



## ATC Backpacking Course Gear List

This list has been developed for the conditions you may experience any time of year on the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). Your equipment and clothing must function well in a wide variety of weather. While each piece of gear you bring is important for your success and safety, what you leave out of your pack can also benefit you by lightening your load.

Wet and cold conditions are expected *any month of the year* when hiking on the A.T., particularly in high elevation areas, and weather can often change quickly. Years of experience in the mountains demand we emphasize good rain gear and a layering system for clothing.

Your instructors will inspect all gear you bring (even if it is new) on Day 1 of your course. For your safety and the group's, all clothing and equipment must meet the minimum safety requirements for the expected conditions during your specific course. **EXTRA GEAR WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ONCE YOU ARRIVE**, unless otherwise indicated by your instructors.

Please take the time to carefully choose and understand your gear. If you are buying new gear, please remove all packaging and labels *before* you arrive. If possible, we recommend using your gear (e.g. - setting up your tent, cooking with your camp stove) at least once before your course, even if it's in your backyard. During your course, it is our goal to help you have a greater understanding and comfort with your gear, but the more practice you have the better!

Your instructors are here to help you! Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions as you pack and prepare: (828) 357-6542

### REQUIRED ITEMS

**CLOTHING** – Your clothing should include multiple layers that can be added or removed as needed to manage your body temperature. You will need more layers in colder temperatures than in warmer temperatures, although temperatures can change quickly in the mountains, especially with precipitation. Conditions can become hypothermic even in the summer. All clothing should be made from synthetic materials or wool – these fabrics will wick moisture away from your skin, dry quickly, and retain their insulating value even when wet. **Cotton clothing (including denim) will not retain any warmth when wet and becomes heavy and cumbersome.** Synthetic materials include polyester, spandex, nylon, fleece, acrylic, rayon, or name brands like Polartec™, COOLMAX™, and Capilene. Merino wool has a soft feel and is resistant to holding odor.

- HIKING SHIRT:** Long or short sleeve synthetic shirt. Long sleeves will protect you from sun, bugs, underbrush etc. You will likely wear this shirt every day.
- HIKING PANTS/SHORTS:** Lightweight synthetic material. Pants similarly will protect from bugs, underbrush, etc.
- UNDERWEAR/BRA:** Most hikers wear the same set of underwear every day for short trips. You may want to bring an extra set to change into on longer trips (4+ days). Some hikers may choose to go “commando.”

- ❑ **BASE LAYER TOP & BOTTOM\*\*:** Lightweight long underwear style top and bottom. May be worn under hiking clothes during cold weather or as a dry set of sleeping clothes in warmer weather. **\*\*Required for cold weather courses. May be considered for warmer weather courses.**
- ❑ **INSULATING MID-LAYER\*\*:** To be worn over your hiking/base layer in colder temperatures, either on the trail or in the evening. Can be wool, fleece, Capilene, etc. **\*\*Required for cold weather courses. May be redundant for warmer weather courses.**
- ❑ **INSULATING JACKET:** Can be a down or synthetic fill “puffy” or fleece soft-shell jacket. **Down will lose all insulating value when wet** but will be more lightweight. Should be able to be packed inside your backpack when not in use.
- ❑ **RAIN JACKET or PONCHO:** A hooded waterproof jacket/poncho is required. It should be able to fit comfortably over your other layers. Even in dry weather this can be used as an added layer to retain body heat during cold temperatures. Should be a relatively lightweight and breathable material.
- ❑ **SOCKS:** At least two pair – one for hiking, one for sleeping. Made of wool and/or synthetic blend. For longer hikes, you may want an extra pair of hiking socks to rotate. Your sleeping socks should always remain dry. Some people also prefer a pair of thin liner socks to wear under their hiking socks. Try out different socks to see what system feels best with your boots/shoes.
- ❑ **HIKING BOOTS/SHOES:** Sturdy, clothes-toed shoes are required. Comfortable footwear is one of the most important items you will bring, and there are many possibilities to choose from – boots or trail runners, high- or low- cut, waterproof or breathable. If you are buying new shoes, try on several pairs before you decide, and **give yourself at least a month to break them in** before the start of your course. Your feet will probably swell after a long day of backpacking, so you may consider buying a ½ size bigger than you normally wear.
- ❑ **CAMP/SLEEPING CLOTHES:** One set of clothes (top and bottom) that will always be kept dry. Wet clothing conducts heat away from your body and is just plain uncomfortable to sleep in, so it is important you have a dry set of clothes to change into after a long day of sweating or hiking in the rain. In warm weather, this may be your base layers (see listed above). In cold weather, you should bring an EXTRA set of base layers to sleep in, since you may be hiking in the first set.
- ❑ **WARM HAT:** Wool or fleece hat for cold or cool evenings. You will likely use this any time of year.
- ❑ **GLOVES:** A pair of fleece-lined gloves for cold temperatures.

**EQUIPMENT** - The choices for backpacking gear are nearly endless. Ask 10 different thru hikers what gear to use, and you will get 10 different answers. Options can range from “ultralight” to “ultraheavy.” Two important things to consider when choosing gear are their **weight** and **comfort-level**. Lighter gear = lighter pack, which will likely lead to more comfort while hiking. However, if you prefer some extra comfort when camping at the end of the day your pack may be heavier as a result. *Keep in mind that food and water will be your heaviest items.* If you are purchasing new gear, **price** is a third consideration – lighter and/or more comfortable gear usually comes at a higher price. Consider your personal priorities and budget carefully.

- ❑ **BACKPACK:** Good quality, internal or external frame. 50-65-liter capacity is common for most hikers. If using a smaller pack, it must be able to fit all personal gear and food for the duration of the trip.
- ❑ **SHELTER:** Lightweight and waterproof tent or hammock. Make sure shelter is designed for backpacking, *not front country use*. A shelter system weighing 3-5lbs or less is recommended. A ground cloth to protect the bottom of your tent is also recommended. If using a hammock, be sure that straps are at least 1-1.5” wide webbing, which will limit girdling and bark damage on trees. An underquilt for hammocking is recommended for cooler temperatures.

- ❑ **SLEEPING BAG:** 20°F bag weighing maximum 3lbs is recommended. Temperature ratings for most bags are for **survival, NOT comfort**. Some courses are taught during winter conditions, with possible below-freezing temperatures, which could beg for a 0°F bag. *Check with instructors about conditions for your course.* Bags can be down or synthetic fill. **Down will lose all insulating value when wet** but will be more lightweight. Keep your sleeping bag dry by storing inside a garbage bag or water-proof stuff sack.
- ❑ **SLEEPING PAD:** Closed cell foam or inflatable pad to insulate you from the ground. If using an inflatable pad, make sure to bring a small patch kit in case of punctures.
- ❑ **HYDRATION:** You should be able to carry at least 2 liters of water. Water bottles or bladders (e.g. - Camelbaks) are both acceptable. 1-liter soda, Gatorade, or Smart Water bottles work well. Nalgene bottles work but are a heavy alternative.
- ❑ **WATER TREATMENT SYSTEM:** There are many acceptable types of water treatment: squeeze filters (ex. Sawyer Squeeze), pump filters, gravity filters, UV filters, or chemical purification (ex. Aquamira or iodine). Whatever system you choose, familiarize yourself with its use before your course. You can find a more comprehensive overview of water treatment options here: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/water-treatment-backcountry.html>
- ❑ **STOVE and POT:** A small backpacking stove plus a metal pot w/ lid to cook food in. Many options are available. We also recommend a small scraper or “scrubby” used to clean the inside of your pot. May use isobutane canisters, denatured alcohol, or white gas for fuel. *Fuel will be provided during your course. please let your instructors know what type of stove you plan to use.* **(NOTE: Some hikers prefer not to carry a stove. They eat cold calorie dense meals and snacks that do not require heating water.)**
- ❑ **SPOON/SPORK:** A durable, yet light, utensil to eat with.
- ❑ **LIGHTER:** A small lighter is helpful to light a stove or to have in case of an emergency.
- ❑ **HEAD LAMP:** Models with a red light option are recommended. *Bring an extra set of batteries.*
- ❑ **TROWEL:** Small, lightweight trowel for digging 6”-8” catholes. Vital for proper Leave No Trace backcountry waste disposal. *Please do not leave behind this valuable piece of gear.*
- ❑ **TOILETRIES: Recommended** – toilet paper, toothbrush and toothpaste, *biodegradable* soap, hand sanitizer, lip balm, sunscreen, prescription medications, feminine hygiene items (if needed). **Optional** – bug spray, comb, wet wipes, foot powder. **Not Recommended** - deodorant
- ❑ **STUFF SACKS:** 1-3 stuff sacks of varying sizes for organizing your gear inside your backpack. Could be used for you sleeping bag, clothing, stove & cook kit, toiletries, etc. Find what system works best for you.

## OPTIONAL ITEMS

- ❑ **RAIN PANTS/SKIRT:** Rain pants are useful to maintain warmth during cold and rainy weather. Skirts provide rain protection with added breathability but will not maintain body heat.
- ❑ **SUN HAT:** You may choose to bring a baseball cap or other hat to deflect sun on hot days. Sunburn is much more likely at the high elevations where courses take place.
- ❑ **CAMP SHOES:** A nice addition so you can change out of your boots at the end of the day. (e.g. Crocs, sandals, light sneakers, etc.).
- ❑ **HIKING POLES:** Useful for taking the weight off your knees during ascents and descents. Highly recommended if you have prior knee or leg injuries. May also be utilized in some non-freestanding shelter setups.
- ❑ **GAITERS:** Fits over the top of your boots/shoes and around your ankles to keep dirt and debris out.
- ❑ **BANDANAS:** Multi-functional; use to wipe sweat, blow your nose, clean your cook pot, as a wash rag, etc. Bring a few!
- ❑ **BUFF/NECK GAITER:** Can be used as a neck gaiter, head band, lightweight hat, or face cover in colder temperatures.

- ❑ **POCKET KNIFE:** You never know when it might come in handy.
- ❑ **MUG/CUP:** Some people prefer an extra mug/cup to hold hot drinks, rather than drinking out of your cook pot.
- ❑ **CAMERA:** Capture your memories and share them. Be sure to waterproof your camera in one or two Ziploc baggies, or other style of dry bag.
- ❑ **EAR PLUGS:** Sometimes sleeping inside the shelter is necessary, convenient, and noisy! You won't regret these lightweight additions.
- ❑ **CLOTHES FOR THE TRIP HOME:** These clothes can be left at basecamp/vehicle, along with any bedding, towel, etc.

### **WHAT WE SUPPLY**

- ❑ **TRAIL FOOD:** Various options for common meals and snacks will be provided. You will do a "mini shopping trip" on Day 1 of the course and choose from these options to plan your meals while on trail. Please indicate any allergies and dietary restrictions on your medical form.
- ❑ **FOOD STORAGE SYSTEM:** Proper food storage is required while on trail, and several options will be provided (bear hang w/ stuff sack, bear canister, or Ursack). Your instructors will go over these options on Day 1 of your course.
- ❑ **FUEL:** Fuel for your backpacking stove is provided. Please let your instructors know what type of fuel you will need.
- ❑ **FIRST AID KIT:** Instructors will carry a group first aid kit while on trail.
- ❑ **UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:** Our instructors are enthusiastic professionals with ample guiding and education experience and a combined total of 15,000 miles under their belts.