

# Pack List

## [And food suggestions]

This is the gear I carried --or should have carried-- after I figured out what was what on my 2015 thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail.

With a few exceptions I haven't recommended a particular product. And I won't get into weight either, except to say that lighter is better. **[The three most important things about back packing are: pack weight, pack weight, and pack weight. And the corollary: Everything weighs something.]** But lighter almost always costs more and that is a personal decision. How much are you willing to pay --can you pay-- to lighten your pack?

## TRANSPORTATION

- Backpack, 55 liter  
[My 50-liter lightweight pack made it to Mt. Katahdin but it really wasn't sturdy enough or big enough to carry heavier, bulkier, wintertime loads. I abused it. Look for a sturdy pack, weighing as close to two pounds as you can find and afford, that's a little larger than my pack, say, 55 liters, 60 at the outside. Then shorten or cut off the excess straps, of which there will be several. [Pack weight, pack weight, pack weight!] The hiking industry manufactures and sells beautiful monster packs with lots of zippered pockets. If you want to carry, 50, 60 pounds or more and then rest as much or more than you hike, by all means, buy one.]
- Pack cover, orange  
[Wearing orange will make you more visible and may keep you from getting shot during hunting season.]
- Trekking poles  
[Well over 90 percent of thru-hikers carry them. Cut off the hand straps to lose that extra weight.]
- **WINTER:** Micro-spikes and carrying bag  
[If you don't have a bag of some sort in which to store the spikes they will cut up your backpack. I did not have micro-spikes when I began my thru-hike on Feb. 15, 2015, in the middle of winter. I paid dearly for that omission. Do not rely on Yaks. They're fine for walking down an icy driveway to get the mail, but they are worthless on the AT. They'll tear up in a day. Mine did.]

## SLEEPING

- Compression dry sack  
[ESSENTIAL. This is where you will store your sleeping bag or quilt, your bag liner, and the clothes you're not wearing, to keep them dry. You can't get to Maine unless you hike in the rain and, sometimes, not only will it rain hard the wind will blow it sideways.]
- **SUMMER, SOME SPRING AND FALL:** Sleeping quilt, comfortable to about 40 degrees.  
[Don't buy a down-lined quilt like I did. Down is lighter but it does not insulate when wet. And it takes longer to dry.]
- **WINTER, SOME SPRING AND FALL:** Bag liner. Adds 5 degrees or more to the effectiveness of your sleeping bag or quilt. Silk is better, lighter, but it costs more.
- **WINTER:** Sleeping bag comfortable to 15-18 degrees and stuff sack.  
[If the expected temperature is in the teens, or lower, sleep in your tent. It will be at least 5 degrees warmer than a shelter. And, of course, use your bag liner.]
- Ear plugs  
If you stay in shelters with other backpackers, and don't have them, you will wish you did. Those other guys snore.
- Self inflating, three-quarter length, sleeping mat and packing bag.  
[Most thru-hikers I met carried longer, thicker, more comfortable looking sleeping mats but I slept just fine. And I think my mat was lighter.]
- Pee bottle  
[A Planters peanut bottle is perfect. You don't want to have to get up two or three times, put on boots, and go out into the night. It's sometimes cold. Or raining. Or both. Wrap your pee bottle with duck tape so you a] have duck tape when you need it and b] don't confuse this bottle in the night with your drinking water bottle, a mistake, I'm happy to say, I didn't make.]

## TENT

- I carried a Big Agnes, Fly Creek, UL1 tent and it worked just fine.  
[There are a lot of other tents out there that would work just as well. But remember this: Weight is far more important than lots of room.]

## KITCHEN

- Cooking pot, 2L

- Cup
- Spoon
- Cigarette lighter and matches, stored in a water-tight medicine bottle
- Trash bag  
[Carry it in, carry it out. You will be amazed at the amount of trash you generate. You'll need a trash bag.]
- Stove  
[I used a Pocket Rocket-type stove and it did just fine. I did not carry a wind screen and almost never needed one. If I were going on a section hike I'd carry screen; on a thru-hike I wouldn't. The occasional inconvenience is not worth the extra weight and extra space a screen requires.]
- Fuel, one all-season, 8 oz. can, to cook with
- Fuel, one all-season, 4 oz. can, as a backup  
[I ran out of fuel with no backup once. It was unpleasant. Get all-season fuel because the other kind won't work in cold weather. On a short section hike, of course, there is no need to carry backup fuel.]
- Bear rope, 40 feet, with reflectors weaved into the rope.  
[Without reflectors your rope can be difficult to find on dark or foggy mornings.]
- Carabineer  
[You'll need this (and the bear rope, of course) to hang your food out of reach of bears.]

## **HYGENE**

- Dry bag, 2L, orange  
[Carrying different colored storage bags will help you find the item you're looking for more quickly.]
- Toilet paper stored in its own zip lock bag  
[Wet toilet paper is worthless.]
- Purel or equivalent, an alcohol hand gel that kills germs  
[On my thru-hike I never saw anyone washing their hands. Amazing, isn't it. But clean water is scarce. You have to walk up to a quarter of a mile, or more, to get water and then you usually have to filter it. I did, however, see alcohol hand gel used many, many times.]
- Vaseline in a tube  
[Store those three items together, in a zip lock bag. That means your toilet paper will be in two bags, an outer bag and an inner bag. Let me repeat: wet toilet paper is worthless. And when you don't have any, you'll be sorry.]
- A separate zip lock bag for remaining items:

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Soap

[Bag your soap, too, or it will get all over everything. All of the above goes into the orange dry bag listed at the top of this section.]

## **WATER**

- Sawyer Squeeze water filter  
[This is one ounce heavier, and more expensive, than a Mini-Sawyer but well worth it because it filters water so much faster than the Mini. I've tried everything and, to me, this is the best solution.]
- Small plastic bag for collecting water from a shallow stream or spring -- or mud puddle  
[This works almost as well as a cup and it is lighter and much easier to store.]
- One peanut jar size water bottle
- One Smart Water water bottle  
[You can buy a Smart Water bottle, full of water, at a convenience store. Why not a second peanut jar size bottle? Because you can screw your Sawyer to this bottle and you will certainly want to do that. So why not carry two of them? Some hikers do. But it's a lot easier to collect water in a peanut bottle and, while you wouldn't want to collect dirty water in one of your clean water bottles, you might need to on occasion.]
- Potable Aqua purification tablets and Potable Aqua neutralizing tablets or equivalent  
[This is a back up. You might lose your filter. I did, twice. Or it might break.]
- Bandana  
[I used a bandana to strain especially dirty water. As a washcloth and towel, too. Or just to wipe the sweat off my brow.]

## **MEDICAL KIT**

- Dry bag, 2L, blue  
[I packed my medical kit and tools together, in the same blue bag.]
- Zip lock bag for medical kit containing:
  - Ibuprofen  
[A hiker's best friend.]
  - Band-Aid Friction Block

[This is great stuff. Stops blisters before they really get going.]

--Band-aids

--Triple antibiotic ointment

[Prevents infection, speeds healing. I used it extensively and successfully.]

--Moleskin, 2 sheets

--Rubbing alcohol

[I bought a small plastic bottle and filled it. I used alcohol to clean my blistered feet and toes and to clean the area around the blister and so the bandage would stick better.]

--Ankle wrap

[I carried a Johnson and Johnson self-adhering elastic bandage called COACH. When I blistered I would rub the area with alcohol, puncture the blister with a needle, apply triple antibiotic ointment, a band-aid, a strip of moleskin, and, depending on the severity of the blister, wrap it tightly with COACH to keep the bandage from slipping with I began to hike -- and my feet began to sweat.]

- **SUMMER:** Bug spray

[In northern Maine the bugs --mosquitoes, black flies, gnats-- were so thick, and bothersome, I also wore a head net.]

- Remember to bring whatever pills you normally take.

## TOOLS

- Dry bag, 2L, blue

[I packed my tools and medical kit together in the same blue bag.]

- Zip lock bag for tools

- Super glue

[Used it to glue boots together and glue foot bandages in place.]

- Matches, cigarette lighter, small candle [to use as a fire starter] stored in a medicine bottle to keep them dry

- Finger nail clips

[Except for the cigarette lighter this was the single most valuable tool in my tool box.]

- Razor

[Use it to cut moleskin into strips.]

- Head lamp

- Extra headlamp batteries

- Needles, thread  
[I repaired my backpack and jacket and tried, unsuccessful, to sew my boots back together.]
- Tie-ties  
[I used one to replace the thing-a-ma-jig you use to pull a zipper open and closed.]
- Six big safety pins and six small ones  
[Used the big ones to hang wet clothes on the back of my backpack, so they would dry. Used several small ones to pin my hernia girdle back together when the stitching pulled out.]

## OTHER

- Map book, note pad, and ball point pen, all in a zip lock bag

## CLOTHES

### ...Wore

- Spandex underwear
- Smart Wool socks
- Boots, Salomon.  
[For a thru-hike you will need at least two pairs of boots, maybe three. Wearing boots until they come apart is penny wise and pound foolish -- damaged boots will damage your feet. Remember to buy them a size or size and a half larger than your street shoes, because your feet are going to swell.]
- Polyester pants
- One short sleeve polyester shirt
- One long sleeve polyester shirt  
Sometime I wore both, the short and long sleeve shirts, on chilly mornings. Then, if the bugs were not bad, I would peel off one or the other when it warmed up, or I began climbing.
- Rain jacket, light weight  
[I didn't automatically wear this when it rained. I wore it to block the wind, or if I was chilly. Rain gear won't keep you dry, it will help keep you warm.]
- **SUMMER, SOME SPRING AND FALL** -- Sun hat, with a chin strap  
[At some point you will encounter high winds. Without a chin strap you will lose the hat.]

- **WINTER, SOME SPRING AND FALL:** Balaclava, orange  
[Why orange? Makes you more visible so a hunter is less likely to shoot you.]
- Leather belt
- All in one whistle/thermometer/compass, tied to a belt loop
- Pocket knife, tied to a belt loop
- Wrist watch, with day and date feature  
[On a thru-hike you will lose track of the days. You will need this feature if you want to know what day it is.]
- Wallet
- Phone
- For extended hikes, carry an external battery to recharge your phone. On several occasions I was in the woods for more than a week.
- **WINTER:** Insulated, hooded jacket.  
[As with your sleeping bag and quilt, buy a jacket with artificial insulation, not down.]
- **WINTER:** Waterproof mittens.  
[Mittens are much warmer than gloves.]
- **WINTER:** Rain pants, light weight  
[You'll need these to block the wind.]
- **WINTER:** Long john bottoms, polyester.

## **CLOTHES**

### **....Carrying**

- Compression dry bag, for sleeping bag or quilt and for clothes storage
- One pair of socks
- One pair of underwear
- Camp shoes, Crocks  
[I didn't carry anything to wear other than boots. [Pack weight!] But most hikers carried Crocks and I wished I had too, especially on the more than a dozen occasions when I had to ford streams or rivers. If you wear boots they get soaked, of course. And if you go barefoot you must be ever so careful because the rock are usually slippery. You will not like either of those choices.]
- **SUMMER IN THE NORTH:** Head net.  
[Black flies, mosquitoes, and gnats will be all over you in the north. And they can bite through a thin, long sleeve shell shirt. Make sure at least one of your long sleeve shirts is thick or you'll have to wear both of them on hot, summer days. Otherwise, bugs will eat you alive.]

- **WINTER:** Long john top, polyester.  
[I tried to save this to keep it dry and wear at night. But if it was really cold, I wore it during the day, to layer up with one short sleeve shirt and two long sleeve shirts.]
- **WINTER:** Two pairs of long john bottoms, polyester.  
[One cold days I'd wear one during the day and, sometimes, it got wet. I carried a second pair so I would have something dry to wear to bed at night.]
- **WINTER:** Fleece zip up jacket.  
[I didn't wear it during the day. I kept it dry and saved it to wear to bed.]

## FOOD

Breakfast:

Usually I ate...

- Two pop tarts, strawberry
- Two hot chocolates, 150 calories each, in one cup of water
- Two Carnation instant breakfasts, chocolate

Bruin, one of the guys I sheltered with, mixed hot chocolate powder in a cup of cold water and poured it over a bowl a cheerios. He said it was like eating cereal with chocolate milk. I didn't try that but it sure sounded good.

## Lunch

- One hiker steak sandwich. I put ketchup on one side of a tortilla, mustard on the other and a piece of spam in the middle.  
And...
- One peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich.
- Sometimes I would mix up a cup of powdered milk, or two, and drink them.
- Nutella. It tastes good and contains 100 calories per tablespoon. I could have easily eaten a jar of that stuff in one sitting. Still could.

For lunch the Hiking Vikings usually made a peanut butter sandwich on a tortilla but they put cheese and raisins on it. I did that once or twice myself.

On some resupplies I was able to get boiled eggs, four of them because that's how many I could fit inside my cooking pot, to keep them from being crushed in my pack. I'd eat all four on the first day out, two for lunch and two for supper.



On a resupply I would always bring two or three, sometimes four, apples and oranges, all of which I would eat by noon of the second day. They were heavy which explains why most hikers never carry fruit. But fruit is so good and so good for you.

## **Supper**

- Slice and boil summer sausage and then add instant potatoes, cheese, and salt and pepper. Yum! If I didn't have summer sausage, I'd substitute dehydrated corn or, that old standby, spam!  
If I didn't have potatoes, or was tired of potatoes, I'd substitute dehydrated rice, or Ramen noodles.  
If I had cheese I'd use it with anything. Cheese make everything taste better. And it's good for you, too.
- Butter, in cold weather. Like cheese, it make everything taste better.
- Nutella. Did I mention that it contains 100 calories per tablespoon? And it tastes better than candy.

Snacks: Hard candy, candy bars, almonds. Occasionally crackers or cookies. Chewing gum.