

American Alpine Institute^{Ltd.}

Alps Trek Equipment Checklist

During your expedition in the Alps you will encounter a very wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. At one end of this range are the pleasantly warm temperatures in the valley; while at the other end of the spectrum can be cold and windy high in the mountains. The equipment you bring must function well in a wide variety of conditions. Your clothing should be warm, lightweight, dry quickly, and allow good freedom of movement. The layering principle, based on several thin layers of insulation (rather than one thick one), covered with an outer weatherproof shell, meets these needs well.

During our trek, days are usually mildly warm with nights becoming increasingly chilly as we gain elevation. The climate in the Alps is somewhat similar to the Cascades of Washington state with a mild/rainy side and a colder, drier side. We often experience both of these climatic conditions during our trek.

Please take the time to properly label and identify all items of personal gear. With many people sharing a mountain hut, it can be very easy to forget which water bottle or set of gloves belongs to you. Be sure to mark your name on a clothing tag. Colored tape or fingernail polish is excellent on other items. If using tape or colored markers, make sure your labeling method is durable and water resistant.

All items of clothing should be inspected to make sure that the seams, stitching, and waterproof properties of the garments are intact and adequate for the rigors of an expedition. Used articles of clothing including shell jackets and softshell items should be cleaned and treated with a durable water repellent (DWR) such as Nikwax TX Direct or Gore-Revivex. Gloves with leather or synthetic palms should be treated with a waterproofing agent such as Nikwax. Make sure all of your packs and bags have buckles and straps that are in good working order.

When preparing your equipment for travel to Europe, protect your equipment by covering your trekking poles with cardboard or other protection to prevent puncturing or tearing less durable equipment.

At AAI we take equipment and its selection seriously. Our Equipment Services department is expertly staffed by climbers, skiers and guides. We only carry products in our store have been thoroughly field tested and approved by our guides. This intensive process ensures that all equipment that you purchase from AAI is best suited to your course and future mountain adventures. Please contact us for help selecting equipment for your expedition.

Clothing & Footwear

Own Need

*Items with an “R” in the “Need” column are available for rent. Please also the included rental reservation form.

Base Layer Top:

Bring two. This will be your base layer and should be “lightweight” or “silk weight” synthetic or wool. No cotton.

Weight: 5 - 8 oz / 140 - 225 grams **Materials:** Synthetic, wool.

Example: Patagonia Capilene 2

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Base Layer Bottom:

Look for the same features as your Base Layer Top. Bring one.

Weight: 5 - 8 oz / 140 - 225 grams **Materials:** Synthetic, wool.

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Undergarments:

Most trekkers wear them underneath their base layer or pants. Bring 2-3 pairs depending on personal preference for changing.

Materials: Synthetic, wool

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2nd Layer Top:

A lightweight fleece or wind shirt. A chest pocket is a helpful feature of this multi-use layer.

Weight: 13 - 16oz / 368-454 grams **Materials:** Nylon, fleece, wind stopper

Examples: Patagonia Houdini, Goliath Wisp, Outdoor Research Marvel

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Soft Shell / Nylon Pants:

A thin, light, stretchy, breathable but wind and snow-resistant layer that is comfortable to wear is ideal. This will be your outermost layer most of the time for your legs. Your base layers need to fit under these pants comfortably.

Weight: 16 - 30oz / 450 – 850 grams

Materials: Schoeller, Powershield, Powerdry, or similar

Examples: Patagonia Guide pants, Black Diamond Alpine Pants, Arc'teryx Gamma LT Pants, Marmot Champ

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Light Insulating Layer, Top:

The goal for this piece is to add warmth to your layering system. Depending on your clothing system, you may fit this layer underneath your shell gear (e.g. fleece sweaters) or over your shell gear (lightweight insulated jackets). If choosing fleece, pick modern garments with waffle-grid patterns and avoid “windproof fleece” – it is not breathable enough. The weight and design of this piece will vary based on the other items of climbing that you are bringing.

Weight: 10 - 20oz / 283 – 566 grams

Materials: Primaloft, down, fleece

Examples: Patagonia Puff Jacket or Micro Puff pullover, Patagonia R3 or R4, Montbell Thermawrap, Wild Things Primalight and EP jackets.

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Own	Need

Shell Jacket:

Choose the lightest, most packable, waterproof shell that will still get the job done. Avoid extra pockets (one or two chest pockets is perfect), 3-layer Gore-Tex, and hanging linings. Your shell should fit comfortably over your other base and mid-layers (minus your insulating layer).

Weight: 8 - 20oz / 227 – 566 grams

Materials: eVent, Gore-tex, h2No, or similar

Examples: Rab Latok Alpine, Patagonia Jetstream, Marmot Precip

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Shell Pants:

Made of a waterproof/breathable material, your lightweight shell bottoms should have full or hip-length side zips. This garment should be extremely lightweight and packable. A zipper fly is a nice optional luxury.

Weight: 8 - 16oz / 227 – 453 grams

Materials: eVent, Gore-tex, h2No, or similar

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Fleece Gloves/Glove Liners:

Bring two pairs of varying thicknesses. One lighter pair and one medium weight pair is ideal.

Materials: fleece, Powerstretch, or similar

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Sun hat:

A baseball cap or visor serves well. Models with a “tail” provide increased sun protection.

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Beanie Hat/Toque:

This is a warm hat that covers your ears.

Weight: 2 – 4oz / 56 – 112 grams

Materials: fleece, wool, windstopper, windpro

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Socks:

Bring two to three complete changes. Some trekkers prefer to wear a very thin liner sock underneath a thicker hiking/mountaineering sock. Adjust your sock system ahead of time to perfect your boot fit. No cotton.

Materials: wool, synthetic

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Trekking/Hiking Shoes:

High top or low top, lightweight hiking shoes are required. Ankle support is preferred but not required. Gaiters are optional. If you bring some, sure your gaiters fit your approach shoes also. Please break these in thoroughly before your expedition.

Examples: La Sportiva Trango S, Kayland Apex Rock

Camping Equipment

Own	Need
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Internal Frame Pack:

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Make sure it will hold all of your personal equipment with room to spare for your

Make sure it will hold all of your personal equipment with room to spare for your share of the group equipment that will be divided during your expedition. A pack around 50-60 liters in size is ideal. Make sure it will hold all of your personal equipment with room to spare for your share of the group equipment that will be divided during your trip. A heavier pack is optional but keep in mind this will be harder to carry on a daily basis.

Weight: 3.0 - 6.5lbs / 1.6 – 2.9 kg **Volume:** 2500-3000 cubic inches

Trekking Poles:

Two telescoping trekking poles are required.

Example: Black Diamond Expedition Poles

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Water Purification:

Bring tablets or liquid purification. Bring at least 80 tablets or the equivalent.

Examples: Potable Aqua, Aqua Mira

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Eating Utensils:

- Spoon: Bigger is better. Lexan is lighter, but metals spoons are more durable.
- Knife
- Fork

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Hydration:

Bring two 1-quart wide mouth Nalgene bottles and a hydration bladder like a Camelbak. Have 3 liters of storage capacity total.

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Personal Medical Kit:

Personal Medications: (notify AAI of all medications and prescriptions)

- 20 tablets of Tylenol, Ibuprofen, or Aspirin
- A few Benadryl
- Personal prescriptions
- If you are severely allergic to bees, or if you suffer from Asthma, please notify AAI and your guide regarding the location of your epi-pen and/or albuterol inhaler.

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Cuts & Bruises kit:

- 10 assorted Band-aids ,
- one 1 1/2 inch roll of cloth athletic adhesive tape
- 3 inch Ace bandage

Blister Kit. Bring a comprehensive blister kit. This includes:

- Plenty of Compeed, Bandaid, or Dr. Scholls blister pads
- A packet of moleskin/molefoam

NOTE: you cannot use codeine or sleeping pills at altitude.

Personal Toiletries:

Bring a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, a small towel, hand sanitizer (bring 3-4

Own	Need

Hand Sanitizer:

Bring a couple travel-sized bottles of an alcohol based hand sanitizer.

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Sunscreen:

With SPF 30 or higher. A couple of 1 oz. tubes are adequate. Several small containers are better than one large one.

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Lip Protection:

Bring 2 containers/applicators with the highest SPF available. Some models of chapstick have SPF15 or higher.

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Sunglasses:

Choose a model with 100% UVA/UVB protection and side shields. If you have an extra pair, bring them too. Climbers using contact lenses should bring a pair of prescription glasses in the event that your contacts or solutions are lost or damaged.

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Garbage Bags:

Bring two or three large ones. Trash compactor bag, if available, are more durable.

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Headlamp:

Choose a small, high output LED model that runs on AAA batteries. Bring one set of extra batteries. Flashlights and older halogen headlamps are not acceptable.

Examples: Petzl Tikka XP, Black Diamond Spot

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Repair Kit:

At a minimum this kit should include a small sewing kit, duct tape (wrapped on water bottles or trekking poles), and a waist buckle for your pack.

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Multitool:

Any multitool similar to a Leatherman is great. These are used for emergencies, and for slicing cheese, salami, and opening packages.

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Hygiene Supplies:

Bring a lightweight towel (Pack Towel), nail clippers, toothbrush, toothpaste, wet wipes, soap, shampoo, etc. Travel sized containers are best.

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Travel Items

Own Need

Passport:

Required. This must be valid for six (6) months after your scheduled return date.

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Own Need

Passport/Money Pouch:

Bring a low profile money pouch or belt to protect your essential documents, credit cards, and money.

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Spending Money:

The Euro is preferred, though Swiss Francs are also accepted at Swiss huts.

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Small Padlock:

To fit through the zip sliders of the duffel to secure its contents. Buying a TSA-approved lock is highly recommended. Don't lock your bag when you check it through security at the airport.

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Personal snack food:

Please don't bring more than about a pound or two. If you bring dried fruit, do not claim it to customs agents, as they are looking for fresh fruits and veggies only.

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Optional Equipment

The items below are not required, but many are nice "luxury" items that can make your trip more enjoyable. Remember that ounces add up to pounds on your back and knees during the expedition.

Handiwipes/Wet Wipes:

The mountain shower. For personal hygiene and general use.

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Bandana:

A cotton bandana has many uses in the mountains.

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Ear Plugs:

Defense against snoring and noise in the huts.

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Entertainment:

Books, games, journals, cards, etc. are great for evenings in the hut. Music players like mini-disc and MP3 players are popular because the device and media are small and relatively lightweight.

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Electrical adapter:

Bring one if you have anything that needs to be plugged in while abroad. These kits are available at electronic stores, REI, and travel shops.

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Camera:

We recommend a small point-and-shoot cameras that can easily be carried in an outside pocket or small case outside your pack. If you can't comfortably and safely carry your camera outside your pack, even in bad weather, you'll miss the best photo opportunities. Though some trekkers bring them, SLR cameras are not recommended because of weight and bulk. If bringing a digital camera, consider your battery needs.

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Own Need

Buff:

“Buffs” are a multifunctional neck gaiter that can substitute for a lightweight balaclava. Buffs are worn on the head more than any other item. They make a good facemask, and can prevent sunburned lips and tongues.

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Shorts:

Lightweight shorts are nice for warm days.

Weight: 4 - 8oz / 110 - 227 grams

Materials: Nylon

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T-shirt:

Light colors are best. This shirt can be synthetic or cotton. If you plan to hike in it, synthetic is better. A cotton shirt can be a nice break from the synthetics in camp.

Weight: 3 - 7 oz / 85 - 200 grams **Materials:** Synthetic, cotton, blends

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Foot Powder:

A very small bottle will allow you to treat your feet daily, keep them dryer, extend the life of your socks, and help you avoid blisters/rashes from chronic wet feet.

Weight: 1 - 2oz / 28 - 56 grams **Examples:** Gold Bond, Dr. Scholls

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Sandals/flip flops:

Bring a lightweight pair for use in the huts at night.

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The Equipment Shop at the American Alpine Institute

The Equipment Shop at the American Alpine Institute provides clothing and equipment for purchase, rental gear, and advice. Shop staff members are great climbers themselves and deeply involved in evaluating and testing gear. They are considered by many outdoor gear manufacturers to be the most expert in the country. They thoroughly understand the needs of climbers who will be rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, or exploring the world on international expeditions.

Please consider our staff members a part of your resource team in preparing for your trip. AAI Equipment Specialists are on hand to consult with you on specific gear needs, to answer questions on the latest equipment and innovations, and to make recommendations on best choices of clothing and equipment. They can assure that you are equipped with the best possible gear for your climbs. And if you have any difficulty determining if some particular items of clothing or equipment you already own will serve you well on a particular trip, they can help you answer that question.

Guides Choice International Field Testing

The Equipment Shop at the American Alpine Institute also administers AAI’s prestigious Guide’s Choice Award. Equipment and clothing that have been awarded the Guides Choice designation have proven to be the top item in their product category. The awards are made on the basis of excellence in design, performance, and durability demonstrated in rigorous international field tests carried out by the professional guides of the Institute. All of the products at the Equipment Shop and on its website, guideschoice.com have been field-tested or have been vetted and are in the process of being field-tested.

Call or E-mail the Equipment Shop for Advice or Gear

Please feel free to contact us and to let us help you get ready for your climbing trip. Our staff members are experts in the field, and the items of gear that we rent and sell are the best made in terms of design, performance, and durability. Your comfort and safety depend on being well equipped. Whether you get your gear from us or just get advice, we're here to help you prepare.

Call: (360) 671-1570

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