



Hiking Gear for any Occasion

This section encompasses gear that might be useful for any hiking occasion. From boots to packs to food to water, this section will be useful whether you're going on a casual stroll in the summer or a multi-night winter hike.

Hiking Shoes

Regardless of what type of hike you're going on, you definitely want to wear sturdy, supportive shoes that can grip surfaces well. This does not mean that you have to wear a hiking "boot" in the traditional sense of the word, although boots are usually a good option. For day hikes, many people prefer sneakers, trail-running shoes, or even hiking sandals. Your footwear choice should largely be determined by personal preference, comfort, and the type of trip you're going on. For example, on long hikes when you're carrying a heavy load, you'll probably want stiffer shoes/boots with more ankle support.

Types of hiking footwear:

Hiking sandals

Pros: Breathable, lightweight, stream crossings are more seamless, comfortable to wear at your campsite

Cons: Little to no ankle support, straps can be abrasive, your toes are exposed to the elements and to kicking rocks



Trail-running shoes

Pros: Lightweight, somewhat breathable, typically require less time to break in than a hiking boot, good for maintaining a fast pace

Cons: Less traction and support than hiking boots, you'll feel rocks and roots underneath your feet, less effective in mud, snow, and water than hiking boots, get worn out more quickly than a pair of hiking boots



Low-cut hiking shoes (available for rental)¹

Pros: Sturdy, durable, require less break-in time than mid- or high-cut boots, great for hiking on well-maintained trails, can be used on tough trails and in adverse weather conditions, somewhat flexible sole is useful for steep slopes

Cons: Less ankle support than mid- or high-cut boots, worse at keeping out mud, snow, and water than mid- or high-cut boots, less breathable than sandals or trail runners



¹ NOTE: Gear in *blue* is available to be rented from HOC

Mid-cut hiking boots (available for rental)

Pros: Extremely versatile, great for almost any trail, supportive, sturdy, good ankle support, good for carrying heavy loads, can be used for backpacking trips, can be used in any season

Cons: Somewhat heavy, require some time to break in, not very breathable



High-cut hiking/backpacking boots (available for rental)

Pros: Extremely sturdy, can be used in all terrains and all conditions (some are even waterproof!), provides top-level support when you're carrying a heavy load, will hold up well over long trips, can be used in any season

Cons: Bulky and heavy, difficult to pack in a bag, require time to break in, not breathable



Tips:

1. When you try on hiking boots, make sure to wear socks that resemble the thickness of socks you'd wear on the trail
2. Make sure to break in your boots before you use them on a long trip
3. You don't necessarily need to take your shoes hiking to break them in! Just wear them around the house, to the grocery store, etc. Any use is better than none, trust us
4. Test out hiking shoes/boots before you buy them and don't ignore obvious discomforts, because these will only be amplified on the trail
5. If you wear hiking sandals, it may be a good idea to also bring a pair of socks in case the weather conditions change
6. Pay attention to the material of the shoes you wear/buy. The material can influence water resistance, breathability, warmth, etc.

Socks

Socks are your feet's first line of defense from blisters and the elements. Good hiking socks are often made from wool or a blend of wool and a synthetic material. However, you can find high-quality hiking socks made in a myriad of different blends. Note that for long hiking trips, you typically want to avoid cotton. Cotton is poor at regulating temperature and takes a long time to dry. Generally, good goals to have for hiking socks is that they keep your feet warm, wick moisture away from your feet, provide cushioning, fit well, are durable, and work well with whatever shoes you plan to wear. For short hikes in hospitable weather, you probably won't need to have hiking-specific socks. Any athletic sock that works well with your shoe will do. For long hiking trips, some people like to wear sock liners underneath their regular hiking socks. Sock liners are basically thin socks that can help reduce the friction that your feet experience (thus preventing blisters) and wick moisture away from your feet. Bringing an extra pair of socks on overnight trips is a great way to make sure you have dry socks in the morning or can double up if your feet get cold. Remember, there's no shame in sleeping with your socks on your tummy so you wake up with them warm and dry. All the cool kids do it.



Backpack

Backpacks are an essential part of any type of hike and the type of backpack you bring generally depends on the length of your hike. The main things to look for in a backpack are the capacity, the features, and the fit. Capacity is generally in the 20-80+ Liters range. Features can include anything from additional ventilation, extra pockets, a sleeping bag compartment, a rain cover, etc. The more features, the pricier the bag. At the end of the day, many of these features aren't 100% necessary and it just comes down to what you'll mostly be using your pack for. The fit is one of the most important features of a pack. REI has a great [fit guide](#) for making sure a pack is the right one for you.

Day pack (available for rental)

These generally fall in the 20-40L range and are intended for non-overnight trips. Depending on the seasons you are hiking in, you may want a bigger day pack. For example, if you are hiking a lot in the winter, you may want a bigger pack to store extra layers, whereas a lighter, smaller backpack might be more suitable if you are mostly going on summer day hikes.



Backpacking pack (available for rental)

These will mostly be the 60-80+L range and are intended for overnight or multiple overnight trips.



Bag cover or trash bag

Bag covers are basically rain jackets for your pack! They're designed to keep your bag and its contents dry when it rains, and it's especially important for overnight trips where you don't want all of your dry clothes and gear to get wet. (Keeping a dry pair of socks is essential for both morale and health!!) You should always have some sort of bag cover handy if you're on an overnight trip or if you want to keep your gear dry during a day trip. Some backpacking bags will come with a bag cover, but a lot of people cover their pack with a trash bag instead. They're light, easy to get, and just as (& often more) waterproof than other bag covers. Make sure that whatever trash bag you use fully covers your pack, and if it's thin, that you bring two in case one rips. Alternatively, you can put a trash bag inside your pack as a liner (affectionately known as a "happy sack"). The trash bags you can get in your dorm laundry and trash room work wonderfully.



Food

Whether on an overnight trip or not, food is essential. You can burn so many calories on a hike, so it's super important to make sure you keep yourself fed. High calorie, high-carb, salty foods are great hiking foods (Clif bars, peanut butter, sandwiches, etc.) because they keep you nourished and don't take up too much space. Bananas + apples are great as well but be sure to leave no trace! Don't throw your banana peels and apple cores into the woods. These can take years to decompose, are generally not a part of an animal's diet, can attract animals to more highly-trafficked areas (i.e. a highway if you throw food on the side of the highway), and can make animals more reliant on humans for their food. If you're going on an overnight trip, you don't need pre-packaged, ready-to-eat hiking meals like Mountain House, which can be super expensive. Bringing some pasta + pasta sauce (with parmesan of course) is a HOC favorite.

Food containers/utensils

Spork and a bowl. Enough said. Keep ya food safe and from exploding in your bag! It's generally a good idea to keep your food in a separate container in case things get messy. If you're planning to cook, don't forget to bring whatever cooking utensils/equipment you may need (e.g. knife, big spoon, pot, pan, spatula, sponge, etc.).



Water + Water filtration

A good rule of thumb is that you'll need 2L of water per day, if not more. This is the equivalent of two Nalgenes, which is what we recommend to bring on any day hikes. If you're going on an overnight trip, you might not be able to carry enough water, so you'll have to fill up along the way. Often, you can fill up on water at the fast part of a moving stream and drink it without any issue. However, we recommend purifying your water regardless of the source. If a stream is not available, another water source will work but you'll DEFINITELY have to purify it to make sure you get rid of any bacteria. Options for filtering include a portable water filter, iodine, chlorine, or boiling.

1. If you're using iodine tablets, you'll probably need 2 tablets per quart (although this can vary - check the bottle you have). Put the tablets in the water and wait around 30 minutes to allow the iodine to do its work.
2. If you're using liquid chlorine, 3 drops per liter of water is usually an appropriate ratio. Make sure to also let the chlorinated water sit for at least 30 minutes to allow the bacteria to die.



Duct tape

The power of duct tape cannot be understated. HOC leaders often have some taped around their water bottle because you never know when it'll come in handy. Maybe a pack rips and you need a quick fix. Maybe you break a pole and need a sturdy mend. Duct tape is your answer.



*Hot (spot) tip: If you don't have moleskin (or even if you do), use duct tape on a hot spot to decrease friction and prevent it from becoming a blister.

Bug repellent

The outdoors has bugs! Sometimes lots of them. Bug repellent is worn like sunscreen (though always be sure to read the instructions because some are clothing-only) and can help keep bugs (primarily mosquitos) from biting you. You don't need to worry about bugs in the northeast in the winter, but bug repellent can be very useful in the spring, summer, and early fall. Bugs are most often found near standing water. The most widely used bug-repelling chemical in the U.S. is DEET. DEET is found in many bug repellants, and brands will often list the percentage of deet found in their product. Although DEET can be toxic in large quantities or if ingested in the wrong way (i.e. please don't drink DEET), it's generally considered to be safe and effective. Some people are allergic to bug repellent, so it may be best to bring a bottle but check in with your group before applying it. Some non-spray alternatives include getting a mosquito net for your head (often worn over a hat), and/or bringing an extra layer of

long clothes to protect any exposed skin. Head nets are usually not necessary for day trips, but can come in handy on overnight ones.

Trekking poles (available for rental)

Trekking poles are basically ski poles that you hike with. Many people use them for balance or to try to reduce the amount of stress they're putting on their joints, but they are far from necessary to have in order to hike. They're likely more relevant/useful if you're carrying a heavy pack over long distances.

What they can be helpful for:

1. Reducing the impact on your knees (a 1999 study found that trekking poles can reduce the compressive forces on your knees by as much as 25%).
2. Navigating steep ascents or descents
3. Stream crossings
4. Hiking in slippery snow
5. Pushing aside poison ivy or other harmful plants
6. Looking like a badass
7. Getting an unintentional arm workout
8. Sturdy trekking poles can be used to help you construct a small/light shelter



Rain gear (available for rental)

A rain jacket or a rain poncho is probably your best bet for keeping your upper body dry during a downpour. The advantage of a poncho is that it's very lightweight, cheap, and covers most of your body (and your backpack if necessary). However, ponchos tend to be loose and thin, so they can easily get snagged on tree branches while you hike. Rain jackets, in contrast, are pretty form-fitting and are made

of more durable material. Rain jackets that are advertised as **waterproof** should be able to keep you dry for multiple hours in significant rain. Rain jackets that are advertised as **water resistant** will be able to handle some rain, but eventually moisture will seep through. Water resistant gear is often much cheaper and more breathable than waterproof gear.



Rain pants are great for keeping your legs dry during heavy downpours. They're especially useful on overnight trips for keeping your actual pants (which you may have to wear again) dry. Gaiters can help keep your feet and ankles dry. Many hikers like to wear a brimmed hat when they hike to prevent their face and/or glasses from getting wet. In addition to rain gear for your body, it can be helpful to carry some sort of waterproof case or bag for your phone. The best foolproof way to test if your gear is waterproof? Shower in it!



Headlamp/Flashlight

It's really, really handy to have a headlamp or flashlight with you whenever you go into the backcountry. It's absolutely necessary to have one of these things with you for an overnight trip, but it's highly recommended to also bring one on day hikes (on the off-chance that you'll have to hike in the dark). Hikes often take longer than we expect, and you never know when you might get lost, so bring a flashlight!! It's incredibly difficult to hike in the dark and a flashlight may just save you from a sprained ankle. The advantage of a headlamp (over a flashlight) is that it allows you to keep your hands free! Always remember to bring extra batteries for your headlamp/flashlight. Even if you're sure your gear is fully powered, your friend may be thanking you later.



Hand sanitizer and/or soap

Hand sanitizer and/or soap are necessary on a hike of pretty much any length. Basically, if you expect to use the bathroom or eat food on your hike, you should bring at least one of the two. As you probably already know, keeping your hands clean can prevent you from transferring germs from your hands to your mouth (or to open wounds), which can cause infection. Hand sanitizer is more compact and doesn't require you to use water when cleaning your hands, so it's probably the best option for a day hike. However, many people like to bring soap on longer hiking trips so that they have the option to scrub dirt off their hands and wash dishes. If you bring soap, make sure that it's biodegradable!

Sun protection

This involves everything from sunscreen, sunglasses, a hat, and clothing that covers your skin. It can be easy to forget this if you're mostly moving around in the woods, but that doesn't make it any less important!

Map and Compass

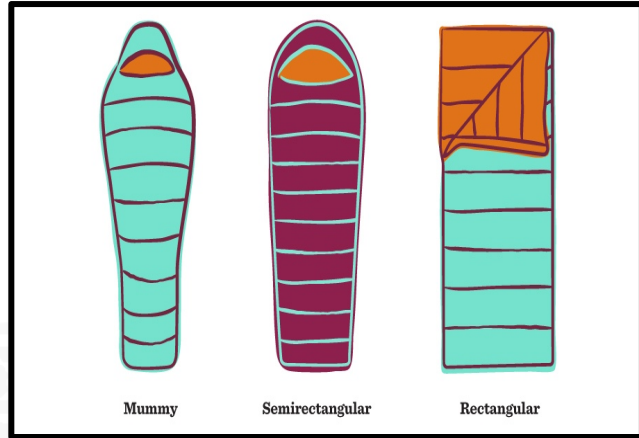
To make sure you know where you are and where you're going! Navigation tools are some of your most essential pieces of gear in the backcountry. You'll want a paper map and physical compass so that you're not relying on something that could run out of battery and/or not have service. [This website](#) has some intro stuff on how to read a map, but HOC is coming out with a video on this!



Overnight Hiking Gear

Sleeping Bag (available for rental)

An essential for overnights! This will be where you curl up at night in your tent (or in a hammock or in neither if it's super nice out). Sleeping bags are characterized by how warm they are and their size. Size is pretty self-explanatory - you want a bag that is long enough that your toes aren't cramped but not too big that it's taking up way too much space in your pack. The temperature of the bag is also very important. You might hear a phrase like "40 degree bag" thrown around. This means that you will be comfortable sleeping in the bag in temperatures as low as 40 degrees Fahrenheit. You can sometimes get away with using a 40 deg bag in colder temperatures, and oftentimes the bag will have a lower limit rating as well. A zero-degree bag is meant for much colder temperatures and is often bigger, heavier (more insulation), and more expensive. Sleeping bags come in a few different shapes such as mummy, semi-rectangular, and rectangular. Mummy bags are probably what you picture when you think of sleeping bags as they're the most common shape. Mummy bags are smaller at your feet to create a smaller pocket of air that your body needs to heat up, thus keeping you warmer. Rectangular bags on the other hand may leave more room for cold air, but they are much easier to move around in.

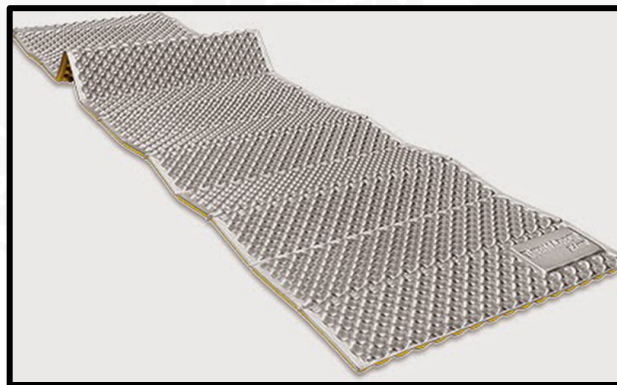


Sleeping Pad (available for rental)

Sleeping pads are basically portable mattresses that protect you from the ground at night. These are essential to use because they insulate you from the ground, which keeps you warm at night. They also make sleeping outdoors much more comfortable and help protect your sleeping bag from getting damaged from direct contact with the ground. There are two main types of sleeping pads...

Foam

These sleeping pads are mats made of foam that either roll or fold up into a portable size. When hiking, you usually strap foam sleeping pads below your pack. They often have a silver reflective side, which you should keep facing up to reflect your body heat back to you. They're much cheaper and easier to set up/pack up than inflatable pads, but they also provide less padding between you and the ground.



Inflatable

These are kind of like air mattresses, and they compress into really small packs that are easy to carry. Once you set them up, they also provide more cushioning between you and the ground. While they

tend to be very light, they are also less durable, take longer to set up, and are typically more expensive than foam pads.



Tent (available for rental)

For an overnight trip, it's essential to bring some form of shelter with you. Even though it can be very appealing to plan to just sleep under the stars, you should always have a back-up plan in case of cold, wind, rain, snow, etc. A tent is the most common form of shelter that campers and backpackers carry with them. Tents are (usually) lightweight, reliable, and easier to set up than many other forms of temporary shelter. Many tents are advertised as "3-season tents". This means that they're designed to stand up to the elements in the Spring, Summer, and Fall, but that they're probably inadequate for harsh winter conditions. In contrast, 4-season tents should be able to withstand any weather conditions (at least, as well as any impermanent structure like a tent can). 4-season tents are typically heavier, so if you never plan to do any winter camping, a 3-season tent is probably your best bet. A tent is probably the most expensive piece of gear you'll need for an overnight hiking trip, so consider renting or borrowing one! HOC offers tent rentals and many members of the HOC community own tents, so definitely ask around if you need short-term access to a tent. Tents come in a variety of different shapes, sizes, and capacities, so be mindful of your needs when renting, buying, or borrowing a tent. Pro trip: Always. Set up. The rain. Fly. Although. Some in the HOC Leader Community disagree and do not believe this is *always* necessary. Especially in the desert or when it's hot out.



Bear bag/Bear canister

If you're camping out in an area that might be home to bears, it's super important to put any food you've brought in a place that a bear can't reach it. Bears generally won't disturb humans, but if you've kept food in your tent, you might get an unwelcome visitor. Bear bags are sacks you can store food in (you can often use your sleeping bag's stuff sack). After putting the food in the bear bag, you'll want to hang it over a tree branch, a good distance off the ground so that it remains out of reach of a bear. This can be accomplished by tying a rope around the bag and throwing the end of the rope over a branch, allowing you to hoist the bear bag into the air. Bear canisters are generally heavier than bear bags but harder for a bear to get into. You'll often see these at established campsites. A bear should hypothetically not be able to get into a bear canister, but it's still a good idea to try and put it out of reach somewhere.



Knife

A pocketknife or other form of multitool can be very helpful on overnight trips in the backcountry. However, a knife is not always essential.

Potential uses:

1. Opening cans or bottles
2. Cutting food + peeling fruit
3. Cutting through packaging cleanly
4. Shaving and/or whittling wood
5. Making sparks for a fire if you have something like flint or ferrocerium on hand
6. Cutting rope, string, or parachute cord
7. Cutting things for first aid purposes (e.g. fabric, bandages, moleskin, tape)



First aid kit

You never know when something might go wrong on the trail, so it's always a good idea to have some first aid supplies. What you bring is fully dependent on your needs and expectations, but below is a list of things that you might want to consider bringing:

1. ACE elastic bandage
2. Antibacterial ointment
3. Antiseptic wipes
4. Aspirin
5. Band-aids
6. Benadryl or other antihistamines
7. Cold compress
8. Epi-pen (if necessary)
9. Gauze
10. Hand sanitizer
11. Ibuprofen

12. Materials for building a splint
13. Medical tape
14. Moleskin
15. Scissors (if you don't have a knife)
16. Ziploc bags or medical waste bags

For a long hiking trip, a prepackaged, store-bought first aid kit can be great for helping you to cover all your bases. Usually however, one of these is not necessary and you can put together your own perfectly serviceable kit.



Head net

Depending on when and where you're hiking, bugs could be the last thing on your mind or the first thing on your mind. If you're going into an area where you expect bugs to be a nuisance, consider bringing a head net. Head nets are very small and lightweight but can offer significant peace of mind. Hot tip: If you go on a hiking trip in New Hampshire in the months of May or June, it will be black fly season. In this case, a bug net may be the one thing that stands between you and insanity.



Hammock

When you camp, an alternative to sleeping on the ground is sleeping in a hammock! Hammocks can be far more comfortable than the ground and can also be lighter than a full tent. However, just like with a tent, if you plan to spend the night in a hammock, you should definitely consider bringing a rain tarp. A rain tarp can be strung up between the same trees as your hammock and will offer protection from an unexpected downpour.

Comparison of hammock vs. tent:

Hammock pros: Lightweight, well ventilated, comfortable, cheaper than a tent, you won't wake up in a puddle

Hammock cons: Less wind protection, no rain protection without a rain tarp, you need to find appropriate trees, less protection from insects and wildlife, can only be used in warm weather, you can fall

Tip: Many people find hammocks slightly uncomfortable because of the way that the banana-shape of the hammock folds your body at the waist. In order to solve this problem, just lay across the hammock diagonally! Your body will be far flatter this way.



Stove

If you plan to cook on a hiking trip, it's a good idea to bring a camping stove. It's far more reliable and convenient than building a fire to cook. A camping stove can also be useful for boiling water to disinfect it if needed. If you pack a stove, don't forget to bring gas! To be clear, you don't need a stove to go on an overnight hiking trip. If your trip is just a few days, you can definitely pack enough ready-to-eat meals to get you through without a heat source. Those meals may just be a little bit sadder and less exciting than a freshly cooked meal in camp.



Trowel

Trowels are pretty self-explanatory: you use one to dig a hole before you poop in it. That's it! Don't use the trowel while you poop or after you poop. The trowel should never come into contact with poop. According to Leave No Trace guidelines, the hole you dig with your trowel should be 6-8 inches deep and 4-6 inches in diameter. After you finish pooping, cover the hole with soil, leaves, or other natural materials. If you know that you'll have access to campsites with outhouses throughout your trip, then you don't necessarily need to bring a trowel.



Pee rag

A pee rag is a bandanna or cloth that you can use to wipe after urinating in the woods. Many women bring pee rags with them on hiking trips to maintain good hygiene without producing waste (because pee rags are reusable!!). Typically, hikers carrying a pee rag will hang it on the outside of their backpack. This allows it to dry faster and not come into contact with your other belongings. In addition, a little-known fact is that UV rays actually kill the bacteria on pee rags!

Tip: You may want to tie a knot in one end of your pee rag to distinguish the part you hold from the part you wipe with.



Cold Weather Gear

Snowshoes (available for rental)

Snowshoes are ideal for travelling over deep, powdery snow. They distribute your weight more widely than normal shoes and allow you to tread on top of the snow, rather than plunging through it with every step (which is known as post-holing). Even though snowshoes are pretty large and heavy, they will actually save you energy in deep snow. Snowshoes are not intended to be worn on ice but they will still provide good traction on ice.



Microspikes (available for rental)

Microspikes are basically a net of chains with small spikes on the bottom. They're worn over your hiking boot and provide you with much better traction in snowy or icy conditions. Microspikes are typically better-suited for packed snow or ice than they are for deep powder. Although microspikes add some weight to your feet, they tend to be pretty lightweight. Microspikes fall in between crampons and bare-foot (when you don't have microspikes or crampons on) in terms of grip strength.



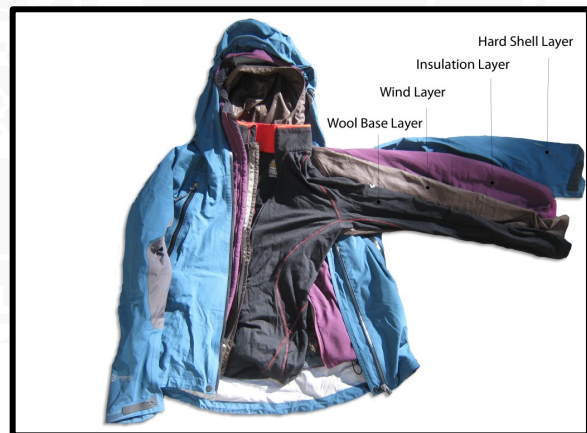
Crampons (available for rental)

These provide a similar function to microspikes but are more heavy-duty. You'll generally use crampons when hiking up steep, icy terrain. The spikes on crampons are much larger than on microspikes. Crampons are typically not needed for activities other than mountaineering or ice climbing.



Insulation/layers (available for rental)

LAYERS LAYER LAYERS are so important on any hike, especially during the winter. Layers help you control your body temperature. You always want enough layers so that you can shed a layer if you're getting too warm or put on an extra layer if you're getting cold. Shedding layers is extremely important when on a more serious winter hike. If you have on too many layers while on a challenging winter hike, you might start sweating. This makes your base layer (the layer in direct contact with your body) wet and, when you stop moving, will make you extremely cold. As we mentioned in the socks section, avoid cotton!



Gaiters (available for rental)

Gaiters are sleeves that can be cinched over your ankles and shins to prevent snow, rain, and debris from entering your boots. They're usually not necessary in hospitable weather but can be great for heavy downpours or deep, unpacked snow. Some rain pants and snow pants have an elastic seal in the cuff that goes over your boots. These seals can be used instead of (or in addition to) gaiters to keep your feet dry. Seriously do not underestimate the power of gaiters in the snow.



Gloves (available for rental)

A pretty self-explanatory piece of care, but that doesn't make it any less important. It's often a good idea to have multiple gloves on a hike just in case one pair gets wet. If you're planning any overnight trip, even if it's summertime, it's usually a good idea to bring gloves. Temperatures may drop significantly at night (especially if you're at a high altitude) and cold, stiff fingers will make it far more difficult to do things like cook dinner and set up camp. Gloves are very important for activities like cross country skiing where shielding your hands is impossible.



Sun protection

It might seem weird to include sun protection in this section again, but it's super important to remember your sun protection in the winter as well. Snow reflects sunlight a lot, and it's not uncommon to get a sunburn on a winter hike!

Useful hiking apps

Alltrails

- Alltrails is a massive database that contains thousands and thousands of trails around the world. You can use it to find hikes, share hikes, and map your way through hikes that you're unfamiliar with.
- Alltrails asks for a membership fee but most aspects of the app are free.
- Super helpful because it's widely used and people can post trail reviews (a lot like yelp) so your information is always up to date.

Gaia GPS

Gaia has a great map + GPS interface that can help you navigate your way through any hike. The best part about Gaia is that you can download sections of maps to access offline. Thus, even when you don't have service, you can use your phone's stand-alone GPS capabilities in combination with the downloaded map to navigate.

PictureThis and/or Seek by iNaturalist

- Both of these apps can be used to identify plants that you encounter on the trail.
 - *Note: Even if you use one of these apps, we recommend not eating any wild plants unless you're CERTAIN of their identity.*

Star Walk 2

An app that helps you identify stars, planets, and constellations when you're on a nighttime hike or at a campsite where the sky is visible.

