



Balanced Rock

look inward, explore outward.

Backcountry Packing and Equipment List

The first key to success of any trip is good preparation. We have compiled a thorough list of gear you will need for your trip. Please read this list carefully. Adequate equipment is crucial for your safety and comfort in the wilderness. This list has been generated from years of experience and numerous resources. Please contact us with questions about gear.

Good equipment does not necessarily mean the most expensive gear. Surplus and second hand stores can be a great source for used clothing, boots, gear, etc. In most cities and big towns you can find second hand sports stores like [Play it Again Sports](#). REI is also a good source for gear, as are most outdoor gear stores. REI and other stores also **rent** equipment if you would rather do that than invest in expensive items such as a backpack. 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.

Gear stores like REI are also a 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](tel:2093799453) or email us at arin@balancedrock.org.

Please arrive in Yosemite with all the gear you need and make sure it is broken in, waterproofed, 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 you how to properly pack a backpack to make sure that we are prepared for the back-country.

What Balanced Rock Provides (All Group Gear):

SHELTERS- if you want to bring your own tent, talk with us.

STOVES

WATER FILTERS

POTS/PANS/COOKING UTENSILS

ALL FOOD

FIRST AID KITS

BEAR-PROOF CANISTERS

DROMEDARIES (water bags)

TARPS

What You Should Bring:

PACK: A sturdy, comfortable backpack with a secure waist belt and good sternum strap, big enough to hold food and supplies for a 5 day trip. Suggested carrying capacity: **4500-5000 cubic inches**. 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 5 days *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 – 60 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 & STUFF SACK/ 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. If you bring a down bag, it must stay dry in order to keep you warm! Bring a trash compactor bag or sturdy garbage bag to line your sleeping bag compression sack and keep it dry in your backpack. Also, be sure to bring a stuff sack or compression stuff sack to pack your sleeping bag in.

SLEEPING PAD: Ensolite or other closed-cell material to insulate you from the ground and help you sleep warm and comfortably.

Thermarest brand pads are nice, though expensive. They are also heavier than Ridgerests, though very comfortable. If you choose a Thermarest you may want a thick plastic or Tyvek ground cloth to protect it from punctures on rocks. Also, bring a Thermarest repair kit.

Ridgerests are far lighter than Thermarests and are nice to use as a back-country yoga mat. They are not as cushioning as Thermarests. One suggestion is to bring one full length *Ridgerest* and one ¾ length one for comfort.

Folding lightweight camp chairs like the Crazy Creek are nice but heavy—it's up to you if you want to carry it. You can use your Crazy Creek chair as extra padding on top of your Ridgerest when sleeping.

GROUND CLOTH/PLASTIC TARP: A lightweight tarp or sheet of plastic big enough to act as a barrier between your sleeping bag/pad and the ground.

HIKING BOOTS: Suitable for backpacking on trail and off trail with a pack. Medium weight boots with good ankle support. Leather boots or leather/ gore tex combo boots with vibram soles work well. 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. We recommended that you waterproof your boots with sno seal or another brand of waterproofing paste before the trip.

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

SOCKS:

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

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. Buy some sealer and seal the seams of your raingear.

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
 - 1 Heavy-wieght shirt or jacket** made of polypropylene fleece or wool
- **Cotton and down are both useless insulators when wet. Cotton is heavy compared to synthetics, especially when wet and it doesn't pack well.

SHIRTS:

- A cotton t-shirt for sleeping and hanging out at camp
- A tank top for really hot days
- 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: See above regarding layering.

- 1 pair of polypropylene or silk long underwear pants
- 1 pair of warm pants (pile, fleece, or wool). Surplus stores and Salvation Army are good places to look for pants, but beware of very heavy ones. You'll be carrying them.

SHORTS:

- One pair of quick dry fabric shorts is ideal so that they can double as swim wear. Nylon athletic shorts work well.

UNDERWEAR: (not including the polypropylene above)
2-3 pairs of underwear. Light cotton is best.
1 polypropylene jog bra is nice for hiking and swimming.

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

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

SUN HAT: Baseball hats work well, but they don't protect your ears from the sun. A full brimmed hat is great.

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 among cook groups 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. The wide mouths make water filtration easier. Many people prefer to use *Camelback* hydration systems. These are nice. Make sure they don't leak and can carry at least 2 quarts. If you choose to bring a Camelback please bring **one** Nalgene type water bottle as a backup for your Camelback in case it develops a leak.

2 BANDANAS: For sun protection, first aid, towel, etc.

SMALL FLASHLIGHT OR HEADLAMP: Headlamps make life much easier and more enjoyable in the backcountry. Headlamps with LED (light-emitting devices) use a great deal less battery energy than traditional flashlights.

EATING UTENSILS:

- 1 spoon
- 1 strong 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.)

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.

4 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.

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

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. Also keep in mind that any items with a smell will need to be stored in bear-proof containers. We have limited space for this. Plan ahead. You will not be using cosmetics—leave them home. Also, we will not be using cell phones, Walkmans, iPods, radios, etc. in the field.

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*

PACK COVER: A large waterproof cover for your backpack is useful. You can buy or make one. Plastic bags don't work well on the outside of the bag, but they are nice to line the inside of your pack *If you choose not to take one, make sure at least your sleeping bag, is packed with a plastic bag for waterproof protection!*

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

HIKING SKIRT/SARONG: For fun and fashion. You will be amazed at the uses of a sarong in the backcountry!

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. These can also really help with hygiene and sanitation during our days away from showers.

BINOCULARS: For wildlife viewing. Bring them if you have them.

COMPASS: Must read within 2 degrees. We will have some extras.

CAMERA: Film and extra batteries. Disposable cameras also work very well.

ART SUPPLIES: A small watercolor set, colored pencils, etc. Keep it small.

GAITERS: For keeping out dust.

SMALL PILLOW

SMALL POCKET KNIFE