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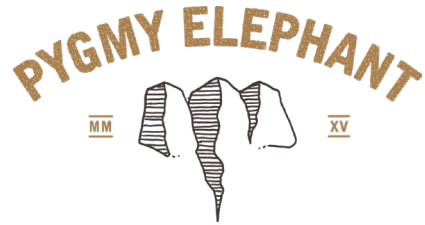


XV

THE ALPS PACKING GUIDE



The Alps Packing Guide



Trekking through the Alps of France, Italy, and Switzerland is a demanding but rewarding endeavor. To walk beside granite towers formed some 15 million years ago and gaze down on valleys strewn with tiny houses and chalets is to venture into another world. Packing correctly for this hike will allow you to absorb the experience with minimal stress and worry.

This general packing list for our Alpine treks provides recommendations based on our experiences traveling and hiking. You may find that you don't need everything on this list, or that you need things we haven't mentioned. **Everyone's backpack will look different, depending on their situation.** If you need help deciding what you should and shouldn't pack, please contact us.

PRE-TRAVEL PLANNING

Before you start packing, there are several important planning tasks you should complete. These are related to your packing list and will contribute to a successful Alpine trek.

- **Notify friends and family of your travel plans.** We recommend you develop a plan to make regular check-ins with at least one person while you are on the trail.
- **Notify your bank of your travel plans.** State that you will be traveling in Europe and that they should allow transactions. Check with your bank about ATM restrictions, as well.
- **Notify your government of your travel plans.** This isn't strictly necessary, but your government can provide you with help in an emergency situation.
- **Ensure your passport is current.** Many countries require that your passport be valid for at least six months beyond the dates of your trip.
- **Obtain visas and travel documents as necessary.** [Check if you need a visa to enter countries in the Schengen area.](#)
- **Purchase a travel insurance policy.** Your policy should cover medical expenses, evacuation, and repatriation and should preferably have no elevation or equipment restrictions.
- **Familiarize yourself with the terrain for your trek.**
- **Familiarize yourself with basic first aid and emergency procedures.**

DOCUMENTS

- **Passport and visas.**
- **Travel insurance policy documentation.**
- **Cash in euros and Swiss francs.**
- **Pygmy Elephant handbook.**
- **Guidebooks and maps.**

The Alps Packing Guide



CLOTHING

The trail for your Alpine trek ranges in elevation from 2,200 feet in the valleys to 8,800 feet on mountain passes. In the valleys, you may be comfortable hiking in shorts and a t-shirt, but on mountain passes where snow is still present, you may need pants and a warm jacket. Layering is an effective way to adjust to temperature, wind, and precipitation. When the weather is bad, you want to be able to quickly add layers. Keep a mid-layer handy, especially when hiking over high mountain passes. Choose a base layer made of wool, silk, or synthetic material, as these fabrics both wick moisture away and keep you warm when wet. Do not wear a cotton base layer, as it dries slowly.

- **Technical hiking pants** and/or **hiking shorts**.
- **Wool, silk, or synthetic base layer and underwear**.
- **Synthetic long-sleeved shirt**.
- **Fleece mid-layer** (or similar).
- **[Waterproof and breathable jacket](#)**.
- **Wool or synthetic hiking socks**.
- **T-shirts and comfortable layers for mountain huts**.
- **Long underwear tops and bottoms** (optional).
- !! **Broken-in hiking boots**.

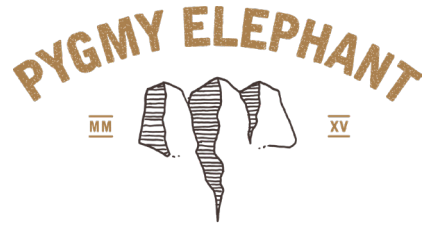
Note: It is important to break in your hiking boots before starting a long-distance trek, as new, stiff boots are more likely to cause blisters and foot pain. You should feel comfortable walking for 6 to 8 hours at a time in your boots for multiple days in a row. [Click here to learn more about how to choose the right boots](#).

ACCESSORIES & HYGIENE

Accessories covers a wide range of items highly subject to personal preference and mountain conditions. In addition to the items below, you might want a roll-top waterproof bag, or a waterproof backpack cover. One of the most important functions of the items below is protection from the elements. Sunscreen, for example, is one item that should be in every hiker's backpack.

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|---|--|
| ● Backpack (30–50 liters for day bag). | ● Sunscreen . |
| ● Duffel bag (for luggage transfers). | ● Flip-flops (for showers). |
| ● Camelbak or water bottle (≥ 2 liters). | ● Towel (quick dry). |
| ● Hiking poles . | ● Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss . |
| ● Hats (wool and with sun-bill). | ● Shampoo, soap, hand sanitizer . |
| ● Gloves (waterproof recommended). | ● Insect repellent . |
| ● Head lamp . | ● Blister plaster or moleskin . |
| ● Sunglasses . | ● Earplugs and eye mask . |
| ● Knife or multi-tool . | ● Slippers (for mountain huts). |
| ● Compass . | ● Dirty clothes bag . |
| ● Sleeping bag liner . | |

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MOUNTAINEERING & EMERGENCY GEAR

Depending on winter and spring weather, and on how early in the summer you are hiking, you may encounter sections of hard-packed snow or ice on the trail. These conditions can be slippery and dangerous, and may lead to injury. In case of snow or ice, consider bringing MICROspikes, or even an ice axe. You can rent equipment in Chamonix if you don't bring your own. Furthermore, early in the season there is sometimes a risk for avalanche on the trail. You may want to bring a personal locator beacon or satellite messenger in case you need to call for help, especially if you are hiking solo. Make sure to consult with your refuge warden, hotel or with us for possible avalanche danger and weather conditions before setting out on your tour.

- **MICROspikes.**
- **Ice axe.**
- **Gaiters.**
- **Hand warmers.**
- **Sleeping bag** and/or **bivy sack.**
- **Personal locator beacon (PLB)** or **satellite messenger.**
- **Whistle.**
- **First aid kit** (disinfectant, bandages, scissors, absorbent pads, protective gloves).
- **Thermal tarp** or **space blanket.**
- **Medicine** (pain-relief tablets, fever-reducing and anti-inflammatory pills, ointment for scrapes or burns, antihistamines, mineral salts, anti-diarrheal, anti-itch cream).
- **Survival kit** (sewing needle, safety pins, fire starter, duct tape, resealable plastic bags, iodine tincture to disinfect water, orange flagging tape, magnifying glass, parachute cord, emergency food).

FOOD

As you are booked on a half-board basis at most accommodations (excluding Courmayeur, Chamonix, and Zermatt), the only food that you will need in your backpack is your lunch and your preferred snacks. Many accommodations provide a packed lunch for purchase. Otherwise, there are groceries and supermarkets where you can buy food, or you can stop at a restaurant or mountain hut for a hot meal on the trail. Below are some of our favorite food and food-related items.

- **Chocolate** (especially dark chocolate).
- **Trail mix.**
- **Regional sausage** or **cheese.**
- **Fresh fruit** (especially bananas).
- **Granola.**
- **Energy bars.**
- **Sports drink powder.**
- ⚠️ **Wild blueberries** (season-dependent).

Caution: There is a chance of confusing blueberries with either bog bilberry or **belladonna**, also known as **deadly nightshade**. Bog bilberries are not toxic, but the berries and foliage of belladonna are **extremely toxic**. Make sure you can identify these plants before gathering any berries.

Do not eat anything you cannot positively identify.