

Suggested Equipment for Pathfinders

Below is a list of suggested equipment that Pathfinders will need throughout their Pathfinding experience. The information is only as a guide for you when you are considering the equipment that is needed. Some equipment can be very expensive but you can usually find a cheaper alternative.

This would be the basic requirements for normal camping when it comes to hiking there is some more specialized equipment required.

SLEEPING GEAR

Sleeping Bag -

When it comes to keeping warm while sleeping you have 2 basic choices.

Synthetic: As well as offering excellent insulation, synthetic fill is moisture resistant, low allergy and retains its warmth when wet. Easy to wash and dry.

Synthetic fills vary greatly in durability, bulk and weight. For a given insulation rating, even superior brand-name synthetics are heavier and bulkier than down. On the other hand, a synthetic bag is less expensive than a down bag of the same insulating value. Synthetics also dry faster making them less vulnerable to mildew and other moisture damage.

Down: Down is an excellent insulator, nothing beats its warmth to weight ratio, compressibility, or luxurious feel. The quality of a down filling (fill power), its ability to fluff up and trap air, is called its loft. Loft is dependent on the type of down (goose or duck) and the percentage of feathers (e.g. 80/20, 90/10%). Down mix bags contain a percentage of small feathers, but the fewer the feathers the better the down. The best down in general use has 550 loft (i.e. one ounce of down will loft to 550 cubic inches), but some top end bags will contain down with 660+ loft. The higher the fill power and down ratio, the greater the insulation efficiency.

Down is ideal for those who travel light or want to minimise pack space. It is expensive, but with proper care will last longer than a synthetic. Down's major drawback is that it loses most of its insulating power while it is wet and takes a long time to dry (a Scotchguard treatment improves its resistance to moisture and helps wet down to dry more quickly). Down is also a problem for some allergy sufferers.

When you purchase a sleeping bag keep in mind its size when rolled up and its weight. Try to buy the smallest, lightest, warmest bag in your budget.

Try to get one under 2kg under 1.5kg would be really good

Suggested min temp would be 0° preferable would be -5° or even better a -10°.

Some brands to consider are:

- Roman
- Black Wolf
- Coleman
- Outer Limits

Sleeping Bag Liner –

Cotton sleeping bag liner will help keep the sleeping bag clean and will also increase warmth. Silk liners are even better, increasing warmth quite a bit.

Mattress-

Roll up foam type are fine, but please get a cover for them so they don't break apart and leave litter. Self inflating mattresses are also good and are now reasonably priced. Please don't get a single bed sized airbed as these take up too much space in the tent and limit the space to others.

CLOTHING

Layering is a simple and well-proven principle of dressing for the outdoors. Use a number of light layers of clothing rather than a few layers of thick material. Not only does this maximise the insulating ability of your clothes by trapping air between the layers as well as within the fabric, but it also allows great versatility. As your temperature rises and falls due to changes in conditions and activity, the layers can be added or taken off. In windy or wet conditions a waterproof jacket and over pants are the essential outer layer - often called shell wear.

1. Inner layers

Inner layer clothing is the most critical as it is worn right next to your skin. Its job is to keep you comfortable by wicking the sweat from your skin and disperse it to the next layer where it can evaporate.

Why? Water is a very good heat conductor. A wet garment against your skin can draw heat away from your body twenty-five times faster than a dry one. Even in conditions above freezing, this rapid heat loss can cause a dangerous drop in your body's core temperature, leading to hypothermia.

Synthetics such as polypropylene and polyesters now dominate as the materials of choice for this layer. Synthetics are light, strong and absorb very little water.

Inner layers are available in light, medium and heavy weights to meet the demands of different activities. Light-weight for mild conditions or high aerobic activity where sweat dispersal is paramount. For more "stop and go" activities, mid-weight underwear provides greater insulation. Heavy-weight underwear is best in cold conditions where you are relatively inactive. Finally, the inner layer should fit snugly but not be restricting.

2. Mid layers

Mid layer clothing consists of the items you use every day such as shorts, T-shirts, lightweight pants and long-sleeve shirts. The primary function of mid-layer clothing is to provide basic insulation and protection in warm conditions. Mid layer items are often worn alone on short trips in good weather conditions. The pieces you choose should be comfortable, lightweight and built to last.

3. Insulation layers

Insulation layer clothing is designed specifically to provide additional warmth. It's typically worn whenever mid layer and/or inner layer pieces are not warm enough for the current conditions. The insulation layers you use should be warm, lightweight and as non-bulky as possible. They should also breathe well to let sweat and body heat escape.

To slow heat loss, this layer must be capable of retaining the warmth that is generated by your body. Synthetics and wool are well suited for this purpose because the structure of the fibres creates small air spaces that trap molecules of warm air. Additional features such as pit zippers and full length front zippers allow venting. As with the inner-layer, this layer should be snug but not constricting.

As far as moisture management goes, synthetics have the upper hand because they absorb little water, allowing faster evaporation. Wool absorbs up to thirty percent of its own weight in water, leaving it heavy and difficult to dry. Synthetic fleece/pile and down garments (pants, jackets, pullovers and vests), as well as being lightweight, are very durable and require less care than wool.

4. Outer layers

The primary job of the outer layer clothing (both jacket and pants) is to protect you from the wind, rain and snow. But it needs to be somewhat breathable as well, to let sweat and body heat escape. Bushwalkers should always carry protective outer layers.

For dry conditions, a breathable (uncoated) wind shell may be all you need. If you expect conditions to be more severe, a waterproof rainwear will be adequate. A shell made of a breathable/waterproof fabric, such as Gore-Tex, will give you protection from wind and rain, as well as allowing water vapour to escape. However can be quit expensive.

Head insulation / Hats

It's estimated that up to fifty percent of a person's total heat loss occurs through the head. Consequently, your head acts like a radiator, letting heat escape. This puts a strain on the rest of your system because your body must now use additional energy to reheat the blood as it circulates.

A good synthetic (e.g. fleece, polypropylene, polyester) or wool hat will not only slow heat loss through your head, it will also make your hands and feet feel warmer because of the improved circulation. In extremely cold conditions, nothing protects your face or keeps in heat like a full-face balaclava or a scarf.

For summer months a wide brimmed hat is preferable to a peak hat for protection from the sun.

Hand and feet Insulation

In its effort to keep your head and your body's vital organs warm in cold conditions, the heart reduces blood flow to the extremities (hands and feet). These areas do not generate much heat on their own, so some insulation and protection from the elements is needed. Mittens are warmer than an equivalent pair of gloves because the whole hand contributes to the warming process, however mitts inhibit dexterity. Gloves are better for activities that require greater freedom of movement, such as tying knots, but because each finger must warm up its own little compartment, it makes them less efficient at keeping your hands warm.

Keeping your feet warm and dry is absolutely imperative on long bushwalking trips. Your choice of socks can make or break a trip.

Again synthetic/wool blend or wool is the preferred material and provides the best balance of moisture management, warmth and cushioning. The addition of a liner sock will add warmth and speed up moisture transport from the feet to the outer layer. You can sometimes avoid liner socks by purchasing thicker single socks made from a wool/acrylic/stretch nylon/polyester blend.

Socks should fit snugly. If they're too tight, circulation can be restricted and your feet will get cold. Conversely, a loose sock can slip or move around; creating pressure spots that can lead to blisters.

Shoes / Boots –

Sturdy runners or hiking boots are good. Sandals or thongs are fine for around the campsite or next to a river etc, but shoes or boots are needed for any walking.

Torches

Head torches are cheap and ideal, as they allow your hands to be free for other things. It is also good to have a hand torch these are also cheap. Both types of torches are available with LED's, these are very bright and also make efficient use of batteries.

Camp Cooking

Camp stoves come in many different types; probably the most efficient and safest would be the gas cartridge type. They are light weight and ideal for base camping as well as hiking. The flame is also controllable, which makes the ideal for quick boiling or slow simmering.

All of this equipment can be found at the camping stores in Canberra, most of them tend to have a sale or 2 during the year. There is also often a camping sale at EPIC during the year.

- Camping World
- Kathmandu
- Snowgum
- Jurkiwicz
- The Great Outdoors
- eBay is also a great source for camping gear

If you would like any help in regards to what camping gear to purchase please feel free to contact either Graeme McDean or myself and we will be happy to help in any way we can.

Kind Regards

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