

# Troop 195 Hiking, Backpacking and Gear Tips

## Dressing for the Outdoors

Outdoor enthusiasts have long recognized that multiple layers of clothing keep them warm in winter and from overheating in summer. Adding or removing garments is a practical way to adapt quickly to different activity levels and temperature changes during your time outside.

Many winter campers wear a system of underwear, a midlayer of polyester fleece (pants and top), followed by a windproof, water-resistant outer layer (windpants with full zips down the side for easy on/off and a high-performance wind shell with zippers under the arms for ventilation during active sports).

### Underwear

While cotton was once the mainstay of long underwear and cold-weather clothing, it is no longer recommended for strenuous winter activities because it soaks up moisture. Damp clothes are heavier and, if next to your skin, can pose a chilling hazard.

Modern performance underwear, made from polyester or polypropylene, is most effective in moving moisture away from your skin and into outer layers of clothing where it can evaporate.

In addition to traditional shirts and "long johns," many other garments, including short-sleeve tops, bras, boxer shorts and briefs, are now made with polyester fabrics to wick away chilling perspiration.

### Midlayer

If you are performing an active sport such as skiing, or hiking in spring or fall, a polyester fabric, such as fleece, is an ideal second layer over your long underwear. It continues to trap your body warmth while wicking away moisture. Even in warmer seasons, a midlayer is useful to have handy in your pack for those times you begin to chill (particularly during rest stops.)

### Outerwear

Depending on weather conditions, you may want to wear wind-resistant, water-resistant pants and an anorak over your other clothes. How many layers you need depends on your level of exertion, personal preference and weather conditions.

### Rainwear

Be prepared for severe weather. Carry a waterproof rain jacket and pants with you, even if the forecast is for sunshine.

## **Hat**

Up to 80% of your body heat can be lost through your neck and head. Carry a hat with you for added warmth or protection from the sun.

For overnight trips, carry a lightweight polypropylene hat. It stores compactly in your pack pocket and doubles nicely as a comfortable sleeping hat in cool weather.

Winter campers often carry a hat system consisting of a lightweight polypropylene liner and a nylon shell to adjust to changing winter temperatures.

## **Socks**

For maximum comfort and blister prevention, many hikers wear two layers of socks, a thin polyester sock liner with a thicker outer sock. On overnight or extended trips, be sure to carry enough socks to be able to change into a fresh set each day.

# **Hiking Tips**

1. Start out slowly, gradually increasing your pace and distance traveled.
2. Let the slowest person in your hiking party set the pace. This is especially important when children are part of your group.
3. Plan the trip ahead of time and assign tasks that people enjoy. The goal is to have a good time outdoors.
4. Take turns leading the group and sharing decision-making responsibilities.
5. Hike only on marked trails in wilderness areas unless bushwhacking is allowed and you have excellent navigation skills.
6. Hike in groups as much as possible, especially during winter and on hazardous terrain.
7. Leave your itinerary with a friend or family member and check in with them upon your return.
8. Learn basic repair skills for fixing a backpack or a camp stove. Remember to take repair kits on your trip.
9. Mountain weather is generally cooler, cloudier and windier than in lowland areas. For every 1,000 feet of elevation, the temperature often drops three to five degrees.
10. Wear sunglasses and a hat or visor when you hike. Snowblindness, caused by the sun's glare on snow, can also be caused by sunlight reflecting off water or boulders. Keep your eyes and face covered, especially during your first few days outdoors.
11. Always bring sunscreen. You can get a painful sunburn even in subfreezing temperatures.
12. Develop an emergency plan before you start your trip. Make sure everyone knows what to do if they become lost or a medical emergency arises. Give children whistles with the instructions to "stop and blow" if they become lost.
13. Take frequent rests or vary your pace to recover from strenuous activity spurts. A steady pace works best.

14. Drink plenty of water. Water is heavy to carry, but thirst on the trail is a hazard. Take a tip from athletes: Before a hike, drink some water so you're well hydrated and energized. Don't run out of water. Backcountry water supplies are unpredictable. Treat or filter all water.
15. Pack carbohydrates – energy bars, granola, candy, gorp and fruit provide an instant pick-me-up on the trail.
16. Bring a first-aid kit tailored to your outing.
17. National parks and many state parks and other federal lands prohibit dogs. Be sure to keep pets on leashes in restricted areas, especially in cattle and sheep country. Bring water for pets and make sure they have name tags. Watch for injuries to your dog's foot pads in rocky areas, on ice or in extremely hot terrain.
18. If camping, pay attention to local regulations, especially concerning camp fires. In many desert or drought areas, fires are prohibited and you must use a camp stove.
19. Dress in layers. Polyester clothing worn closest to your skin will trap warm air next to the skin and transfer or wick body moisture away

## Choosing/Loading Your Backpack

Whether you are carrying an internal or external frame pack, you should load it with balance and the convenient location of gear in mind. A few basic packing principles apply to both styles of packs.

1. **Protect your sleeping bag.** Internal frame packs have a special sleeping bag compartment in the bottom. External frame packs have a special area below the pack bag where you can lash on your sleeping bag. In either case, make sure your sleeping bag is well protected from the elements. It is always a good idea to carry a large plastic garbage bag in the bottom of your pack. If it rains, you can line your sleeping bag stuff sack with it for extra protection.
2. **Balance your load.** Carry clothing, cooking essentials and food in the main compartment. The heaviest gear should be stowed toward your back and centered in the pack to provide proper balance. It helps to use a soft garment as a buffer between your back and hard-edged items such as cook kits and fuel bottles. Midweight gear should be carried toward the top and outside portion of the pack. Organizing your gear in color-coded stuff sacks makes packing easier and helps you locate supplies quickly on the trail.
3. **Keep essentials handy.** Carry sunglasses, guidebook, map, compass, water bottles, camera and other essentials in outer pockets. Nothing is more frustrating than having to sort through all the compartments in your pack to find something you need. The easiest way to avoid frustration is to consistently pack the same items in the same pockets. Once you have a packing routine, you'll find it natural to reach for the right pocket every time.

# Choosing Hiking Boots

**Your enjoyment on the trail rests literally on your feet.**

Nothing can end a great outdoor experience quicker than painful blisters, pinched toes or even injuries caused by inappropriate hiking boots. (The comfort, fit and construction of appropriate footwear can also add to your margin of safety in rugged terrain.) Here are our guidelines to help you choose the right hiking boots for all your outdoor adventures.

1. Before you begin shopping for a pair of hiking boots, think carefully about what kind of hiking you plan to do. Select boots that are designed to provide the support and protection you will need for the most difficult terrain you expect to encounter.
2. Choose boots that are designed to support the load you expect to be carrying. The heavier your load, the more support you will need.
3. Remember that great hiking boots do not have to weigh a great deal. Today's high-tech materials have replaced the traditional metal shank and other heavy elements that provide stability in a boot. As a result, hiking boots are lighter but still offer plenty of support.
4. Consider the various advantages of fabric-and-leather boots and all-leather boots. Fabric-and-leather boots are lighter and easier to break in, but all-leather boots offer added protection and durability in rigorous terrain, as well as being water resistant and breathable.
5. Today's top-quality hiking boots, including many of L.L.Bean's fabric-and-leather boots, are made with a Gore-Tex® lining that keeps water out while allowing perspiration to escape. A real plus if you encounter puddles and shallow streams.

## **Types of Hiking Boots**

### **Trail Shoes**

If you are hiking in a dry climate and on well-established paths that don't have a lot of rocks, a pair of trail shoes may be just what you need. High-quality trail shoes are ideal for one-hour to one-day hikes when you are carrying a light day pack.

### **Trail Hikers**

If you are going to encounter steeper inclines and muddy paths, or plan to stay out three days to a week, then you will need some sturdier, higher-cut waterproof boots. These will provide added stability and ankle protection against protruding limbs and rocks.

### **Mountaineering**

If you plan to climb in the mountains (and might even need to attach crampons for a better grip on glaciers or hard-packed snow), you will want an extremely strong boot with a stiff sole to give your ankles support and protection as you climb on challenging terrain.

### **Finding the Best Fit**

1. When trying on boots, wear the socks you plan to wear on the trail. Try boots on at the end of the day when your feet are more swollen. We suggest polyester liner socks that wick away moisture, as well as an outer pair of heavy-weave wool or synthetic rag socks for cushioning.
- Safety Tip:** On the trail, wear any kind of socks but cotton, which absorbs water and perspiration and holds it next to your skin. If you are hiking with wet feet and the temperature drops below freezing, you risk getting frostbite. A good sock system and hiking boot reduce that possibility.

2. Boots should feel snug but comfortable, so you can still wiggle your toes. Most hiking boots won't feel as instantly comfortable as sneakers, but they shouldn't pinch, cause hot spots or constrict circulation. They should fit securely around your ankle and instep.
3. When trying on boots, try walking down an incline. Your feet should not slide forward, nor should your toenails scrape against the front of your boot. If your foot slides forward, the boot could be too wide. If the back of your heel moves around, your boots might not be laced up tight enough.

### **Breaking in Your New Boots**

Once you purchase a pair of boots, break them in slowly with short hikes. Leather boots in particular take a while to break in, so take a couple of two- or three-hour hikes before your big trip or wear them around the house or even while mowing your lawn. If you find any sharp pressure points, use leather conditioner to soften the leather.

### **Care and Maintenance**

1. Cleaning and waterproofing your boots from time to time is critical. Use waterproofing on leather, and be sure to concentrate on the seams, which can become porous over time. For boots with a Gore-Tex lining, use a silicon-based waterproofing treatment, not a wax-based treatment. Wax-based treatments keep the leather from "breathing."
2. On the trail, if a blister or hot spot develops, place padding such as moleskin or an adhesive bandage over the area. You can cut a "donut" in the moleskin to create a buffer around the blister.
3. Remember, hiking boots will never feel like bedroom slippers.

## **Dayhiker's Checklist**

Before you hit the trail, take the time to make sure you've included the items on the following list to make your trip safer and more enjoyable.

Our list is designed to help equip hikers just starting out. You will probably develop your own checklist as you gain experience.

### **Gear**

1. Map and/or guidebook
2. Compass
3. Full canteen(s), water bottle(s) or hydration pack
4. Pocket knife
5. Flashlight or headlamp with new batteries
6. Waterproof matches

7. Insect repellent
8. First aid kit
9. Sun protection (sunglasses, sunscreen, lip balm, hat with visor)
10. Toilet tissue (in a plastic bag)
11. Notebook with pencil
12. Whistle
13. Day pack or fanny pack
14. Money
15. A handful of zip seal plastic bags
16. Camera and film (optional)
17. Binoculars (optional)

### **Gear**

1. Supportive footwear designed for the length and terrain of your hike
2. Extra socks
3. Pile jacket or pullover
4. Rain/wind shells (jacket and pants)
5. Wool or fleece hat
6. Baseball style hat (to protect from sun)

### **Day Hiking Tips**

1. Carry your clothing and food in different colored stuff sacks to keep your pack organized so you can easily find what you need.
2. Always carry plenty of water. Three quarts per person per day is a good rule of thumb. Warmer conditions and/or rugged terrain may necessitate carrying more. Take drinks often to stay well hydrated. Filter or treat water from natural sources.
3. Fill your canteens before you leave home. It is better to be prepared than to rely on backcountry water sources.
4. Carry more food than you think you will need. It is better to bring extra snacks home with you than to go hungry.
5. Practice minimum impact hiking. Carry out whatever you pack in so others can enjoy the surroundings. If you can, help pick up what previous visitors may have left behind.
6. When you choose a hike, consider the ability levels of all members of your party.
7. Hike only as fast as the slowest member of your group.
8. Acquaint yourself with the area and specific trail(s) you plan to hike so you can set a reasonable timetable for your hike. Many guidebooks include estimated times of trips.
9. Start off slowly to avoid excess fatigue part way through your hike.
10. Make sure your vehicle is in good running order and your gas tank is full.
11. Check weather conditions before you leave.
12. Leave your itinerary with someone you trust and check in upon your return.

# Low-Impact Hiking and Camping

To help ensure quality backcountry experiences for fellow outdoors people and future generations, we encourage our customers to join us in practicing low-impact hiking and camping.

## Cooking

Carry in, carry out. Before you hit the trail, repack food into reusable containers. When empty, the containers can hold waste until you can dispose of it properly. Pack everything that you carry into the backcountry back out with you.

1. In bear country, protect wildlife, your food supply and yourself by storing rations securely. Seek advice from park rangers on proper food storage.
2. Some parks install bear-resistant containers or poles (for hanging "bear-bagged" food) in backcountry sites. Pick up and clean up spilled foods.
3. Use a backpacking stove to prepare meals. It takes less time and has less impact on the environment than building a campfire. In addition, many areas prohibit the use of campfires except in designated areas.

## Fires

Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings or fire pans. Do not scorch large rocks or overhangs.

1. Keep your fire small. Gather sticks no larger than an adult wrist. Leave branches on trees, even if they are downed or dead.
2. Put out campfires completely. In the morning, remove all unburned trash from the fire ring and scatter the cold ashes over a large area well away from camp.

## Hiking

Visit the backcountry in small groups and try to avoid popular areas during peak-use periods.

1. Stay on designated trails and walk in single file in the center of the path to avoid trampling trailside plants.
2. Many grasses and sub-alpine plants are extremely sensitive to foot traffic. If you must venture beyond the trail, choose the most durable surfaces to walk on (rock, gravel or snow).

## Campsites

Choose an established, legal site. If you are wilderness camping, pick a previously used campsite when available to decrease impact on terrain.

1. Good campsites are found, not made. Don't alter a site for your own purposes by clearing vegetation, building structures or digging trenches.

## **Sanitation**

Set up camp in areas where vegetation is compacted or absent. Camp at least 200 feet (about 70 adult steps) from lakes and streams to help keep pollutants out of water sources.

1. For bathing or dishwashing, haul water 200 feet from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. A small bowl of water and one baby wipe provide a thorough bath. Strain your dishwater and scatter it or bury it in a hole so it won't attract insects. Use gravel or sand to clean pots and pans.
2. Deposit human waste in a hole, six-to-eight inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, trails and your campsite. Use toilet paper sparingly. Pack it out in fragile areas or where required.
3. Check your campsite to make sure you have removed all refuse and other evidence of your stay. Make sure you scan the tent area for small items that could inadvertently be left behind.

## **Keeping the "wild" in wilderness**

Leave plants, rocks and historical artifacts for others to enjoy.

1. Domestic animals and wild country often don't mix. Most state and national parks prohibit dogs or require them to be on leashes. If you must take your dog with you, make sure it is under control at all times. Do not allow it to chase other animals or become a problem for other hikers or campers.

Enjoy your adventure in the backcountry. Take only pictures. Leave only footprints.