

Day Hiking: Gear Purchase Guide



Comments: These are personal recommendations based on my *Day Hike Checklist*. Weblinks to specific hike products below are found on my *Hiking Weblink* page (www.ronjones.org/Weblinks/Hiking.html).

Leave No Trace is an outdoor *credo* with seven guiding principles—know and follow all of them when respecting the outdoors: Plan ahead & prepare; Travel & camp on durable surfaces; Dispose of waste properly (Pack it in-Pack it out); Leave what you find; Minimize campfire impacts; Respect wildlife; & Be considerate of other visitors. Details are on my *Hiking Weblink* above. ☺

10 ESSENTIALS: There are *10 Essentials* recommended by hiking groups. I've modified mine slightly for short day hikes, but the message is that for safety, *you must be prepared before heading out into the wilderness!*

- **Clothing Layers:** Use *TechWear* clothing that is light & wicking. It will keep you dry without being heavy. *REI*, *Capilene*, & *Patagonia* + others have good selections for both upper & lower body garments including underwear & socks.
- **Drinking Water:** For ≤ 1 hour, plain water should be fine. For hikes of > 1 hour or in very hot conditions, take a sport drink with electrolytes like *Gatorade* or equivalent. If you want electrolytes without the sweetness of sport drinks, Trader Joe's has a great *Vitamin+Mineral Drink Mix Booster* which comes in individual serving packets. For longer hikes, take extra drink powder.
- **Food:** I take sport nutrition food like energy bars, gel packets, along with mixed nuts, PB&J, bananas, & apples. **Tip!** Take *Performance Food* that will help your hike—NOT junk foods that will make you feel like crap! ☺ Don't take *messy foods* that get all over everything including your nice pack!
- **Matches:** Short hikes with a group on a popular trail probably don't need these with every person. Use your judgment.
- **Headlamp/Flashlight:** If there is even a remote possibility of getting stuck in darkness, take some light! I use the *Black Diamond Spot LED Headlamp* ($\approx \$43$). I think it is the best one for maximum light, battery conservation, light weight, & efficient strap design. A lot of headlamps are not bright enough, too heavy, or don't have good straps that keep the light on your head. The *Black Diamond* is a great choice, but at least take a *Mini Maglite* or equivalent.
- **Map/Directions:** Know where you are going! Depending upon trip complexity, you will need anything from a simple hand note, webpage, or even a Topo map with GPS.
- **Multi-Tool/Knife:** A great item to have along. Many models contain a knife, scissors, tweezers, saw blade, pliers, & more.
- **Sunglasses:** Opt for an all-around lens that is not too dark for shadows. If you have a "dark" lens, you won't see very well when you're under a tree canopy or in low-light conditions.
- **Sunscreen:** The sun is VERY intense at higher altitudes! Snow, water, & desert sand can intensify reflection burns. Use *generous amounts* of sunscreen & reapply often.
- **Whistle:** If you go down, let someone know LOUDLY!

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BASIC EQUIPMENT: This can vary by distance and group size. **REI.Com** is a great place to begin—great stuff & good prices. (Others are on my webpage)

- Daypack: Get a pack with multiple *ergo* adjustments like waist, shoulder, & chest. Good packs (≈\$50-170) also have extra padding to protect the spine, shoulders, & waistline. Get one with multiple compartments which makes it easier to sort & organize & actually FIND what you are looking for! It is best if you can try them on for size to make sure it's a good fit & make sure you like the layout.
- Water Bottles: I use *Nalgene* brand bottles (≈\$8-9) because they don't leave a plastic taste in your water. I use two sizes. The 32 oz. I put in the back, & the 16 oz. I keep up front in my pocket or hand. I'll take two 32 oz. bottles & one 16 oz. bottle for any hike over 3 hours.
- Water Filtration: You don't usually need to filter water for a short day hike of ≈3 hours because you can pack enough with you; however, for longer hikes, you will probably need more water from a natural source. NEVER drink natural water without purifying it first because you can become very sick or even die from *giardia*—a dangerous parasite found in the water! I use a pump filtration system by MSR. The *MSR Mini-Works EX System* (≈\$85) allows a direct attachment to the *Nalgene "Wide-Mouth" Bottle*. You pump water from the stream into the ceramic filter system then right into the *Nalgene*. If you are hiking with someone that has a filtration system, you can probably share between a small group.

CLOTHES: *TechWear* is amazing! It is incredibly lightweight yet warm. These technical fibers will "wick" moisture away from your body keeping you dry. They are not cheap, but think of them as "investments" for your wellness which is a much better value than heart surgery or diabetes!

- Boots: For day hikes, the *Light Hiking* boots are good choices. I recommend the "over ankle" style. Tennis shoes are not enough protection from sharp rocks and steep trails. The *Light Hiking* boots usually have artificial sides with leather reinforcements along with hiking boot soles for good traction. Serious *Mountaineering Boots* for multi-day hikes are much stiffer & heavier which require a serious break-in period. *Light Hiking* boots don't need much break-in; however, I would recommend walking around in them a few times before doing hikes over an hour. *Light Hiking* boots good for day hikes cost around \$85-150 depending upon what you want. Medium-use hiking boots can get up to \$150-250. I use *Lowa* boots. Other quality hiking boots are made by *Asolo, Merrell, Vasque, Salomon, and many more as well.*
- Extra Clothes: Always take "layers" of clothes. Hiking in the wilderness can bring very rapid climate changes from direct sunlight to pouring cold rain in a matter of minutes or hours. Also bring another set of "return trip" clothes for the way home including comfortable shoes! I like to come home with open-toe sandals because after a long hike, my dogs are tired & sore!

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- Gloves: Not always necessary for a short hike in mild conditions. Use your judgment.
- Hat/Cap/Visor: Outdoor sun is intense. For hot conditions, use a *TechWear* cap that breathes while protecting from sun or opt for a simple visor. In cold conditions, a hat or cap can also conserve valuable body heat.
- Pants/Shorts: If the weather will be hot to mild, I opt for *TechWear* shorts. If I'm not sure, I'll take "zip-off" pants that can quickly convert between full & short length. The *TechWear* pants will not "chaff" or be as abrasive as regular cotton clothing plus *TechWear* is much lighter. Weight matters when going vertical my friends!
- Rain Gear: It's always a good idea to have a light rain parka or jacket—even a large trash bag is better than nothing!
- Shirts: I usually carry about three layers of upper clothing for day hikes: A light short-sleeve *TechWear* on bottom, then a long-sleeve lighter *Capilene*, finished by a light jacket. *Capilene* (or equivalent) comes in varied thicknesses depending upon temperature conditions you'll be experiencing. Even the lightest *Capilene* is pretty warm once you get moving. For outer wear, I use a *Mountain Hardware Windstopper Tech Jacket* (~\$185) or *Patagonia Fleece Jacket* (~\$150). Both are worth the money in the wilderness.
- Socks & Liners: NEVER hike in cotton socks! You are asking for a blister! I recommend using special-blend & *non-itch* wool socks called *SmartWool* or equivalent wool-blend socks made for hiking (~\$10-16). A medium weight should be fine for day hiking. These socks wick moisture without "bunching up" like cheap cotton socks. They also keep your feet from getting as "stinky." ☺ I use very light *TechWear* "liner" socks next to my skin for extra blister protection.

PERSONAL: This varies by person, trip length, location, & even fitness ability to "carry" additional weight up various degrees of slope.

- Binoculars: Cool for checking out wildlife. I use them with groups to keep track of people behind or ahead.
- Camera: Easy choice with today's lightweight, small, & hi-tech versions.
- Nature Book: Identify native birds & plants.
- Return Trip Clothes & Shoes: Bring loose fitting comfortable clothes & especially shoes! Your feet will be tired & sore—maybe have blisters. Open-toed sandals are my first choice for coming home in comfort.
- Return Trip Food: By the end of the day, you'll be sick of "pack food," so bring something that is palatable for your trip home. ☺
- Writing Utensils: Poetry, journal, or story ideas.
- Zip Lock/Waterproof Bag: A good "just in case" item for multiple uses. A large leaf or garbage bag is also a great backup "rain poncho" or wind shield.

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FIRST AID & SAFETY: 🗡️ Be prepared because things happen in an outdoor & uncontrolled environment. Some of these might not be needed on every person depending upon trip length and group size. Use your best judgment, but stay on the “safe side” with your supply list!

- Antibacterial Wipes/Gel: Because of dangerous staph bacteria infection, make sure to carry these so you can immediately sterilize a wound. Even a simple scratch can develop into a serious MRSA infection within hours.
- Blister Cushion Pads: *Band-Aid Blister Cushions* are small soft protective bubbles that you can put over “hot spots” where blisters are starting to emerge. These are water & sweat proof. They will stay on for the duration of the hike & can literally save the enjoyment of your hike that day!
- Compass/GPS: Might not be necessary on a major well-traveled trail or if you have a group member with location finder. Use your judgment.
- Emergency Blanket: Get a fold up shelter blanket made out of a foil like material. These are very light and compact—about the size of playing cards.
- Insect Repellent: Remember, you are in nature—NOT the city! There are bugs in nature—BIG ones! *DEET* is the active chemical that is the most effective for mosquitoes found in many repellants.
- First Aid Kit: When hiking alone, this is a must. If in a group, make sure to have enough supplies to share for group situations. Even a small kit can help.
- Flash Light: I at least take along a small *Mini-Maglite*. On longer hikes, I'll also bring my head lamp as a back up.
- Head Lamp: I only use the *Black Diamond Spot LED Headlamp* (~\$43). I did a lot of research on these, & use the *Black Diamond* for trail running at night or hiking in low light. Superior candlepower-to-weight ratio + excellent strap system makes this a top choice for Coach RJ!
- Safety Pins: Sometimes you can rip your clothes on a rock or branch. Pins can keep things together & prevent other things from falling out!
- Sunscreen: Outdoor sun along with water, snow, & sand can intensify harmful rays. Take plenty of sunscreen. Apply liberally & often.
- Two-Way Radios: With a group, these can be helpful to keep coordinated. Make sure to use them for safety & not “chatting” which would be disruptive to the other hikers trying to get away from cell phones & city stress.
- Whistle: If you go down, let people know! With minimal effort, you can make a lot of noise that carries for a long ways.

🚶 Enjoy your trip...may each step be towards *higher* wellness! 🚶

“The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.”-- John Muir

♥ *Dedicated to the memory of Trail Goddess Meredith ‘Hope’ Emerson* ♥

* Ron Jones (5.11.10)

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