

Suggested clothing and equipment for short backpacking trips with Ben Gadd

Important: You'll enjoy the hike more if you go as lightly as possible. A good rule to follow is, "*When in doubt, leave it out.*"

Clothing

- Usual underwear, plus lightweight long underwear to put on if the weather is unusually chilly.
- Socks. Wool recommended (usually fewer blisters than with cotton) or whatever you are used to. Bring a spare set.
- Hiking boots: lightweight or moderate-weight and broken-in. Boots made entirely of leather, and well water-proofed with Sno Seal or some other wax treatment, will be warmer in wet, cold conditions than leather-and-fabric models. Wearing Goretex socks over your regular socks also helps a lot in bad weather. Expensive, but worth it!
- Moccasins ("surf shoes") or sandals of synthetic material for fording streams. Can also be worn around camp.
- Long pants. Good choice: nylon ones with zip-off lower legs. Jeans not recommended. They tend to get wet and cold.
- Swimsuit and towel to leave in the car, if finishing the trip at Miette Hot Springs and you'd like a dip.
- Long-sleeved shirt, nylon recommended.
- Lightweight pile jacket or wool sweater, bearing in mind that wool takes longer to dry than pile.
- Light insulated jacket. Down-filled, synthetic-filled or of heavy pile. Can be put in your sleeping-bag stuff sack and used as a pillow.
- Waterproof rain jacket with hood. Waterproof and breathable fabric (Goretex, etc.) is popular, but after an hour in the rain, Goretex is just as non-breathing as cheaper, lighter, coated fabric.
- Waterproof rain pants
- Poncho, if not bringing jacket and rain pants. Ponchos are light, but they do not protect the lower legs in wet brush, nor do they protect the lower body in wind-driven rain.
- Gloves. Recommended: pile or synthetic knit gloves, which dry quickly.
- Cap with brim for sun protection
- Tuque (knit cap) or hat with earflaps for chilly conditions. Also good for wearing in your sleeping bag.

Pack

- Internal-frame or external frame backpack with capacity of at least 50 litres. Too big is better than too small. Should have a comfortable padded hip-belt and should fit properly, so weight can be transferred to hips.
- Fitted pack cover or large plastic bag to cover your pack in the rain

Sleeping

- Summer-weight (warm to 0°C) down-filled or synthetic-filled sleeping bag, in stuff sack.
- Plastic bag in which to put your sleeping bag, in its stuff sack, to make sure that it stays dry.
- Foam pad. An inflatable type, such as the Therm-a-rest, is the most comfortable. Note that these are not ordinary air mattresses, which are not recommended (heavy, cold, likely to leak).

Personal essentials

- Small plastic bowl, insulated plastic cup and nylon spoon. You can skip the bowl and eat from the cup.
- Strong plastic bag for packing out garbage
- Matches or lighter (keep dry)
- One-litre wide-mouth plastic water bottle
- Small first-aid kit. Minimum: blister pads and bandaids. Ben will bring a more complete kit.
- Any medications you require
- Foam ear plugs, if you're sensitive to the sound of people around you snoring
- Sunglasses
- Sunblock rated 20 or higher. Damaging ultraviolet light is strong at higher elevations.
- Insect repellent. Recommended: any brand with 20–50% DEET, in a small pump-spray bottle.
- Cloth handkerchief and/or small towel
- Pocketknife, or a light Leatherman-type all-purpose tool. Large knives are not recommended.
- Small flashlight (two-AA-cell type) or headlamp. The new LED-type lamps are very light and compact.
- Comb/brush

- Toothbrush
- Extra glasses/extra contact lenses
- Toilet paper, sanitary napkins, etc., in a zip-lock plastic bag, plus an extra bag to carry used to next point of disposal.
- Compass or (better) GPS receiver. Ben will show you how to use these items if you're not sure.
- Whistle, to bring help
- A couple of extra plastic garbage bags

Recommended personal extras

- Walking poles. Nearly everyone who tries these likes them. (A single walking stick is not nearly as effective.) Poles make the hills easier, they provide better balance in awkward spots, and they're great for wading streams. Using rubber tips on walking poles reduces annoying clacking in rocky spots.
- Camera and plenty of film/digital storage media
- Binoculars of the compact type, typically 6 x 15 to 8 x 24. Large binoculars are too heavy.
- Map of the area. If it's the Fiddle River area, you can pick up map "83 F/4 Miette," available at the park information centre.
- Notebook and pencil
- Field guide to plants, animals, geology, etc. *Handbook of the Canadian Rockies* covers all, but it's heavy. Ben will bring a copy.
- Paperback for reading on a rainy day

• *You could share the equipment listed below with one to three other people, to save weight.*

Group gear

- Lightweight mountain tent. The better designs pitch with few or no stakes. All seams should be sealed to prevent leaks. The fly should cover the whole tent.
- Lightweight stakes of aluminum or nylon
- Small sponge, to sop up water from unexpected leaks
- Light pack-packer's tarp, for shelter while cooking and standing. Ben can provide two of these, which will be sufficient for the group.
- Lightweight camping stove, preferably one that uses isobutane/propane fuel cartridges. Good brands: MSR, Primus.
- Fuel. Allow 50 g of isobutane per person per day.
- Light cook set. One or two pots, pot-lifter and plastic scrub pad.
- Light backpacker's water bag—not a heavy canvas water bag—for collecting from stream or lake and carrying to camp. All users will praise you. Also saves wear and tear on the streambanks.
- Water-purification filter. Good brands: Sweetwater, MSR, PUR. Ben can provide two of these.
- Plastic trowel for digging individual poop-holes if necessary between established camps, which have pit toilets.
- Re pepper spray** to use in case of bear trouble. As a licenced guide, Ben is expected to carry pepper spray. One or two dispensers per group provide peace of mind, although a party of six or more persons is considered to be attack-proof. Be sure that the spray is instantly accessible, not in your pack. And remember that you can't bring it on the airlines.

Food: try for minimum weight and maximum nourishment

Recommended: suppers based on dried foods (pasta, Japanese noodles, beans, rice) or freeze-dried meals; hearty breakfasts that are more than just instant cereal (my current favorite: instant black-bean flakes mixed with instant rice, plus a little cheese, corn chips and salsa). Popular for lunch and snacks: granola bars, dried fruit, jerky, sausage, cheese, trail mix, crackers, cookies, candy—including that great on-trail caffeine source, chocolate-covered coffee beans! Remember that you'll need one fewer breakfast and supper than you'll need lunches, because you'll eat breakfast before we leave and supper after we get back.

Please try to have everything packed and ready for the hike when we meet at the trailhead. If you need instruction on packing up, though, Ben is happy to help. *** 20 May 2005