



Camping and Hiking: What To Take Before You Go



- **Food and water.** Regardless of your hike's duration, you should always pack plenty of water and high-protein, high-carbohydrate foods like fruit (fresh and dried), tuna, crackers, cheese, granola, peanut butter and meat jerky. Energy bars, gels, chews and trail mixes are the popular hiking foods because they offer good nutrition but are lightweight. Water filtration and treatment systems may also be something you want to consider taking along.
- **Appropriate clothing.** One of the biggest mistakes inexperienced hikers make is not dressing for the environment. They expose skin when they should protect it, wear flip-flops instead of hiking boots, forget to take a hat or a jacket. A good rule of thumb is to take multiple layers of clothing you can alter as you hike. Your clothing choices should always include a moisture-wicking under layer and a waterproof outer layer. Consider how the weather changes as you hike and take an additional bandana, hat or gloves if needed.
- **Backpack.** Choosing the right kind of backpack can be a huge advantage. Backpacks intended for the outdoors are quite different from the one you may carry to school, so shop around before you buy. Make sure the pack is appropriate for your size and build, is waterproof and can hold all the supplies you need.
- **Mobile communication and navigation devices.** A freshly charged cell phone is the easiest thing to take, but having some backup electronics is also a good idea if your cell doesn't work. For example, you could also carry a two-way radio or Global Positioning System (GPS) unit with spare batteries. Make sure you know how to use these devices and have emergency numbers or frequencies written down where you can easily access them.
- **Choose bright colors.** Bright colors translate into visibility. Under normal conditions, this may not mean much, but if you get lost that red jacket or orange backpack could become an effective signal tool.
- **First aid kit.** Lightweight first aid kits are both easy to find and inexpensive. Make sure it contains insect repellent and basic pain relief medications.
- **Sun protection.** Help prevent over-exposure, over-heating and dehydration by carrying sunscreen, lip balm, sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.
- **Fire-building tools.** Have several ways of creating a fire if you need one, including waterproof matches, lighters or a fire starter. Carry all these in a waterproof container along with kindling (dryer lint and corn chips actually make excellent, lightweight kindling!)
- **Tools.** Always have a knife or multi-tool which includes a knife available to you. Duct tape strips and camping utensils are also lightweight and extremely versatile resources.
- **Low-tech rescue devices.** If you get lost or in trouble, your cell phone may not work when you need it most. Having low-tech options is a great idea. These simple tools can include an emergency whistle, weatherproof map, compass, signal mirror and a flashlight with extra batteries.
- **Emergency shelter.** This doesn't mean lugging around a tent if you're just out for a short hike, but carrying a compact thermal blanket, waterproof poncho or plastic tarp can help you create an emergency shelter if you need one. When possible, buy these items in bright colors to maximize your visibility.