

Suggested clothing, equipment and food for summer backpacking with Ben Gadd

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Important: if this is a week-long outing, it means a pack heavy with food for the first few days. You'll enjoy the trip more if you go as lightly as possible. Here is a good rule to follow:

“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. MEC sells these.
- Moccasins or sandals of synthetic material for fording streams, if on the program. Can also be worn around camp.
- Long pants. Good choice: nylon ones with zip-off lower legs. Jeans not recommended: tend to get wet and cold.
- Swimsuit and towel to leave in the car, if on the Fiddle Valley trip and finishing at Miette Hot Springs.
- 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; note correct spelling) 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 60 litres. 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 stuff sack to use as a food-hanging bag, large enough to hold all food, soap, etc.
- 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 30 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 bring these items and show you how to use them, if you're not sure.
- Wet wipes—the small kind, in tiny packets—for washing hands after pooping
- 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, or if the camera is digital, extra storage media and extra batteries
- Binoculars of the compact type, typically 6 x 15 to 8 x 24. Large binoculars are too heavy.
- Topographic map. These are available at MEC stores or at park-information centres.
- Notebook and pencil
- Field guide to plants, animals, geology, etc. *Handbook of the Canadian Rockies* covers all, but it's heavy. Ben will pack a copy.
- Paperback book for reading on a rainy day

Group gear

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

- 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. Ben has a good four-person tent to lend.
- 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 one of these, which will be sufficient for a group of six.
- Lightweight camping stove, preferably one that uses isobutane/propane fuel cartridges. Or a naphtha-fuelled (white-gas) stove. Good brands: MSR, Primus.
- Fuel. Allow 50 g of isobutane per person per day, or 100 ml of naphtha.
- 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 one 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: 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 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 your pack ready for the hike when we meet at the trailhead. ***