

Hiking Gear

Hiking without gear is like stepping up to the plate without a bat. Or hitting the links without clubs. When you take to the trails without hiking gear, you're simply tagging along while everyone is having all the fun.

You really can't hike properly without the right gear. Hiking gear combines all of the essentials you'll need to have a successful trek in the woods, and everything you'll need to have fun with all the other kids.

BootsFirst of all, if the trail isn't all natural, it's just not hiking in the real sense. You need rocks and roots to fully experience a walk on the wild side. And, you also need a good pair of sturdy boots to help you tackle the rough terrain. To determine whether a pair of boots is really sturdy, start at the bottom. Check the feel of the soles. Remember that the boots you choose must protect your feet from sharp rocks and debris, and they need to provide enough ankle support to prevent sprains. Suffering a twisted or sprained ankle is a definite possibility if you trip over a root or other obstacle along the trail. Hiking gear should be able to withstand not only the dangers of the trail, but the dirt as well. If you don't want to subject your white tennis shoe to the dirt, dust and mud of the great outdoors, you'd best leave them at home and opt for a pair of boots that can stand up to whatever nature has to dish out.

ClothingWhat you wear on the trail has nothing to do with fashion. It's all about comfort and protection. You need to know the climate, and potential temperature changes, before you set off on your hike. Most hikers like to wear layers while on the trail. A t-shirt, sweater and lightweight jacket or vest will offer as much -- or as little -- warmth and protection as you require. When the sun is high and temperatures are warm, you can stuff the jacket into your pack and tie the sweater around your waist, and then put them back on when the sun starts to set. The inner layer of your clothing should be made of wicking fabric or another light material that will keep the sweat off of your body. The middle layer is for insulation. Lightweight polar fleece or high-tech knit sweaters are great options. Finally, cover up with a waterproof and windproof jacket. Wear sturdy pants to protect your legs from cuts and scratches. Bring at least one extra pair of socks, so that you change into a dry pair to prevent blisters.

PackA good pack is more than a place to carry your essential hiking gear. It is part of your essential hiking gear. There are things you'll need to bring on your hike, like extra clothing, food and water, and you'll need to have ample room to carry them. Don't make the mistake of grabbing just any backpack from the department store shelves. Choose a proper hiking pack that has wide, padded straps, and a waist belt to help with weight distribution. An improper pack can take its toll on your back, and ruin a great hike.

Insect RepellentEven if you're planning a solitary backwoods stroll, you won't be alone. Bugs are a necessary evil that hikers must deal with. Protect yourself from the annoyance, discomfort and potential danger of bug bites by using a good quality insect repellent. Bring the bottle along so you can 'freshen up' along the way.

The right hiking gear can make or break your time on the trail. Choose the right gear and you'll have a great time in the great outdoors.