

Annotation for Backcountry Gear List

revised: 3/06

Please pay careful attention to the gear list. It is born out of extensive experience in both the Adirondacks and Canada. You are not helping yourself or the group if you bring things, "just in case", the other side of the coin is that if you don't bring what is on the list, you may be hurting yourself or even the group.

Trekking for a week or more is about water ! No matter what you do whether it is backpacking or canoeing, sooner or later things are going to get wet. Putting on wet clothes is not pleasant; even nastier is trying to sleep in a wet sleeping bag. **Get a contractors' heavy duty plastic bag for a pack liner and a heavy plastic bag to line your sleeping bag stuff sack !** Will a garbage bag work? **No !** Holes poke through garbage bags too easily. Seal both by twisting the bag neck several times, bend it over, and secure the "goose neck" with a heavy-duty rubber band (bring one or two extra bands). While on the topic of sleeping bags here are just a few thoughts: Go to Campmor or EMS, etc. and climb into a few bags to find out if they are too snug or too loose. If you are to have just one all-purpose bag, my feeling is, buy a 20 degree one. Yes, you can use a 40 deg. one in June, July and the beginning of August, but it's not enough the rest of the time. Fibers to look for are quollofil and polarguard, avoid things named walmart-warm, sears-slumber, etc. Down is great IF you are absolutely certain, beyond any doubt, you can keep it dry. Also bring a plastic groundcloth to put under your bed roll to protect it; don't worry about protecting the tent. A sleeping pad, in terms of warmth and comfort, is highly recommended. It can be anything from a \$10 Walmart one to a top of the line Therma-rest.

On the topic of water - water bottles are to be 1 qt/liter. No other volume is acceptable as this is the volume we treat with chemicals for purification. Don't complicate things with an odd size.

One set of night clothes get put up each morning with your bed roll so they never acquire the smell of food. Dark colored boxers and a T work well for both guys and gals. This is particularly important in bear country.

Underwear is not needed. Live in your nylon bathing suit (with built in brief) during the day, and if it gets cool or buggy in the evening, slip on your nylon wind pants. Both of these should be the lightest weight you can find (J C Penny bathing suit, \$10 - \$15; wind pants, about the same price). If the wind pants have a cotton lining, take a pair of scissors and cut that part away. Jeans and sweatshirts are heavier to carry in the first place, and if they get wet they hold the water like a sponge and just suck the body heat right out of you. Retired DEC High Peaks Forest Ranger, Pete Fish is often quoted, "Cotton Kills"! If anyone should know, he does after 1000s of trips up and down Marcy. Do include some type of rainwear.

If hiking, a pair of Teva sandals or watershoes can be your in camp footwear (and double when you swim); if canoeing lightweight shoes with socks work in the evening and on the portage trail.

Bandanas serve as nose blowers, face wipers, hot pot lifters, towels after a swim, washcloth ...

They rinse and dry out quickly, bring two. You will need the light nylon line. A lighter (Bic type) is more dependable than matches. Band-aids, analgesic, medicated powder (for all those places the Sun doesn't shine that get sore, itchy, etc.) you need to have your own. Wrap 2-3 ft. of duct tape around the powder container, that adds up to about 25 ft. of tape per crew; enough to take care of most emergencies.

Don't bring a BSA type mess kit! A 12 oz. Lexan plastic cup (REI, EMS), a 7-8" plastic bowl (Campmor, Walmart), and Lexan spoon and fork, all in a mesh or nylon bag.

Do everything you can to reduce weight, it's important after the first half mile!

What's the best type of pack? Most designs work, it is important to have one large enough - you will be carrying about 5000 cu.in. of gear. So whether you choose a pack basket (not bad for canoeing, but heavy), a canoe pack, or an internal frame pack, look for one in the 4800-5400 cu.in. range. If you choose an external frame pack, go with much less volume (3000-3600) because the sleeping bag goes outside at the bottom & the sleeping pad can go on top. External frame packs are hard to make fit in a canoe and, if you are flying to the trailhead be aware that we've had baggage handlers break the welds on frames.

Your trail toilet kit really should be minimal - We don't take soap swims, don't bring soap. Forget about deodorant or cologne, we really don't want some wild critter saying to himself, "What is that curiously delightful odor, hummm, slightly sweet, somewhat fruity?"; "Oh, I do believe it could be better than roadkill with berries and nuts". There is an advantage to smelling like a human being, it is not attractive to wild critters (that's a good thing in the middle of the night)!

In these days of increased UV penetration of the atmosphere, almost everyone is aware of the need for protection of skin and eyes. Do wear a broad-brimmed hat, use sunscreen, wear sunglasses, keep your shirt on. Anecdotally, I will tell you I've tried to be careful of my skin after seeing large chunks of my father's go to the surgeon's knife. I never gave my eyes too much thought; I've just gotten my second "bionic eye" due to cataracts, the operation is not fun. Sunglasses would have helped prevent them.

You will need a compass. Fortunately bottom of the line, good quality ones are not expensive. Two brands come to mind: Silva & Brunton, get the orienteering type with a plastic base marked with in. & cm. scales, and a rotating bezel. The \$10-20 range is fine. Put a referee's type whistle on the lanyard.

Flashlights have come a long way over the past 10 or 15 years. Keep it small, 2-3 AA or even AAA batteries is all it should take.

That's about it. If you have suggestions regarding gear, I'd like to hear them.

Johnson

Good trekking,

Chris