



Balanced  
Rock

## Backcountry Packing and Equipment List

The first key to success of any trip is good preparation.. Adequate equipment is crucial for your safety and comfort in the wilderness. This list has been generated from years of experience and numerous resources. **Balanced Rock has a limited amount of gear available to lend—please contact us if you have gear needs or questions.**

REI is a good source for gear, and **rents** equipment such as backpacks. Please be aware that the REI rental program is often busy in the summer season, but you can reserve your gear up to 30 days in advance. Second hand stores and Play it Again Sports are examples of in-expensive alternatives.

Gear stores like REI are also great resources for your questions. Bring this list and your trip description with you when you shop. Your salesperson should be able to answer your questions. If you have further questions about equipment, please do not hesitate to contact us:

(209) 379-9453 | [info@balancedrock.org](mailto:info@balancedrock.org)

Unless you are borrowing some Balanced Rock gear, please arrive in Yosemite with all the gear you need and make sure it is broken in and ready to go. There is not a convenient store nearby to get forgotten supplies. Be assured, we will be spending some time at the trailhead to divide up the group gear together and teach how to properly pack a backpack to make sure that we are all prepared for our adventure.

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### What Balanced Rock Provides (All Group Gear)

*Please note: you will be carrying a portion of following group gear*

- SHARED TENTS/SHELTERS- if you want to bring your own tent, *please contact us.*
- STOVES, POTS/PANS/COOKING UTENSILS & ALL FOOD
- FIRST AID KITS
- BEAR-PROOF CANISTERS
- WATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS - speak with us if you plan to bring your own.
- MAPS & EMERGENCY RADIOS
- TARPS

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### What You Should Bring (Personal Gear)

**PACK:** A sturdy, comfortable backpack with a secure waist belt and good sternum strap, big enough to hold food and supplies for a 4-day trip. Suggested carrying capacity: **4000-5000 cubic inches (65-85 L)**. You will be carrying some portion of the group gear which consists of tent, stove, pots, pans, water filters, etc. as well as your portion of food for the time you are in the field and this is *in addition to* all of the personal gear you are packing now. Food is packed in bear canisters, which take up quite a bit of pack space.

**Caution:** If you are petite and you are getting a new pack, or borrowing one, try to get one that is especially designed for people with shorter mid-sections and smaller waists. If in doubt, wear the pack with a good amount of weight in it (approx. 40-50 lbs.) to be sure that it is comfortable and fits properly. **External or internal frame packs are OK. Luggage that turns into a pack is NOT OK.**

**SLEEPING BAG & COMPRESSION SACK:**

Synthetic or down will work in the Sierra. The bag should be rated to **zero degrees**. It is cold up high even during the summer. Also, be sure to bring a COMPRESSION STUFF SACK to pack your sleeping bag in. Your sleeping bag fit better in your pack with this.

**SLEEPING PAD:** You will need a pad to insulate you from the ground and help you sleep warm and comfortably. You can choose an inflatable pad (such as Thermarest brand), which is more comfortable, but more expensive, heavier and can puncture on sharp rocks. Or you can choose a non-inflatable pad (such as Ridgerest brand), which is lighter, cheaper and more durable (but less comfortable). Non-inflatable pads can also double as great backcountry yoga mats!

**RAIN PROTECTION:** Waterproof (not just water resistant) raincoat and pants. Fabric should be good coated nylon, gore-tex, or similar material. Please do not bring plastic ponchos or uncoated nylon fabrics.

**DOWN JACKET:** A down or warm synthetic jacket for chilly nights and mornings. This does not have to be fancy, just warm and not too bulky (down is usually lighter and more compressible than synthetic fibers).

**UPPER BODY LAYERS:** You should be able to dress for rain, wind, and temperatures down to 30 degrees. Layering garments is the most effective and comfortable way of dressing when traveling in the outdoors. Wearing several layers provides more warmth than wearing a single heavy garment. Most importantly layers help you to easily regulate body temperature by adding or removing layers throughout the day. Layers should include:

- **1 light-weight, wicking layer** such as a polypropylene, wool, or silk long underwear top
- **1 mid-weight shirt** made of polypropylene fleece or wool

**HIKING BOOTS OR SHOES:** It is **ESSENTIAL** that you **break in your boots** by walking/ hiking/ doing everything you can in your boots before the trip. The very best boot is one that fits you comfortably. This will reduce the likelihood of painful blisters and make your feet happy. Hiking boots or shoes should be suitable for backpacking on trail and off trail with a pack. We suggest medium weight boots with good ankle support. Leather boots or leather/ gore tex combo boots with vibram soles work well. We recommended that you waterproof your boots before the trip.

**CAMP SHOES:** These can be sandals, tennis shoes or Crocs, something to give your feet a chance to breathe and dry out in camp. They should be as lightweight as possible.

**SOCKS:**

- 2-3 pairs of heavy wool or synthetic hiking socks
- 1 pair of comfy cotton socks for sleeping

**SHIRTS:**

- A comfy long sleeved t-shirt for sleeping and hanging out at camp
- A light-weight, long sleeve, loose fitting shirt for sun and mosquito protection. A men's style button down shirt works well. This can be cotton, nylon, polyester or other type of fabric.

**LOWER BODY LAYERS:**

- 1 pair of polypropylene or silk long underwear pants
- 1 pair of warm pants (pile, fleece, or wool).

**UNDERWEAR:**

- 2-3 pairs of underwear. Light cotton is best.
- 1 polypropylene jog bra is nice for hiking and swimming.

*\*\*Cotton and down are both useless insulators when wet. Cotton is heavy compared to synthetics, especially when wet and it doesn't pack well.*

**GLOVES OR MITTENS:** Light-weight gloves or mittens. No cotton fibers please.

**WARM HAT:** Fleece or wool for evenings and cold weather.

**SUN HAT:** This is essential in the Sierra! Baseball hats work well.

**SUNGLASSES:** Good, dark glasses with good UV protection are essential, the Sierra sun is strong! Attach them to a *Croakie* or string that you can hang around your neck.

**SUNSCREEN: SPF 20** or higher. Please bring a small container. We can share sunscreen to lighten our load and save space in bear canisters. **LIP BALM** with sunscreen is essential.

**2 WATERBOTTLES:** Wide-mouth quart-size plastic bottles such as Nalgene brand. Old Gatorade bottles are sturdy enough and work well. Many people prefer to use hydration bladders. If you choose to bring one make sure it doesn't leak and can carry at least 2 quarts/ liters. If you choose to bring a bladder please bring **one** Nalgene type water bottle as a backup in case it develops a leak.

**1 BANDANA and 1 SARONG:** For sun protection, first aid, towel, etc.

**HEADLAMP:** Headlamps make life much easier and more enjoyable in the backcountry.

**EATING UTENSILS:**

- 1 spoon
- 1 strong and light plastic bowl
- 1 mug with optional lid

Make sure your container is large enough to hold a good serving of a meal! Plates are not necessary or efficient in the backcountry.

**JOURNAL AND WRITING UTENSIL:**

Make sure to protect it in a plastic Ziploc bag. Consider size and weight of your writing system, as we will be carrying all our gear in backpacks.

**TOOTHBRUSH AND TOOTHPASTE:** Not everyone will need to bring their tube of toothpaste. We can share in cook-groups. (Think small...a travel size tube works well for holding enough toothpaste for the entire course.) Your toiletry bag can't be any bigger than what is allowable on an airplane (small ziplock). The smaller the better as these will all have to fit into our bear canisters.

**PERSONAL FIRST AID:** We will be carrying comprehensive first aid kits, however be sure to have any personal medications you need. (i.e. inhalers, epi pens, etc) Be sure to indicate any ailments or medications on your registration form.

**TAMPONS/PADS:** Even if you just menstruated, bring enough supplies to last for a full period. Your period may change and become heavier, lighter, or come unexpectedly. You may also want to bring a few panty liners, a small, travel sized pack of moist wipes, and a plastic bags for disposal of used tampons, wrappers, and wipes. We carry all of our garbage out of the field.

**FOUR 1-GALLON SIZE ZIPLOCK BAGS:** For protecting your clothes, journal and books in the field.

**TWO GARBAGE BAGS:** These are useful for lining the inside of your backpack and for lining your sleeping bag to keep everything dry during afternoon thunderstorms.

**MOSQUITO HEADNET AND BUG REPELLENT (Essential for June-August programs):**

We consider bug repellent as clothes and a head net. Traditional bug sprays and lotions contain poisons and toxins that pollute our water ways and are not healthy for human and animal consumption. There are some toxic free bug repellent that work with varying success. Covering oneself in a long sleeve shirt, impermeable raingear, and head net is a less environmentally harmful alternative.

*\*PLEASE DON'T BRING items with strong smells like perfumes and deodorants. It's disruptive during meditation and attracts bugs and bears. Keep in mind that any items with a smell will need to be stored in bear-proof containers. We have limited space for this, **each person can have one quart sized ziplock for toiletries at most (think airline regulations).** You won't be using cosmetics —leave them at home. Also, we will not be using cell phones, iPods, radios, etc. in the field.*

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## Optional Items

**TREKKING POLES:** We STRONGLY RECOMMEND that you bring and use trekking poles. They greatly reduce the stress on your knees when carrying a pack. A less expensive substitute for trekking poles is old ski poles. Your ski poles should allow your arms to bend to form an “L” at your elbow or they should allow your hands to fall slightly below your elbow height

**GLASSES/CONTACT LENSES, SPARE SET:** If you wear glasses or contact, we STRONGLY RECOMMEND bringing a spare set on the course.

**BATHING SUIT:** for dipping in rivers and lakes

**EAR PLUGS:** Good for sleeping in a group

**BABY WIPES:** A few pre-moistened tissues are a wonderful way to keep yourself clean throughout the trip. Please don't bring more than one per day as these will need to fit inside the bear canisters overnight.

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Happy packing! If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact us.

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