

Tips offered by experienced Trails Club backpackers

Clothing

Food / Cooking

- plan for 2 lbs/day; weigh your food to avoid over packing
- use an aluminum ziplock container from a commercial 2-person freeze-dried meal to rehydrate your trails meals; it is lighter and takes less room than a bowl, provides much better heat retention & reflection than ordinary ziplock bags
- powdered peanut butter (aka PB2); www.bellplantation.com
- use a Cozy from www.antigravitygear.com to wrap your food bowl & retain the heat for better re-hydration
- **Freezer Bag Cooking** by Sarah Svien Kirkconnell; www.freezerbagcooking.com
- nuts, grains, & dried meats are excellent for snacks on the trail
- trioxane heat tabs provide good emergency heat and stove for boiling water; use it like you would use coals, do not set the stove right on top of it; can be found at army surplus stores; 6 pack costs ~ \$12
- use a food planning chart to help you plan & prepare your meals: track food groups, calories, variety, weight of foods

Foot gear

- use socks that come just to the top of your boots rather than normal crew socks which go (unnecessarily) higher on leg; cooler on legs, nominally less weight
- To cross streams:
 - Remove boots & socks
 - Remove insoles from boots (I ALWAYS replace the trivial insert that comes in boots with a 3rd party insert; mine are reasonably sturdy)
 - Insert insoles into spare socks
 - Put on the spare socks with the insoles
 - Carry your boots & pack across water
 - Once on the other side of the water, remove the socks with the insoles
 - Take insoles out of spare socks
 - Put insoles back in boots
 - Put on socks and boots (with insoles)
 - Squeeze out spare socks and attach to pack to dry
 - The sturdiness of the insoles will protect your feet from rocks. The texture of the socks will keep them from slipping on the rocks. The insoles don't absorb water so there is only surface moisture on them. This saves you from having to carry shoes just for stream crossings, and is much more comfortable than having wet boots & socks, especially when the water is deeper than your boots.
- to keep your feet dry in camp when wearing Crocs; try Rocky Gore-tex waterproof socks <http://www.rei.com/product/688268>; you might be able to find a better price than REI on the web; for a women's size 8½ shoes, a size 9 fits best over a wool sock; REI tells women to order one size down - don't do it; best to go to REI and try them on; Neoprene socks, especially "SealSkinz", are not suggested because of poor fit

Miscellaneous

- a 6 holed aluminum tent stake is lighter, takes less room than orange plastic trowel to dig potty holes
- lithium batteries are lighter & work better in cold weather than alkaline batteries, but in extended uses, such as headlamps, they stop functioning suddenly rather than dimming over time like alkalines; be sure you have a backup light source
- take fresh batteries so you know they will last; eliminates the need to take spares
- dryer Lint mixed with paraffin or Vaseline makes a good Fire Starter
- Wet wipes have many uses
- use a plastic trash bag as a liner for your pack; it eliminates the need for an external pack cover
- hand warmer packets can keep shoes from freezing at night; and in the morning the packets keep your fingers from freezing
- a headlamp that attaches to the bill of a hat is light, cost roughly \$10-\$15
- for waterproof stuff sacks, buy the lightest weight ones - made from "sil" or other like material; another advantage of these stuff sacks is their "slipperiness", which makes it easy to stuff things into them
- store used toilet paper in ziplocks, then burn it in camp at night
- a lip balm holder can keep the tube always within reach; pockets on shirt, pants, or pack eliminate the need for the separate holder
- small multivitamin container helps you with your drugs
- chopsticks can help you eat AND untie your hair

Sleeping

- Tyvek as ground cover is lighter than commercial ground cover & black plastic
- titanium tent stakes are lighter and sharper than aluminum stakes
- "footprint" for tents can serve as a tarp
- use a Ziplock bag OR wide-mouth soft-sided Nalgene bottle to pee in at night in tent & avoid that cold excursions outside
- Emergency Bivvy: it can be found at www.adventuremedicalkits.com; the web page has a store finder feature if you want to buy locally
- as a pillow, use a 1-liter platypus with insulated sleeve

Sun protection

- an umbrella can provide portable shade

Water

- remove mouthpiece from hose attached to water bag, attach water filter outlet port directly into the end of the drinking hose; eliminates need for outlet hose
- Crystal Light "On The Go" packets www.crystallight.com -- one packet flavors 17 oz; comes in many flavors, some with electrolytes & B vitamins. Available at grocery stores; it is lighter & less expensive than similar drink flavoring packets sold at REI; individual packets weigh less than .15 oz. each. Great for people who don't like the taste of plain water or need the extra boost of electrolytes and B vitamins
- to get gunk out of a hydration hose, use dental floss and paper towels; suck the dental floss thru from the opposite side and pull the paper towel thru); can also buy bottle cleaning kit (MSR?) with a couple of long-handled brushes
- to sterilize small-mouthed water containers (such as Platypus) and water hoses, fill/rinse them with water containing a few drops of bleach OR with dissolved denture-cleaning tablets
- chlorine tablets for water purification- can be found online