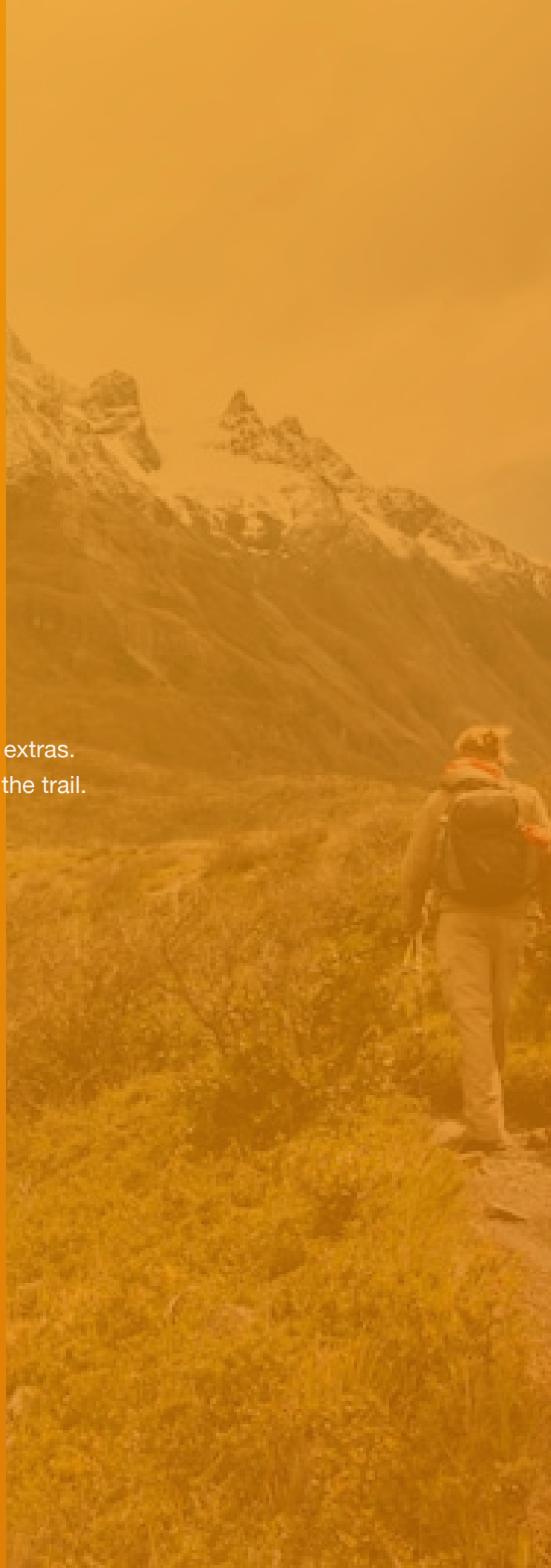


# Day Hike Packing List 2026

The 10 Essentials plus clothing, food, and seasonal extras.  
Everything you need for a safe, comfortable day on the trail.



## 1. The 10 Essentials

Carry these on EVERY hike — non-negotiable

- ESSENTIAL** **Navigation** Paper map + compass + phone with offline maps (AllTrails, Gaia GPS)
- ESSENTIAL** **Sun protection** SPF 50+ sunscreen, UV sunglasses, sun hat or cap
- ESSENTIAL** **Insulation** Extra layer even on warm days — temps drop fast at elevation
- ESSENTIAL** **Illumination** Headlamp 200+ lumens with fresh batteries — hikes run long
- ESSENTIAL** **First aid kit** Blister care, pain relief (ibuprofen), medical tape, antiseptic wipes
- ESSENTIAL** **Fire starter** Mini Bic lighter + waterproof matches in a zip bag
- ESSENTIAL** **Repair tools** Knife or multi-tool, duct tape wrap, zip ties
- ESSENTIAL** **Extra nutrition** 500+ calories beyond planned meals — bars, nuts, dried fruit
- ESSENTIAL** **Extra hydration** 2L minimum; bring a filter or purification tabs if near water sources
- ESSENTIAL** **Emergency shelter** Space blanket or ultralight bivy — weighs ounces, saves lives

### PRO TIP

Build redundancy into your essentials: two fire sources, two navigation tools, two water containers. If one fails, you're never without a critical item. The 10 Essentials exist because search-and-rescue teams found these are what people lacked when things went wrong.

## 2. Clothing

Layer smart, avoid cotton — dress for the summit, not the trailhead

### ESSENTIAL

- ESSENTIAL** **Moisture-wicking top** Merino or synthetic
- ESSENTIAL** **Hiking pants or shorts** Quick-dry, stretch
- ESSENTIAL** **Rain jacket** Always bring — even if 0% chance
- ESSENTIAL** **Hiking socks** Merino blend, cushioned
- ESSENTIAL** **Hiking boots or shoes** Broken in, good tread

### OPTIONAL

- Warm mid-layer** Fleece or light puffy
- Hat** Sun hat or beanie by season
- Spare socks** Dry feet = happy feet

### 3. Food & Water

Fuel your hike — eat before you're hungry, drink before you're thirsty

- ESSENTIAL Water (2L minimum)** Nalgene, hydration bladder, or SmartWater bottles
- ESSENTIAL Lunch / main meal** Sandwich, wrap, or other calorie-dense option
- ESSENTIAL Trail snacks** Bars, trail mix, jerky, fruit — eat every 60-90 min
- Electrolyte tabs or powder** Prevents cramping on hot or long hikes
- Water filter or purification tabs** If route passes streams or lakes

### 4. Gear & Accessories

The extras that make the difference between a good hike and a great one

- ESSENTIAL Daypack (20-30L)** Hip belt for comfort
- ESSENTIAL ID + emergency cash** In a zip bag, always
- Trekking poles** 25% less knee strain downhill
- ESSENTIAL Trash bag** Pack it in, pack it out
- ESSENTIAL Whistle** 3 blasts = distress signal
- Camera** Or use phone — capture the views
- ESSENTIAL Phone + portable charger** 10,000mAh bank + cable
- Insect repellent** DEET or Picaridin 30%+

#### PRO TIP

Put your phone in airplane mode on the trail. It saves battery (up to 3x longer), eliminates distractions, and you'll still have GPS and offline maps working perfectly. Toggle airplane mode off only when you need to send a message.

### 5. Seasonal Additions

Adjust your pack by season — conditions change, your gear should too

Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Rain pants or gaiters	Extra water (+1L)	Warm mid-layer (fleece)	Insulated jacket (down/synthetic)
Waterproof pack cover	Cooling towel / bandana	Glove liners	Insulated gloves + warm hat
Bug spray (tick season)	Wide-brim sun hat	Headlamp (early dark)	Microspikes or traction devices
Light gloves for mornings	Lip balm with SPF	Bright-colored vest	Hand & toe warmers

## 6. Target Pack Weight

Lighter pack = more miles, less fatigue, more fun

SHORT HIKE (1-3 hrs)

**8-12**

lbs

MODERATE (3-6 hrs)

**12-18**

lbs

LONG HIKE (6+ hrs)

**15-22**

lbs

## 7. Pre-Hike Safety Checklist

Run through this list before you leave the house — every time

- Check the weather forecast** Hourly forecast for summit elevation, not just the trailhead
- Tell someone your plan** Trail name, expected return time, car location
- Check trail conditions** Recent reports on AllTrails, ranger stations, or social media
- Charge all devices** Phone, headlamp, battery bank — 100% before you go
- Inspect gear** Rain jacket zips, boot soles, pack buckles — quick 2-min check
- Know your bail-out options** Shorter loop or turnaround point if weather or energy changes
- Check your feet** Trim toenails, apply anti-blister balm to hot spots before you start

## 8. Hiking with Kids — Extra Items

Keep it fun, safe, and flexible — shorter trails, bigger snack bags

- Extra snacks (double)** Kids graze constantly — pack variety
- Extra water** Kids forget to drink — remind every 20 min
- Wet wipes & hand sanitizer** Sticky hands, muddy faces — essential
- Change of clothes in car** Dry clothes for the ride home
- Nature activity or game** Scavenger hunt, magnifying glass, ID cards
- Comfort item** Small toy or stuffy for the inevitable meltdown

### Gear recommendations for every item

Trail-tested reviews, buying guides, and comparison tables — all independently tested.

[peakgarguide.com](https://peakgarguide.com)