag goes on my back for trail patrols and remote lone tasks, as a result I tend to always simply leave my full first aid kit in there, I read a little while ago about the contents of your first aid kit, but without cross referencing my kit that is always with me contains water puri-tabs as a back up to lighting a fire and boiling water.
I was once forced to spend the night on Dartmoor when I made a navigational error, much younger and less experienced!, in attempt to remedy my wrong move I made a river crossing and got wet feet very late in the day, I now always pack spare socks in my day hike bag with my hat and gloves.
The only other items I have in my bag are disposable, not a fan of disposable but in emergency situations I make exception, these are a bend & shake light stick, great for a glow around your area to support the head torch, or should for some reason the head torch fails and two emergency hand warmers, Its great psychologically to have some warmth if out on a cold night. Whilst many of us like to blend into our environment and enjoy being able to see more, the other asset of the survival bag is its usually the only item we can use of a colour to attract attention.

Reply

Steve Bayley says:

+1 for the light-stick, I don’t think they make great work lights BUT they are a good morale boost for a casualty if you need to head off for help leaving someone to wait alone. Also they can be used as position markers to assist a rescue party locate a casualty. This may all sound a bit extreme but they can be obtained cheaply now, are compact and lightweight. A useful addition to first-aid kit.

Reply

Scott Oeth says:

This is great stuff Paul! Thank you for sharing.

I’ve been working on an expansion of the classic “10 Essentials”, for my work with Scouts and guiding clients. Going into the gear, and accompanying skills needed to effectively use the gear. Your material here is very much in line with what I’ve been teaching, and, as usual, I learned several new things from you.

Best regards,

Scott

Reply

ricky says:

hello paul love your videos great site the one thing i always take with me especially when ime over the moors ie dartmoor or
yorkshire moors is hexi stove along with my brew kit. i do love my tea . i can honestly say ive never done a day hike . i love the idea of getting to my destination and putting up a tarp i am a novice really i allways go on my own . i love my own company . goin off the subject abit you and i know you cant light a fire on boggy or mossy ground . hence the hexi stove keep up the very informative work . till next time

Reply

Chip N says:

Paul thank you so much for your help on gear choices, it has been a Godsend for me I respect people like you that share there knowledge of Bushcraft, I can’t get into the woods as often as i would like to and it means so much to me to have someone to learn from over the net, THANK YOU. Quick question in your video you have the Swazi Hooded Fleece in dark green, they do not sell that version of the Back 40 fleece anymore, I checked Ray’s web site and he doesn’t sell the dark green version of the fleece either it only comes in the light green color from Ray’s web site. Swazi sell’s a hooded Fleece called NAHANNI SHIRT in dark green, is that over kill for a bushcraft shirt or should i just go with the non-hooded BACK 40 fleece? thanks again Paul for everything you do for people how wan’t to know more about robust gear.

Reply

James de Ferrars says:

Paul, I have some comments: first, I do not worry too much about the weight of the day pack as I see these walks as training trips for longer expeditions. Often I take a folding German Army mat, or a cut down version; these are very versatile and help protect against the plague of ticks we seem to suffer from on Dartmoor, as well as adding insulation and protection for sitting on, or even for that after lunch kip.
I found the comments about the usefulness of a saw above that of the larger knife exactly my experience after living wild in the French woods for a week.
I would suggest some chlorine dioxide tablets in the first aid kit as water is always a top priority, and I have learned what a chore it is to always have to light a fire to boil and purify water, we lived like this for a week last month. Life revolved around the pot!
I am putting together a kit list for a long Alpine walk I am doing this summer, my inspiration for this is Otzi, the iceman, it is very interesting to read about what he was carrying. I would love to hear what you would take on a multi day Alpine walk, Paul. Regards James.

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi James,

It’s nice to see you leaving so many comments around my blog. I’m glad you are enjoying this content and it is stimulating you to leave your thoughts.

Your point about water purification chemicals is a good one and Chlorine Dioxide is now the best choice as it is effective against Giardia and Cryptosporidium.

You can read more about my thoughts on bushcraft-survival kit here. A couple of pieces have changed in the three years since I wrote the article but the rationale is still the same.

I have various multi-day trip reports and kit-lists in the offing. I hope to be able to get them up online before your walk.
Hi Paul,

Finally got round to watching the video without any distractions. Very similar kit list as mine. I like the way you explain the reasons why you have the kit you have. One quick question, is the hat you have in your bag the possum fir you can get from Woodlore? I've been thinking about getting one but been a little put off by the price.

Hope you are well

all the best

James

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi James,

Yes it's a Merino/Possum beanie. Had it a long while now. It is a bit itchy and overall I prefer a 100% merino hat for comfort in this respect but the merino/possum beanie is very light for the warmth which is useful. It's also a good colour for blending into the environment.

Cheers,

Paul

Reply

Phil says:

Thanks for another great video.

I also pack hand sanitiser with my toiletries. How many people blame falling ill on water quality, when in fact it's down to poor hygiene?

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Very good point Phil.
Hi Paul thank you for another interesting video, my daysack has much the same as you and I also have a gortex bivi bag, a pkt of hexe blocks in mine, my Mrs says that I carry to much stuff, but would rather be safe than sorry.

Hi Ian,

It’s always better to be safe than sorry but it is a balance. Gore-tex bivvy is an improvement in breathability on the classic orange survival bag.

Do you use a particularly lightweight model?

Warm regards,

Paul

Hi Jim,

Just catching up with messages. I like the idea of the “trash kilt” 😊

When in the woods I like a longer waterproof jacket in the New Zealand style. This has a similar effect to the skirt idea you mention – keeping groin, trouser pockets and upper thighs dry.

The trash bag improvisation is a good one to keep in mind though. I’ll store it somewhere in the braincell....

The daypack in this video will squeeze in 35 litres but is more comfortable as a 30-litre bag.

Warm regards,

Paul

This is my second comment; so again, thank you for this video Paul.

About waterproof trousers, i don’t care for them either. As an alternative, may I suggest a “skirt”.

It’s easy to make from a trash liner or tarp and, tucked in under a belt, will keep one dry with plenty of ventilation. It’s also lighter and more compact than trousers so more Packable.

One question: how many liters will the pack you have carry?

Thanks again

Jim

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Reply

James Gohl says:

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Reply

James Gohl says:
Tell me more about your Newzealand style jacket, please.

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi James,

Here you go: http://www.swazi.co.nz/shop/wet-weather-gear/tahr-anorak/?src=wet-weather-gear

Warm regards,

Paul

Reply

Niccolò says:

I have seen this skirt system in a couple of youtube videos, and i want to make my own version, using some sort of waterproof fabric (not GoreTex or any other membrane, they are just too expensive and hard to find).

I am thinking about savaging an old poncho, do you have any idea?

Cheers,

Niccolò

Reply

James Gohl says:

Niccolo,

In the States you can buy a material usually used on houses: TYVEK. Light, waterproof, breathable and cheap, but the only color I've found is white.

Jim

Reply

Niccolò says:

Hi James,

In Italy tyvek is impossible to find, there are some similar materials but you can only buy large amounts (like 50 square metres rolls only), and to be honest I am scared about its toughness, although I see lots of people using it as a ground cloth to keep their sleeping kit nice and dry.

I think I will stick to the poncho idea, I just need to find an old one to cut 🎁

Thanks for the reply though 🎁

Niccolò

Reply

James Gohl says:

Hi Niccolo,

Contact me: jdgohl@yahoo.com
Jim

Reply

Chip N says:

I have the same day pack you have in this post, but for the life of me can’t seem to find a 40-50L dry bag. BTW what is the brand you are using, thanks again for all your post and reply’s.

Reply

Jon Silver says:

This is the one I use… It’s tough, very waterproof, and has a white interior making it easier to sight stuff deep in your pack…

EXPED WATERPROOF PACK LINER YELLOW (50L)

Link: http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B000MLMOYM

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Jon,

Thanks for sharing. I agree a lighter inner makes finding contents quicker. That’s one of the things I like about the small Exped drybags I use for organising small kits, ditty bags, etc.

Cheers,

Paul

Reply

Alana says:

again, great vid, especially for those with lingering questions.

i too, bring a saw, but typically end up clearing bush while hiking in my parents valley. i switched to a steel or aluminum bottle for my water and then got rid of the pot. i’ve been trying to minimize redundancy while maximizing functionality, yet still keep that extra pair of wool socks. i also carry a Bear Banger with multiple bangers and a few flares. we have a surfeit of black bears, and they can get rather aggressive from time to time. along with that, i have at least one carabiner and a decent length of paracord to hang my bag out of reach of bears.

another addition i’ve made to my first aid kit is vet grade clotting powder. it’s much cheaper than the stuff you’ll buy from hiking outfits and works just as well.

instead of rain pants (blech), i went to a hardware store and got a couple of tyvek body suits that keep paint and other stuff off, and broke them both down into a jacket and pants setup. super-light, and i really don’t care if they get trashed if i get stuck out.

Paul, i was wondering how to keep you kit at home. i’ve got a spare wardrobe that has my kit broken down into drawers for kitchen, safety/first aid, water, etc. that way, i just grab what i need, throw it in a pack, and head off.
Reply

henrique lundgren says:

Thanks for a great article and blog!

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

You are very welcome Henrique 😊

Reply

Bart says:

Hi Paul,
Great video! I notice your light weight and heavy weight fleeces fold up fairly small, compared to jackets and the fleece I own. What brands or materials should I look for? I’m concerned on having too bulky a pack. How cold will these layers protect against? Also, what material or brands do you recommend for pants. Thanks, Bart

Reply

david kirk says:

Hi. Just joined your page this morning.
Brief history. Im a ex soldier of 12 yrs. Been on numerous survival courses and Escape and Evasion. I left the army in 1991 and occasionally go on a day hike. I certainly would like to get away again and do the same again and to prove to myself as I did these years ago.

Reply

Pehr Blomkvist says:

Hi Paul,
Thank you for a good video. One thing I myself always bringa is a good size wool blanket. I find that very handy in many ways. I can fold it up a few times and use it as comfortable seat even close to a fire.I can cover myself if feeling a little cold, eespecially handy when sitting still for a longer time watching for animals. It would also be handy if I had to spend the night. And being a Swede my coffy pot is of cause a must have piece of kit.

Sincerely,
Pehr

Reply
Hi Paul

Just wondering if you could let me know the name of that backpack? It looks to me like a Berghaus 45L centurio? I was looking at the Karrimor SF Sabre 45 backpack as I could use that for day hikes and then add the two sabre side pockets (an extra 25L) for over night bushcraft trips. What do you think? Very useful video by the way, I’m going to rethink what I take out into the woods.

Kind Regards
Rhys

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hi Rhys,

Thanks for your comments and question.

The backpack in the video is a Berghaus Munro.

I’m on my second one in 20 years. Great daypack.

Sabre 45 is also a good option for flexibility. I do use mine for day hikes (without side pockets) but this tends to be more in the winter months when I have more bulky clothing, a flask, etc or if I’m in the mountains and carrying crampons, helmet, etc.

Both the Munro and Sabre 45 are amongst my favourite packs. You can’t go wrong with either (or both 😊).

Hope this helps but if you have further questions, please just ask.

Warm regards,
Paul

Reply

William says:

Paul,

Good stuff. It had a few things I had not considered. Thank you.

I often fish rivers that have limited access and you may end up a long way from the truck with no easy way to get out. Planning on spending all day on the river makes life a lot easier. A head lamp, first aid kit and heavy trash bags are now included in my fishing pack. I am still using my old Alice pack and will have to acquire a good dry sack liner as the pack only repels water and is not water proof. I also include 2 pair of dry socks and a Sawyer water filter, Ramen noodles and coffee.

Thanks again

Reply

Mattia says:
Hi Paul,
another great tutorial!
I pack a similar gear with a small add..
Usually I carry with me also a trangia or an esbit stove for ‘tea moment’ in the woods!
Ciao,
Thanks for sharing these useful informations!
Mattia

Hi Mattia,

Thanks for your comment.
I can’t argue with the logic of providing for a “team moment” 😊

Warm regards,
Paul

Hi Craig,

Great article mate.
I always carry water, a torch, swiss army knife, meds / first aid, and fire lighting equipment of some sorts where ever I go. I’m going to add a whistle to that list. I always tell someone where I am going and when I will be back.

It depends on where I am going, the season and for how long, as to what other equipment I might take with me.

Hi Craig,

Good to hear from you. Thanks for sharing your approach – it’s a solid one.

Cheers,
Paul

Hey Paul,

I’m getting reAdy for Spring here in Michigan. I went to our Army Surplus and purchased a messenger shoulder bag. It’s very
cool, about 11 inches by 10 inches and 4 inches deep. I’m dedicating it “my bread bag”. When I go out for a day, I like to take a lunch and snacks. If I stay longer, I take stuff for dinner. It’s good to have a messenger bag for that and a rucksack with all the other gear. I do pretty well with a German mountain ruck. It suits me fine.

Jim

Reply

Paul Kirtley says:

Hey James,

As always it’s good to hear from you.

Yes, some people do like a second bag to keep things separate, organised or accessible.

I know a few people who like shoulder bags or shoulder water bottle carriers.

You have to find what works for you.

Cheers,

Paul

Reply

Bozidar says:

Hi Paul!

With joy I met another excellent and instructive video. All are very nice display, only I always carry with me a poncho, because it is good for the wind and rain.

Wishing expects the next video!

Thanks & Best Regards!

Bozidar

Croatia

Reply

Benny Morgan says:

Paul sir,

This was an excellent video and discussion which provided me with some (several) things to think about. Thank you for this.

regards,

Benny

Reply
Hi Benny,

I’m very glad to have been of assistance. You are very welcome.

Warm regards,

Paul

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Ian says:

Paul,

Great stuff as always. Rather than a heavier fleece, I always throw in a down or synthetic fill sweater. They pack down really small and when used in combo with your waterproofs, offer significantly more warmth than the fleece. A couple of plastic shopping bags and an extra pair of socks can “re-waterproof” soaking boots and keep the old feet a lot warmer if you’re out for the night. Keep up the good work

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Ian (again) says:

Paul,

Keep about 10 foot of duct tape wrapped around an old Bic pen. It’ll patch holes/tears in clothing, fix rips in a tarp or tent, and temporarily sort out a sole that’s flapping around. There’s obviously tons of things it can fix in an emergency and weighs next to nothing

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Teresa says:

Very nice video! I love the insights mentioned, and I have appreciate better spending time in the nature.

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Brian says:

There is a lot of really good information here with regards to gear that would be useful to have in your pack. My experience has taught me that the highest priority items are the ones that will ensure that I can stay warm and dry. Also it is of critical importance to continually practice skills like adjusting your clothing layers so you don’t get soaked in sweat while on the move, getting a fire going quickly in challenging conditions, and setting up a survival shelter quickly in challenging conditions. When things go wrong you will be able to very efficiently deal with the situation if you have become thoroughly practiced with the basic skills. Having the gear in your pack is one thing but really knowing how to use it will make the difference when you really need it. Practice the basic skills as often as possible so they become second nature. Your confidence and abilities will be greatly improved and your enjoyment for the outdoors will grow because you have a high comfort level performing the
skills that keep you safe and alive.
Three Types of Day Hikers. The majority of my hikes are what I consider full-day (meaning, they last at minimum six hours) although in winter and shoulder season the length runs shorter. I tend to prefer peakbagging to hitting a single peak and my motto is, “the more miles, the better.” If a hike runs under ten miles, it tends to feel too short. There is nothing worse than getting hurt or lost in the woods and needing to be rescued. Unfortunately, there are going to be accidents and even if you’re prepared and experienced, you may find yourself in need of rescue. Carrying the right gear in your pack is just as important as finding one that fits you correctly. Having your pack sized at most local outfitters is essential, in my opinion. Thirty days in the woods, 460 kilometres to cover… what to pack? What gear to pack differs vastly from person to person. There are essentially two schools of thought at opposite ends of the spectrum, with the majority of hikers sitting somewhere in between. On the one side there are the ultra-light hikers. The first factor that made packing this time a little trickier is the length of our hike. In principle a four-day hike requires a similar amount of gear to a thirty day hike. (If you bring your kitchen with you, you can cook in it as many times as long as you like). Since we’re stopping to resupply food along the way, our thirty-day hike is essentially four week-long hikes. print this day hike checklist off and use it for your own adventures. The items I list below are just suggestions. Where you. Each year there are numerous people lost or stranded in the wilderness so it makes perfect sense to me to pack for unplanned visits to the woods. All of that isn’t to say that I think you should bring your full Bug Out Bag with you, but for some of you that might be a good idea to see how it feels after a few hours. My wife and I did this before our first backpacking trip to try out items like our portable stove, water filtration items, eat some of the freeze-dried food we would live off of in the wilderness but most importantly to see how lugging our new backpacks full of gear felt.