



## Backpacking and Wilderness Skills Course Equipment Checklist

This equipment list has been developed specifically for the conditions you will experience in the Cascade Mountains during the summer season. The equipment you bring must function well in a wide variety of conditions. While each piece of gear you bring is crucial to your success and safety, what you leave out of your pack can benefit you in similar ways by lightening your load, allowing you to move quickly and efficiently over rugged terrain. Our aim is to have you bring only the essential gear for your mountain adventures. Please understand that weather varies throughout the season and that this list is designed to outfit you for severe conditions you may not actually experience during your course. The vast majority of the items you bring should fit inside your backpack; try to avoid hanging gear on the outside of the pack.

Temperatures and weather conditions in the Cascades are often conducive to great backpacking conditions. Nighttime low temperatures in the high peaks often drop to slightly below freezing while daytime highs range anywhere from 35°F to 80°F. Mountain breezes are not uncommon and should be taken into consideration when planning your clothing system.

Please take some time to carefully prepare and understand your equipment. For instance, if you have a new tent, set it up beforehand to make sure you understand the basics. If you are unclear on anything, your guide will do his/her best to assist. Take the time to properly label and identify all items of personal gear. Many items that hikers bring are almost identical. Your name on a garment tag or a piece of colored electrical tape on miscellaneous items are easy ways to label your gear. If using tape or colored markers, make sure your labeling method is durable and water resistant.

At AAI we take equipment and its selection seriously. Our Equipment Services department is well stocked and its seasoned staff can help guide you through this complex undertaking. Please contact us to select equipment for your course

***Equipment items that are available for rental are marked below. Please contact the Equipment Shop at 360-671-1570 for assistance in selecting equipment for your course and to reserve rental items.***

## Clothing & Footwear

**Base Layer Tops:** Bring two, one short sleeve and one long sleeve. This will be your base layer and should be “lightweight” or “silk weight” synthetic or wool. No cotton, please. Cotton becomes saturated with sweat and is slow to dry.

- *Weight: 5 - 8 oz / 140 - 225 grams*
- *Materials: Synthetic, wool.*
- *Example: Patagonia Capilene, Smartwool merino wool*

Own Buy

**Base Layer Bottom “Long Johns”:** Look for the same features as your Base Layer Top, above. One pair is sufficient.

Own Buy

**Undergarments:** Most backpackers wear them underneath their base layer. A single pair is adequate for an overnight.

- *Materials: Synthetic, wool; avoid cotton.*

Own Buy

**Light Insulation Layer Top:** A lightweight fleece or wind shirt. A chest pocket is a helpful feature, as is a long or full length zipper for venting. A hood can be nice.

- *Weight: 10-14oz / 368-454 grams*
- *Materials: Nylon, micro weave fabrics, fleece, wind stopper*
- *Examples: Patagonia R1 Hoody, Marmot DriClima*

Own Buy

**Soft Shell Jacket (Optional):** A thin, light, stretchy, breathable but wind and snow-resistant layer that is comfortable to wear is ideal. Hoods are optional but highly recommended. Plan your layering system so that, together with the Light Insulation Top, you will have at least one light insulation layer and at least one breathable wind cutting layer. Together or separately, they will go over your base layer and under your insulated jacket or parka.

- *Weight: 18 - 26 oz / 510 -737 grams*
- *Materials: Schoeller, Powerstretch, Powerdry, or similar*
- *Examples: Patagonia Ready Mix, OR Mithral, Patagonia Houdini*

Own Buy

**Hiking Pants:** Look for nylon, polyester, or stretch-woven material. This will be your outermost layer most of the time for your legs. “Convertible” zip-off legs allow conversion to shorts.

- *Examples: Patagonia GI III Zip-off Pant, Patagonia Sidesend Pants*

Own Buy

**Hiking Shorts (Optional):** Omit if you have hiking pants that convert to shorts.

- *Examples: Patagonia Baggies*

Own Buy

**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 all you need), 2- or 2.5-layer waterproof-breathable fabrics are preferable. Your shell should be sized to comfortably fit over your other base and mid-layers (minus your insulating layer).

- *Weight: 10 – 20oz / 227 – 566 grams*
- *Materials: eVent, Gore-Tex, H2No, etc.*
- *Examples: Rab Latok Alpine, Patagonia Jetstream, Marmot Precip*

Own Buy

**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.

- *Weight: 8 – 16oz / 227 – 453 grams*
- *Materials: eVent, Gore-Tex, H2No, etc.*
- *Examples: Marmot Precip Pants*

Own Buy

**Mid-weight Insulation Jacket:** A warm, puffy jacket with an optional hood. These come in many shapes, sizes and temperature ratings and are often called “belay jackets.” If you tend to get cold easily, opt for a slightly warmer and more substantial parka.

- *Weight: 20 – 40oz / 566 – 1132 grams*
- *Shell materials: nylon, Epic, eVent*
- *Fill materials: Primaloft, goose down*
- *Examples: Patagonia DAS Parka, MontBell Flatiron*

Own Buy

**Mid-Weight Gloves:** The best glove is one that is comfortable and dexterous, so that it can be worn all day. It should be durable enough to handle ropes, ice axes, and a bit of rock scrambling.

- *Weight: 4 – 8 oz / 110 – 200 grams*
- *Materials: Shoeller cloth, windstopper fleece, leather*

Own Buy

**Shell Gloves (weather-dependent):** In rainy or stormy conditions, a waterproof shell glove and liners can be worn to keep hands from getting numb.

- *Weight: 6 – 10 oz / 170 – 280 grams*
- *Materials: Shoeller 3x, Gore-tex, Pittards leather*

Own Buy

**Knit Beanie Hat/Toque:** A warm hat that covers your ears. Optionally, a balaclava can add even more warmth, allowing you to “layer up” without even taking off your pack.

- *Weight: 6 – 10 oz / 170 – 280 grams*
- *Materials: wool, polyester fleece, Windstopper, etc.*

**Own**   **Buy**  
  

**Sun Hat:** Baseball cap styles are the most popular, but a hat with a full brim is superior in strong sun or drizzle. The ideal hat can survive crushing, but you may have to compromise on aesthetics.

- *Weight: 3 – 6 oz / 85 – 180 grams*
- *Materials: cotton, waxed cotton, cotton-poly blends*
- *Example: any ball cap, OR Sun Runner, REI Paddler’s Hat*

**Own**   **Buy**  
  

**Socks:** Bring two pairs of warm socks, one for hiking, the other to change into after reaching camp. Some people wear a thin liner sock under a heavy cushioning sock for hiking; if you choose this approach, make that a third pair. Try on your socks with your boots ahead of time to make sure the fit is right. No cotton socks.

- *Materials: wool, polyester, polypropylene*

**Own**   **Buy**  
  

**Gaiters (optional):** Important for off-trail travel or travel in scree or snow. An ankle-high, breathable gaiter works for summer hiking; calf-high gaiters are preferable for mountaineering.

- *Examples: OR Rocky Mountain Low, OR Crocodiles*

**Own**   **Buy**  
  

**Backpacking Boots:** Choosing the right boots for your mountain ambitions is a process that should not be rushed. Visit our shop or another reputable retailer for advice, and try on as many kinds and models as you can. People who plan to progress into mountaineering trips with AAI should choose a boot with a stiff shank that is designed for crampons. For the backpacking course, any good hiking boot will suffice. For all boots, fit is the most important selection factor.

**If you plan to rent from AAI, please call the shop to reserve.**

- *Mountaineering: Salewa Vertical Pro, Sportiva Nepal Cube*
- *Backpacking: Vasque Summit GTX, Asolo Fugitive GTX*

**Own**   **Buy**   **Rent**

## Camping Equipment

**Tent:** A lightweight, 3-season, one- or two-person tent is recommended. It should be able to withstand intense rainstorms. Single-wall models are lighter, but suffer from more condensation than heavier double wall models.

- *Weight: 3.5 – 5.5 lbs / 1.6 – 2.5 kilograms*
- *Example: MSR Hubba Hubba*

**Sleeping Bag:** Rated to around 25°F from late June to mid September. Bring a 15° to 20° for early and late season trips. Down is less weight and bulk, but more expensive and it requires more care to keep dry. To help keep your sleeping bag dry, bring an extra large garbage bag with which you can line your sleeping bag stuff sack and use for storage in the tent.

- *Weight: 16 – 42 oz / 453 – 1200 grams*
- *Example: REI Radiant*

**Compression Stuff Sack:** Used to shrink your sleeping bag into the smallest size possible.

**Sleeping Pad(s):** You will likely camp on gravel or snow during this course. Bringing two pads is recommended – preferably a lightweight inflatable pad (3/4 or full length) and a light, thin, closed-cell foam pad. If bringing only one pad, look for one with an insulating “R-value” of approximately 3 - 4. Please bring a patch kit for inflatable pads.

- *Example: Therm-a-Rest ProLite Plus*

**Backpack, Internal Frame:** 65 – 85 liters is ideal. It should be comfortable for carrying loads up to 50lbs. 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 course. If you plan to use this pack for alpine climbing as well as backpacking, choose a pack on the lighter end of the range.

- *Weight: 3 – 6.5 lbs / 1.6 – 2.9 kilograms*
- *Example: Berghaus Wilderness 65+15 or Expedition Light 80*

Own	Buy	Rent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Own	Buy	Rent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Own	Buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## Cooking, Nutrition, and Hydration

**Backpacking Stove:** A large range of backpacking stoves is available, using fuels such as iso-butane canister fuel, liquid white gas or denatured alcohol, and even solid hexamine tablets. If you are unsure what is appropriate for you, we encourage you to rent a stove from us. Your guide will demonstrate correct use of selected stoves, as appropriate.

- *Weight: 3 – 16 oz / 85 – 450 grams*
- *Examples: SnowPeak GigaPower; MSR Whisperlite; JetBoil*

Own	Buy	Rent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Cookware:** As with stoves, a large range of options is available. Depending on how much cooking you plan to do, you may choose a single 1-liter kettle or a full kit complete with frying pan and multiple pots. Many backpackers make do with a single pot for boiling water.

- *Weight: 4 – 16 oz / 113 – 450 grams*
- *Examples: MSR Titan 1-liter Kettle; MSR Alpinist 2 Pot*

Own	Buy	Rent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Eating Utensils:**

- Spoon or “spork”: Larger is better. Lexan, titanium, or stainless steel.
- Thermal mug (recommended): 16 oz or larger with lid.
- Bowl: A lightweight Tupperware or Rubbermaid bowl, with lid, can work well for keeping food warm.
- Pot scraper (recommended): A light nylon or plastic pot scraper is better than a spoon for pre-cleaning your pot and bowl.

Own	Buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Water Storage/Hydration:** 3 liters capacity is recommended. One solid 1-liter bottle such as a Nalgene is required. The remaining capacity can be made up with other bottles, bladders, etc. A small thermos can replace a thermal mug and double as liquid storage.

- *Examples: Nalgene bottles & collapsible canteens; HydroFlask; MSR Dromedary bag*

Own	Buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Water Purification:** Avoid using filters unless sharing in a large group; they are not worth the weight on short trips. Iodine- and Chlorine-based compounds are convenient and time-tested.

- *Iodine: Potable Aqua, Polar Pure*
- *Chlorine: MSR Aquatabs, AquaMira*

Own	Buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Food:** See the accompanying meal-planning guidelines.

Own	Buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Food Storage Bags / Canister (optional):** Although we rarely have problems with animals, everything from mice and marmots to bears may be attracted by food odors. Storing food properly is a must. Bring at least one sturdy bag for caching food. Odor-proof plastic bags are expensive but nice to have for smelly food that is not pre-packaged. Double-bagging with Ziplocks is also an option.

- *Weight: 4 – 10 oz / 113 – 283 grams*
- *Examples: Ursack, BearVault; OPSak Odor-Proof bags*

<b>Own</b>	<b>Buy</b>	<b>Rent</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Miscellaneous and Emergency Gear

**Personal Medical / First Aid Kit:** The guide will come equipped with a first aid kit for the group, but each participant should carry a kit as well. Include blister supplies like Compeed or Moleskin; Band-Aids; duct tape and/or cloth tape; a choice of pain relievers (one NSAID like Advil (ibuprofen) + another like Tylenol (acetaminophen)); an antihistamine like Benadryl. **Don't forget your prescriptions.**

- *Weight: 4 – 10 oz / 113 – 283 grams*
- *Examples: Adventure Medical Kits Ultralight & Watertight .5*

<b>Own</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Personal Toilet / Self-Care Kit:** Don't go overboard; everyday items like anti-perspirant, moisturizer, soap, etc. should be omitted or else carried in tiny quantities. This is an area where many beginning backpackers take on a lot of unnecessary weight.

- *Toothbrush & toothpaste: travel size tube or less.*
- *Dental floss: coin-size roll, no more.*
- *Hand sanitizer: no more than about 6 handi-wipes or a 1-oz tube of alcohol-based gel like Purell.*
- *Anti-fungal powder (optional): no more than a 1-oz Nalgene jar of a medicated powder like Zeasorb, for feet and/or groin.*
- *Toilet paper: bring no more than 1/4 roll per person.*
- *Waste disposal (optional): WAG Bags or Biffy Bags.*

<b>Own</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Sunscreen & Lip Protection:** These are critical items that can make or break a trip.

- *Sunscreen: SPF 30 or higher, with a physical barrier like zinc or titanium oxide preferred. A single 1-oz tube is adequate for a weekend trip.*
- *Lip protection: Bring 2 applicators with highest available SPF value. Physical barrier preferred for the best protection*

<b>Own</b>	<b>Buy</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Sunglasses:** Most reputable models sold in outdoor stores offer 100% UVA/UVB protection, but check to make sure. If you plan on spending time on snow, wrap-around design or side-shields are required. Sunglasses designed for mountaineering let in less visible light than ordinary sunglasses, reducing eye strain, but are not necessary for backpacking. Bring an extra pair if you have one.

- *Example: Julbo Dolgan*

Own Buy

**Headlamp:** High-output LED models are much lighter and use battery power more efficiently than the older halogen models. No flashlights, please. Bring one set of spare batteries.

- *Example: Petzl Tikka XP, Black Diamond Spot*

Own Buy

**Repair Kit:** These can get out of hand quickly, and are a good thing to coordinate with the others in your group to avoid duplication.

- *Multi-tool: Bring one if you like. Some of the larger models are overkill. A small Swiss Army knife is adequate. One per tent is plenty.*
- *Needle and thread: Choose a heavy polyester thread and one or two needles with good-sized eyes. Pack in a plastic pill-box or the like.*
- *Repair tape: Bring a small amount; some people wrap duct tape around a pencil. Tenacious Tape is a popular brand.*
- *Tent pole repair sleeve: bring one sized for your poles.*
- *Spare batteries for headlamp, GPS, etc.*
- *Therm-a-Rest Repair kit: Bring if you have an inflatable mattress.*

Own Buy

**Pee Bottle / Funnel (optional):** A luxury for those cold or stormy nights. Label it well – yellow duct tape is a favorite.

- *Pee Bottle: Nalgene 2-liter collapsible canteen*
- *Funnel for women: Freshette, GoGirl*

Own Buy

**Ear Plugs:** These are recommended to allow sleep in the presence of snorers or to reduce storm noise and flapping tent walls.

Own Buy

**Bandana:** An ordinary cotton bandana or modernized version like the Buff can be very useful for everything from dinner cleanup to sun protection.

Own Buy

**Camp Footwear (optional):** Light sandals or clogs such as Crocs make good camp footwear. Hiking sandals like Chacos may be unnecessarily heavy for use around camp.

Own Buy

**Parachute Cord:** A 50-foot length of brightly colored cord is useful for caching food and for making miscellaneous repairs.

Own Buy



**Plastic Garbage Bags & Extra Ziplocks:** Bring two or three large size, durable bags to line your backpack for waterproofness, to pack out garbage. Trash compactor and “contractor grade” bags are heavy duty enough to re-use multiple times as a pack liner. It’s also nice to have a selection of free Ziplock bags for repacking food.

Own Buy

**Pack Towel / Sponge:** A small, absorbent towel or sponge is useful as a squeegee in a rainy camp.

Own Buy

**Bug Repellent:** Usually bugs are not a big problem in the Cascades, but occasionally it’s nice to have repellent. The only really effective kind is DEET-based; the higher the concentration, the better.

Own Buy

- *Examples: Ben’s 100 Max Formula; Jungle Juice 100; Ben’s Wipes*

**Hiking Pole(s) / Ice Axe (optional):** In early season or on a route with high passes, an ice axe may be useful. Hiking poles can serve a similar purpose in some conditions, but are better at handling stream crossings, and can also save your knees on hard downhills.

Own Buy Rent

- *Ice Axe: Black Diamond Raven*
- *Hiking Poles: Black Diamond Trail Sport 2*

**Map & Compass (optional):** Your guide will come prepared with these, but it will help you learn navigation skills to have your own map of the area and a simple base-plate compass. Consult with your guide at Rendezvous to find which map you need.

Own Buy

**Après-Hike Clothing (optional):** You may wish to leave a clean set of clothes in the vehicle for when you complete the course.

Own Buy