

Hiking Kit

There is a common saying that rings very true with hike kit. "A big rucksack is the sign of an untaught beginner". The more weight you carry clearly means the more effort to carry it. I am a strong believer in carrying less bulky foods so you don't need to eat more to make up for the energy used to carry it in the first place.

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First of all, plan your hike. Planning involves looking at where you are going and what conditions you can expect. How long do you plan to be going for? You need to take all this into consideration when packing. Hikes of any type can be very unpleasant if you are in pain. Only take what you need. We are all guilty of taking things unnecessarily. I call this the 'Just-in-case' factor.

A general kit list for a hike includes:

- Underlayer clothing (underwear, socks, t-shirt)
- Midlayer clothing to keep you warm (depending on time of year – sweater, fleece, trousers)
- Outerlayer clothing (waterproofs & gaiters)
- Set of spare clothes and footwear (lightweight)
- Food (enough to keep you going and some spare for emergencies)
- Water or high energy drink
- Hiking Boots
- Torch (with good batteries depending on the time hiking)
- Whistle
- Plastic Bags (to keep water out of things in your bag)
- Rucksack
- Map
- Spare Map
- Compass
- Spare Compass
- Survival Bag/Shelter
- Survival Kit
- First Aid Kit
- Route Card
- Pen & Paper with a note of emergency phone numbers

- Watch

Optional kit includes:

- Pen Knife (if permitted, but hand in to a leader at start)
- Hat and Gloves (depending on time of year)
- Personal medication
- Personal entertainment
- Mobile phone
- GPS navigation equipment
- Sunglasses (depending on weather)
- Mini survival guide
- Camping Equipment (if an overnight stop is likely)
- Pedometer
- Walking Poles
- Two way radios
- Map distance measurement tool
- Binoculars

When looking at this list and getting your personal kit together, try to see how you can reduce the weight of each individual item. It may seem insignificant but taking such measures as using a plastic whistle instead of a metal one and leaving the the personal stereo at home can all add up to a much lighter load.

So do follow the motto of 'be prepared' but at the same time, take only what you need.

First Aid

No matter how long the walk is a first aid kit is essential. Accidents occur because we don't expect the hazard that causes them. So it makes sense that we will only need the majority of first aid equipment when we don't expect it. The first aid kit is mostly dependant on the type of thing you are doing and the risks attached too it. For more advice on first aid kits [Click Here](#).

Survival Bag/Blanket

These are a must have for any serious walker. They are very cheap so make great birthday presents. They have many uses, from just a sheet to sit on when you stop for a break, to giving shelter in emergencies. They are brightly coloured or foil so casualties can be seen easily. They have incredible insulating properties so they can even help when sleeping in cold nights.

Waterproof Matches

These are very commonplace these days in camp shops. They are matches that will burn even when wet. They don't blow out as easily as normal matches and get to a greater temperature. They may be the only source of heat you have for survival.

Water Purifying Tablets

This should be fairly obvious. We need water to survive but not all water is safe to drink. They kill bacteria in the water. They don't taste that good until you get used to them, so you may wish to get the neutraliser to take the taste away.

Emergency Rations

These are NOT to eat as you go. These should only be opened when back at base or in an emergency. Ideally they should be a mix of high energy quick release food like chocolate and slow release foods like nuts or dried fruit.

Clothing

It is essential you wear the right clothing for hiking. Also it is important to take the right spare clothes with you. Think again about weather forecast. Is it raining? Could it rain? Is it cold? Could it become cold? The most common mistake people make is wearing a thick insulating top layer such as a lined waterproof jacket.

When walking the body has to work hard. As a result the body's temperature increases a lot. This also produces more sweat. When wearing thick waterproof layers, the heat cannot escape, so you get very hot, even when it's a cold day. Another problem with this is the sweat has nowhere to go. So instead of your waterproof clothing keeping rain out, it traps sweat in.

This sweat can cause more problems when you stop. When you stop walking your body doesn't work as hard so it doesn't produce much heat. So the sweat cools down fast and sometimes freezes.

The best way to avoid these problems is to wear many layers that can be taken off and carried in a bag. This gives more control over your body heat. It prevents sweating and in the long run helps prevent dehydration. At the same time your waterproof layer should be light and easy to remove. So you only need to wear it when you need the water resistant or

wind resistant properties it provides. Hats, gloves, balaclavas, bandanas, scarves, and mitts can always be taken when you expect possibly dramatic weather changes.