



Wilderness Trekking 2 Long Distance Backpacking (WT2-LDB) Course Information & Welcome Packet

Pre-Course Details

Date: August 23rd - Sept 5th, 2009

Locale: Bozeman, Montana

Instructors: Andrew Skurka, Glen Van Peski and Sam Haraldson (subject to change)

Welcome to Backpacking Light's Wilderness Trekking School.

Get ready for a wilderness experience that will test your physical abilities and challenge your conceptions about what it means to take a walk in the wild. Here amidst the picturesque Northern Rocky Mountains, with the potential classroom of the Absaroka, Beartooth and Gallatin Mountain Ranges, you will be traveling in Montana's most amazing country.

While you immerse yourself in the laid-back Montanan style of living, you will receive hands-on guidance from industry-leading instructors regarding the absolute latest in ultralight backpacking tools, techniques and practices. After a full-day of classroom instruction, you will take what you have learned and put it to the test in one of nature's most beautiful outdoor learning facilities – the Rocky Mountains - home of the grizzly bear.

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this **14-day LONG format** course is to offer high quality advance education in the specific skills of ultra-light backpacking for LONG-DISTANCE multi-day travel in a three-season Wilderness environment.

WS2-LDP provides comprehensive instruction in the art of "ultralight" and "super-ultralight" backpacking and camping techniques, with particular attention paid to hiking and camping efficiency and walking longer distances.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW

There is a freedom and exhilaration being in wilderness without the burden of a heavy backpack.

The focus will be on understanding and practicing the basics, all in the Northern Rockies in summer. We will be teaching skills at a high level, but the pace and hiking are not expected to be overtly challenging. The tempo will depend on what students need to successfully master these new skills and techniques. We will carrying minimal gear, but enough to be safe, warm and comfortable. The challenges will be in learning - and using - new concepts for mountain travel with your teammates. By the end of fourteen days, you should be set up well with a good foundation of lightweight skills that will serve you well in your future outings.

WT2-LDB is a MORE DIFFICULT course.

- * Good fitness, skills, and previous experience backpacking are highly REQUIRED.
 - * You should arrive in adequate physical condition such that you can carry a backpack weighing up to 30 pounds for up to 20 miles per day over 14 days on varying terrain.
 - * You are required to have a clean bill of health for moderate exercise in remote areas. (fill out form on the first day)
 - * The minimum age for participation is 18 years. Minors are welcome if they are accompanied by a parent or guardian.
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. DETAILS

Course Instructors: Highly motivated and experienced folks with a mastery of lightweight expedition skills.

When: Class begins on **Sunday, August 23rd** (2009) at **7:00 AM**. Course will end on **Saturday Sept 5th at approx. 5:00 PM**

Where: The classroom portion of the course will be held at the Lions Ridge wilderness education retreat center near Bozeman, MT. The backpacking portion of the course will be a 6-day/5-night backcountry trek through the beautiful Absaroka, Beartooth or Gallatin Mountain Ranges.

What: Two full days of classroom instruction and a 12-day/11-night backcountry trek focusing on introductory to advanced ultralight traveling and camping skills.

Course Size, Max: 8 students, 2 instructors.

Banned Items: No illegal substances, firearms, GPS units, electronic compasses, altimeters, pedometers, communications devices (radio, cellular, or satellite), watches or other timekeeping devices, electronic gaming devices, or excessively large knives.

4. ARRIVING AT COURSE LOCATION

Flying: If you are flying into the Bozeman airport (BZN) you should plan to arrive the the DAY BEFORE the course begins. This means arriving sometime on **Saturday Aug 22nd**. This will require an overnight stay at a local hotel (see hotel suggestions below). Because of the potential for travel delays and lost luggage, we suggest that using carry-on luggage only, your gear is light, right? (due to airport restrictions this means that you will not be able to bring your favorite knife).

A one-time shuttle will be provided from the Bozeman airport (and hotel in town) to our classroom at 7:00 AM on **Sunday, August 23rd**. After the course, a return shuttle back to Bozeman will leave at approx. 5:00 PM on **Saturday Sept 5th**, so please schedule your return flights for after about 8:00 PM on **Saturday Sept 5th**, or for the following morning. Hotel costs not included for the night of **Saturday Sept 5th**, but we'll be happy to drop you off at one in Bozeman after the course.

Free Shuttle Bus:

From Bozeman to the retreat center classroom, 7:00 AM on **Sunday, August 23rd**

From the retreat center classroom to Bozeman, approx. 5:00 PM on **Saturday Sept 5th**

Driving: Long term parking is available at the Bozeman Airport for approx. \$25 per week. If you plan on parking your car at the airport, please arrive no later than 6:30 AM on **Sunday, August 23rd** in order to be ready for the one-time, BPL-provided shuttle to our classroom at 7:00 AM. This same shuttle will stop at any hotels that may be housing students. Also, students have made plans to car pool ahead of time, and we can share emails for this purpose.

Parking: Arrangements can be made for parking at the Lions Ridge retreat center. Please contact us well ahead of your course, because parking is *very* limited. Also, *if there is space available* at the retreat center, it might be possible to spend **Saturday** night (**Aug 22nd**) in their dorm rooms (just simple bunk beds) for a fee of \$20 per person.

Directions and questions, please email: school@backpackinglight.com

5. MEALS and FOOD

Base-camp Meals: All meals while at Lions Ridge will be provided for you. See the schedule below. Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate kosher and vegan diets. Vegetarian options can be made available upon advanced request. Please plan on eating breakfast BEFORE the shuttle to Lions Ridge. There is a convenient sit-down restaurant at the Bozeman airport.

Trekking Meals: Breakfast and dinner rations during the trekking portion of the course will be provided.

Trail Food: You will be required to bring your own personal TRAIL foods (lunch, snacks, goodies, etc) that will be consumed throughout the day on the trail. You are also responsible for your own drink mixes and hot drinks for mornings and evenings. See the GEAR LIST below for exact amounts, listed by calorie and weight. Also, there are excellent bulk and health food resources here in Bozeman, like The Bozeman Co-Op, link: <http://www.bozo.coop/>

6. SCHEDULE

DAY 1: Sunday AUG 23rd

7:00 AM - Bus Pick-up in Bozeman (airport or hotel)

Approx: 7:30 AM - Students arrive at Lions Ridge

(morning snacks and coffee provided)

Classroom Schedule

8:30 AM - Classes begin

- introductions
- philosophy of light weight
- intro to gear
- into to nutrition

NOON - Lunch

6:00 PM - Dinner

- weighing gear and creating data sheet

DAY 2: Monday AUG 24th

6:30 AM - Wake

7:00 AM - Breakfast

8:00 AM - Final packing

9:00 AM - Leave for the mountains!

- begin hiking in bear country
- first dinner using lightweight gear
- tarp pitching
- sleeping outside

DAYS 2 thru 14: Mountain Trekking (*Yippeee!*)

DAY 14: Saturday Sept 5th

Wake up in the mountains, have a final breakfast outside, and hike to the bus pick-up point.

- Arrive back at Lions Ridge base camp. Showers. Final debrief.

5:00 PM - Shuttle back to Bozeman airport or local hotel in Bozeman (if you are staying overnight)

9:00 PM - Earliest time to book a return flight home

7. COURSE GOALS

By the end of WT2, students will be familiar with:

1. Essential philosophy behind ultralight backpacking, in theory and in practice.
2. Basic components of ultralight backpacking gear including footwear, packs, shelters, sleeping systems, cooking systems, and water purification systems.
3. Central nutritional requirements and preferences of ultralight backpackers.
4. Fundamental safety and risk management strategies within the context of ultralight backpacking.
5. Established methods for effectively reducing pack weight.

on successful completion of the course, students will have the experience, tools and resources to be able to effectively:

1. Engage peers in conversation regarding the benefits and limitations of ultralight backpacking.
2. Safely engage in the *process* of reducing the weight of their own gear.
3. Make sound and cost-effective choices regarding the purchase of ultralight gear to meet your exacting needs.
4. Manage the *process* of assessing their personal nutritional needs for backpacking.
5. Take on the *process* of safely planning their own ultralight backpacking trips for durations and conditions similar to those experienced during the course.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Instructor's role: First, instructors are experienced outdoor technicians responsible for the overall safety of individuals and the group in a wilderness setting. Second, instructors serve as teachers and facilitators of this course's formal curriculum. Third, instructors work to help create an open, positive, fun and welcoming learning environment. Finally, instructors serve as an informal resource on UL techniques, backpacking, and other topics related to wilderness travel not necessarily covered in this course. Get to know them and don't be shy about asking questions!

Student's role: Clearly, the primary role of the student is to learn as much as possible within the time allotted. Closely related to this task is allowing other students the opportunity to learn as much as he or she wishes. Please refrain from actions that would disrupt the learning process. Similarly, of paramount importance to this course is your safety, the safety of others and preservation of the natural environment. As risks are inherent throughout the course, we require that students always maintain a high degree of *expedition behavior*. We define expedition mentality as *a heightened sense of awareness and respect for the inherent risks and challenges of wilderness travel, as well as proper behavior befitting of such awareness*.

Alcohol and Drug Policy: Any impaired judgment introduces unnecessary risks to all participants. It is also our belief that partaking in such activities also limits the amount of material that students will retain, thus undermining the credibility of this course. For these reasons, please leave the contents of your pipes, flasks and other associated paraphernalia behind.

Expedition Behavior: This course is intended to be a service for the betterment of the lives of human beings. Human beings come in all sorts of sizes, shapes, and shades, and with many types of abilities, preferences and limitations. Instructors will work tirelessly to help create and support a positive learning environment. Please do them and your classmates a favor by refraining from sexist, racist, vulgar, and/or belittling comments, actions, jokes and gestures. As a side note, if you find yourself saying hurtful things to others on a regular basis, the instructors will intervene for the benefit of the other students.

Group Dynamics: You will experience a very different dynamic on this course than your normal solo/partner wilderness trips. Typically, UL hikers are known for their preference to travel alone. Because we will be in grizzly country hiking as a group is a very real safety issue. That said, we will not be hiking solo. More importantly, this means that you will get to learn from your course mates.

One of the core benefits of this course will be the act of coming together as a group; and to support and help each individual accomplish what she or he has come to do, see and experience. While bringing different people together into a group automatically introduces a range of abilities, please remember that, rather than a limitation, diversity is a blessing. Before you start this course, we encourage you to think long and hard about what would constitute your own ideal expedition team member (i.e. self-sacrificing service to your fellow crew members, humility, and the willingness to communicate in a way that builds upon your crew's strengths) and then, show up to the course ready to be that person.

Likewise, your course instructors will be eager to learn from you as well. Since this is, at its core, a lightweight camping school, our intent is to help you progress towards a lighter pack. But, each student will certainly bring something to the course. Be prepared to share your own experiences with the rest of us. We look forward to meeting and learning from you.

9. PRE-COURSE COMMUNICATION

For courses **longer than 3-days**, we are making available to all participants an email format to ask specific questions of the instructors on your trip. This will be a discussion room open only to the participants on your particular course. Usually the exchange is focused on very detailed gear issues. There will be an on-line gear spreadsheet for each participant to fill out. The instructors can then review each item you plan to use, and we can make helpful suggestions. We encourage you to use this system to fine tune any gear issues prior to the official course start date.

Also, this forum creates a very real camaraderie in our team. We want to promote community and excitement prior to the trek. This can be a fun way to get to know your team mates ahead of time. We encourage you to get to know each other prior to the official course start date.

We will also be emailing you a two extra documents:

An Excel **SPREADSHEET** (titled: WTS Gear List.xls) and a 2-page **PRINTABLE GEAR-LIST** (titled: WTS Gear List.pdf)

Both the spreadsheet and printable check-list are detailed, and match the pre-course GEAR LIST exactly. We encourage you to use these documents to fine tune any gear issues prior to the official course start date.

Please send an email to school@backpackinglight.com with Pre-COURSE in the subject box, and we'll get back to you promptly. We are eager to get you all set up on our discussion forum.

10. THINGS TO DO IN BEAUTIFUL BOZEMAN

Our little Western town of offers a lot for anyone arriving early or staying a few extra days. It is a college town with a classic Western Main Street, and it has a strong outdoor feeling with an excellent bike path system. There is amazing access to the surrounding mountain ranges. Bike rentals are easy, and it's a nice way to get around our little town.

Snack food for the trip: Visit the Bozeman CO-OP for an excellent section of bulk foods and trail snacks. 406.587.4039 (link) <http://www.bozo.coop/>

Greater Valley Taxi: 406.587.6303

Hotel suggestions: Bozeman is a beautiful tourist destination in the summer, so there are lots of lodges, bed & breakfasts, hotels and motels. Here are a few we recommend:

Holiday Inn Bozeman - For Reservations Call: 800.366.5101 or 406.587.4561 / (link) <http://www.hibozeman.com/>

Note: The Holiday Inn has a free shuttle service from the airport to their front door.

C'Mon Inn - For Reservations Call: 866.782.2717 or 406.587.3555 / (link) <http://www.cmoninn.com/>

Bozeman Backpackers Hostel (If you are on a budget) - 406.586.4659 / (link)
<http://www.abaetern.com/hostel/>

Any questions? Check out the **Bozeman Visitors web site**. This is an excellent way to find things to do, bike rentals, local events and lodging with shuttle service from the airport: <http://www.bozemancvb.com/index.php>

11. MEDICAL AND LIABILITY RELEASE FORMS

All participants will be required to complete a medical history evaluation and sign a liability release form prior to participating in the course. These forms will be available upon your arrival. This is not a form that requires a doctor's signature or a physical.

Any questions? Please contact us at:
school@backpackinglight.com

12. GEAR LIST

A detailed inventory of every item you'll need for a three-season outing

There's no way around the fact that lightweight backpacking requires some very specific gear. The team at the Backpacking Light Wilderness Trekking School worked to create an exacting list for our students. You should have been in the room, the philosophical quandaries that welled up were relentless and fascinating. Just so y'know, we are very opinionated individuals, and trying to create a single document was a bit of a comedy show. But, we all agreed that this list needed to be fine-tuned, well thought out, and realistic to the needs of our students.

Course specific requirements

This is the core summer backpacking list that we are sending to all the Wilderness Trekking students when they enroll. It is the WS1-LWB list, our most basic course.

For the longer format courses, some items will be tailored specifically to the season and activity. This fine-tuning will be done with your instructors using the on-line discussion forum (and spreadsheet). See item number **9. PRE-COURSE COMMUNICATION** above.

There are a range of courses, each with different levels of difficulty and challenges. For the 7-day and 14-day TREKKING courses, the items in this list may need to be slightly changed, given certain course requirements. Basically, the more challenging the course, the less you take, and there is an increased dedication that each piece of gear be as light as possible. All these details will be attended to with the on-line discussion forum.

For our most demanding courses (like the WT3-EXT, Wilderness Trekking Expedition Traverse) this list will be pared down to the bare minimum to ensure safety.

Introduction and Scope

The focus on equipment is critical when preparing for a lightweight camping trip, and every single item is important. The following is an in depth series of explanations and suggestions for each individual piece of gear. A recommended maximum weight range for each piece of gear is noted in **bold type**. We are teaching advanced lightweight camping, and we don't want you carrying anything that's unnecessary. Examples are given as a suggestion for the type of gear you should consider, not necessarily the exact item you should buy.

If you have some camping experience, you should have some (or most) of the items listed. If you have an item that matches this description but falls out of this recommended weight range, please contact us, we are eager to help you make a wise decision. If you need to purchase a new piece of gear, remember that you'll have it for future personal outings. Do you have a simple postal scale? If not, most manufactures will have the weights on their websites. Please, do your own homework and enjoy the process.

There is a persistent falsehood that lightweight camping is ridiculously expensive. This is a myth. Most of the gear is a LOT less expensive, except for a few key items. That said, if you are on a budget, please don't be shy about saying so. We have no need to put pressure on anyone to purchase an expensive piece of gear when the budget-friendly alternative is just a few ounces more.

Gear list contents:

- a. **GENERAL CLOTHING NOTES**
- b. **HEAD**
- c. **UPPER BODY CLOTHING**
- d. **LOWER BODY CLOTHING**
- e. **FOOTWEAR**
- f. **SLEEP SYSTEM**
- g. **PACKING**
- h. **PERSONAL ITEMS**
- i. **SNACKS, TRAIL FOOD, and DRINKS**
- j. **EXTRA GEAR INFO**
- k. **SIMPLIFYING the EXPERIENCE**

Guide's Gear: Our Guide's Gear program is used to identify products that offer exceptional performance at very light weights. These are products that our guides and instructors use day-in, day-out, in a wide variety of conditions, and thus, offer good long term value for the value-conscious consumer. For more information about our Guide's Gear Program, see http://www.backpackinglight.com/cgi-bin/backpackinglight/gear_awards.html.

BPL store discount: Wilderness Trekking students get 10% off any regularly-priced item in the gear shop (not subscriptions or course enrollment, but gear) that's not already on sale. You can use a simple coupon code (when you enroll)

at step one of the on-line checkout procedure. We want to help you get outfitted for your course with the lightest gear possible.

- Coupon can be used multiple times per customer.
- Subscriptions, gift certificates, and donations cannot be present in the order in order to qualify for the coupon discount.
- Quantities limited to stock on hand.
- Don't try to use this special offer for your holiday shopping by getting titanium pens for everyone on your Christmas list. Bad karma will ensue.

Gear Weights: Each item described in this article has a MAX weight noted, listed in **BOLD text**; these numbers are the maximum weight we recommend. We strongly encourage you to bring the lightest gear that's appropriate to the demands of the outing. Some of the numbers are downright porky (like a 14-ounce rain parka) and fall into the realm of the "traditional" hiker. That said, you might already have a piece of gear that works, and it may be expensive to purchase something lighter... though now that I think of it, the DriDucks rain jacket is a mere twenty bucks, and you get a free pair of pants.

Obviously, if you take lighter gear, you'll reap the benefits of a light backpack. And if you take VERY light gear, you'll be more comfortable on the trail while hiking, but you'll be required to use extra skills to care for that lighter gear. Fortunately, teaching those skills is part of the school's job.

Gear provided by BPL: Some items are being provided to you during the field time by Backpackinglight. See the items below under, **J. EXTRA GEAR INFO.**

We've also sent you an Excel **SPREADSHEET** (titled: WTS Gear List.xls) and a 2-page **PRINTABLE GEAR-LIST** (titled: WTS Gear List.pdf)

Both the spreadsheet and printable check-list are detailed, and match this GEAR LIST exactly. We encourage you to use these documents to fine tune any gear issues prior to the official course start date.

a. GENERAL CLOTHING NOTES

Your trekking and camping clothes need to be quick to dry and absorb minimal water. There has been a revolution in outdoor clothing in the last decade, and there are remarkably durable and light options available. All knitted and woven garments must be synthetic (nylon, polyester, polypropylene, etc.) or merino wool - no cotton, rayon, or silk, which absorb water and dry slowly. Wet clothing will rob you of your precious body heat.

Fleece (or pile) is cheap and an excellent option for folks on a budget. Lightweight high-loft insulating garments made with either synthetic (Polarguard, Primaloft, etc.) fill or down are more expensive, but offer more warmth for the weight than fleece. Remember, the Northern Rockies can be cold and windy, even in the summer, so don't count on always hiking in a thin t-shirt. A synthetic or merino wool shirt with a neck zip, sewn-in hood, and thumb cuffs may be useful for your main trekking layer and provide the most versatility for temperature adjustment without having to stop and add/remove layers all the time.

Down clothing is wonderfully light, and it provides an amazing amount of insulation and compresses really tiny. Down is a good choice,, but it does require some care. It will lose its insulating properties if it gets wet, and care of the gear is essential.

b. HEAD

1. Warm Hat: Thin merino wool or fleece (50 or 100 weight) "watch-cap" or "balaclava" is recommended. Winter weight pile/fleece (e.g., 300 weight) is too thick, warm, and slow for summer courses. If you have a torso base layer with a sewn-in hood, an additional warm hat is useful, but optional. If your torso base layer does not have a hood, a balaclava design will keep you warmer than a simple watch-cap. Should be considered as part of the sleeping system. **MAX Weight: 2.5 oz.**

2. Sunglasses: These are required to protect your eyes in the high elevations of the Northern Rockies. Polarized lenses are ideal (gas station finds are just as good as the name brand stuff, and a good deal cheaper!), as they'll significantly enhance the quality of your views of the sunny terrain. **MAX Weight: 2.5 oz.**

3. Sun Hat: Required to provide shade during sunny segments of the hike. This may either be a baseball cap or a fully brimmed cap (e.g., Tilley). Synthetic only, for rain protection and quick drying. **MAX Weight: 2.5 oz.**

4. Mosquito Headnet: (*optional*) A non-wire loop mesh head covering; this doubles as an ultra-light stuff sack - and triples as coffee filter. **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Headnets: BPL UL Noseum Headnet (.66 oz), BPL Mosquito Headnet (.33 oz), or a cheapie from the "traditional" camping store.

c. UPPER BODY CLOTHING

5. Short Sleeve Base Layer: (*optional*) Short sleeves are useful for trekking in warm weather and can add comfort/warmth underneath your primary insulation layer while hiking and sleeping, especially if made with merino wool. A long sleeve shirt *may* be substituted, especially if cold temperatures are expected. **MAX Weight: 6 oz.**

6. Long Sleeve Base Layer: One lightweight, long-sleeve polyester or merino wool shirt. Zip necks and hoods are nice options. This should be considered as part of the sleeping system. **MAX Weight: 7 oz.**

7. Insulated Jacket: This will be your primary insulation layer. Worn on chilly mornings and in camp at night. Insulated jackets can be either down or synthetic; hoods are nice, but not required. Also, a lightweight fleece jacket is acceptable. This is also a key component to your sleep system. **MAX Weight: 14 oz.**

8. Wind Shirt: (*optional*) Highly recommended for warmth and breathability while hiking in cold and high elevations. These can be exceptionally light, but provide extra comfort in windy conditions. **MAX Weight: 5 oz.**

9. Rain Jacket: A lightweight, waterproof-breathable shell jacket with a hood. Pullover style is acceptable. Dri-Ducks and Frogg-Toggs jackets are extremely lightweight, but are NOT very durable and will require a little extra care. **MAX Weight: 14 oz.**

10. Extra Layer: (*optional*) One extra shirt if you think it's necessary. This might be best used by cold sleepers who need more oomph at night. **MAX Weight: 7 oz.**
EXAMPLES: Shirts: BPL Beartooth Merino Hoody (8 oz), Patagonia Capilene 1 (4.5 oz), BPL Merino UL Shirt (4 oz). Insulated Jackets: Montbell Thermawrap (12 oz), BPL Cocoon 60 Parka (11 oz). Wind Shirts: BPL Thorofare Shirt (4 oz), GoLite Wisp Wind Shirt (3 oz), Mountain Hardwear Stimulus (6 oz). Rain Jackets: Outdoor Research Zealot (7.7 oz), GoLite Virga (8 oz), Patagonia Specter (6.5 oz), Mountain Hardwear Epic (13 oz) DriDucks (6 oz).

11. Gloves: (*optional*) Thin polypropylene or wool glove liners provide a little extra warmth, and they are especially nice if you know you are prone to cold hands. There is no need for heavyweight fleece gloves, because they are too thick and unnecessary the summer conditions. Quite often folks will never use them for the entire trip, but they are wonderful on that one chilly morning. They are also nice as part of the sleeping system. **MAX Weight per pair: 1.5 oz**
EXAMPLES: Possum Down Gloves (1.2 oz), or any very thin, quick-drying polypropylene gloves.

d. LOWER BODY CLOTHING

Required: At least two layers that offer full lower body coverage (trunk and legs); select from the following list below. You'll notice that all the pants below are listed as optional. It's tricky to give a recommendation when there are a variety of lightweight systems that work well, but we've all got our ways and special preferences. Here's what I (Mike C!) use for my legs in the summer. From skin out, I wear a pair of light nylon running shorts with a mesh liner. I don't wear underwear, the shorts work fine. Next, I wear a pair of quick dry nylon hiking pants, and I might not take these off for the entire trip. And when I sleep, I add a pair of Cocoon UL 60 puffy synthetic pants (Mmmmmmm!).

12. Shorts: (*optional*) Quick drying nylon, these can act as underwear and a bathing suit. These will always be worn, so they will not be added to the base weight of the pack. **MAX Weight: 5 oz.**

13. Hiking Pants: (*optional*) Long pants made of lightweight, breathable, quick-drying synthetic fabric. Light colors are recommended for temperature regulation and sun protection. Convertible zip-off pants are a popular option, but really dorky. **MAX Weight: 11 oz.**

14. Rain Pants: (*optional*) Lightweight breathable fabric, full waterproof protection is NOT essential. A quick drying water resistant fabric is acceptable. These are great in the rain and chilly mornings, but might be too hot for hiking on a sunny afternoon. **MAX Weight: 7 oz.**

15. Insulating Pants: (*optional*) Either puffy synthetic or down, or long underwear (synthetic or wool), these are helpful as part of the sleep system. **MAX Weight: 8 oz.**

What works? No clear-cut answers here, you can choose some combo of shorts, hiking pants, rain pants, or insulating pants for the fickle summer environment of the Northern Rockies. If you aren't sure, bring a selection, and your instructors can help you decide before the hiking begins. You will be required to carry at least two long layers.

- **Lightest option:** A combo of hiking pants and long undies.
- **Medium option:** A combo of shorts, long undies and rain pants.
- **Heaviest option:** A combo of hiking pants and insulating pants (either puffy or long undies) and rain pants.

EXAMPLES: Pants/Shorts: BPL Thorofare Pants (4 oz), GoLite Ridge Runner Shorts (5 oz.), REI Ultralight Pants (11 oz). Base-layer bottoms (required if wearing shorts): Patagonia Capilene 1 (4 oz). Insulating pants: Montbell U.L., Cocoon UL 60 Puffy Pants. Wind Pants: Montane FeatherLite Pants, GoLite Reed Pants. Rain pants: Mountain Hardware Epic Rain Pants (7 oz), Dri Ducks Rain Pants (4 oz).

16. Underwear: Some long-distance hikers recommend underwear (briefs and compression shorts) for chafe-resistance and added warmth. One pair is fine. Another option is wearing synthetic running shorts with a liner instead of underwear. These will always be worn, so they will not be added to the base weight of the pack. **MAX Weight 4 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Patagonia Active Brief (1 oz), Underarmour Heat Gear Boxer Jock (2.5 oz), BPL Beartooth Merino Short (3.5 oz), GoLite Stride Short (3.5 oz).

Also, women may find that exercise and change of environment will influence their monthly cycle, and we suggest bringing multiple pairs of cotton underwear. This is an exception to some of our lightweight dogma, but experience has shown this to be a prudent technique. **MAX Weight per pair: 2 oz.**

e. FOOTWEAR

17. Shoes: These may be the single most important item on this list. Everybody has different feet, so it is tricky for us to recommend something that just might not fit properly. Our favorite shoe may fit you like a broken mouse-trap. Please invest some time and choose wisely to fit the needs of this course and your future outings.

You'll be traveling on potentially wet and muddy trails, and you'll be getting your shoes wet during stream crossings. Waterproof shoes (e.g., Gore-Tex) are not ideal for this course, because they take longer to dry when they get wet. Look for well-ventilated shoes that will dry quickly and drain moisture efficiently. Temperatures should generally be warm or mild, although cold spells (and even snow) can occur. As a result, cold feet in the early morning and late evening hours can be an issue, especially at higher altitudes. We will actively teach foot care in various environments.

Trail shoes should be lightweight, flexible, low- or medium-height, breathable, and made of quick-drying non-absorbent materials (minimal or no leather). No need for anything excessive, because your pack weight will be light enough to forgo "traditional" boots. Big, leather, insulated, heavy-duty hiking boots are totally unnecessary and far too heavy – and they dry slowly. Blister issues are much more severe with these "traditional" hiking boots.

Make an effort to try the shoes on a few moderate hikes BEFORE arriving in Montana. Fit your shoes about one-half size larger than your normal size. This extra room provides comfort, minimizes friction and allows for some swelling.

Any questions? Please contact your instructors, and we'll be happy to help. **MAX Weight per pair: 28 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Try shoes from the following brands and use whichever lightweight shoe fits your feet best and feel comfortable: Montrail, Salomon, Inov-8, La Sportiva, GoLite Footwear, Merrell, etc.

18. Socks: Either thin running socks or medium-weight trekking socks made of wool or synthetic fibers (or a blend) are required. Cotton is unacceptable. You will need a total of two pairs and will change into dry sleeping socks. It's easy to start the morning in the wet socks from yesterday, especially if there is a lot of dew. We will teach the skills for taking only two pairs of socks. One pair will be part of the sleeping system. **MAX Weight per pair: 3 oz.**

EXAMPLES:: Smartwool, Darn Tough, Lorpen, Thorlo, Bridgedale, etc.

19. Gaiters: (*optional*): No need for waterproof fabric. These should be the short style. For this trek, their main function would be to keep mud and dirt out of low-cut shoes, not provide protection against moisture. **MAX Weight per pair: 4 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Outdoor Research Rocky Mountain Low, Mountain Hardware Nutshell, Dirty Girl spandex gaiters.

f. SLEEP SYSTEM

Sleep System: This is defined as the combination of insulating clothing, sleeping bag (or quilt), bivy sack, and sleeping pad. You can even add the backpack too, because you will use it as insulation under your legs. And we might as well add the map under your pad too. This combination must be sufficient for keeping you safe and comfortable for potential extreme conditions and temperatures (see Anticipated Weather and Environmental Conditions). Synthetic fill is recommended because of its insulating properties when wet. Down is perfectly acceptable, but it requires some dedication to manage the additional risks of using in potentially wet environments.

Sleeping with a lightweight bag or quilt requires that you wear your insulating jacket and add some sort of insulating pants. Of your two pairs of socks, one pair will be reserved as sleeping socks. These socks will not be used for hiking and will always remain dry and cozy so that your feet can stay warm and recover better at night. Some hikers will choose a pair that is one size too big for their feet so that they do not constrict blood flow during the night. The clothes you wear at night to sleep are considered multi-use items.

20. Sleeping Bag or Quilt: Summer-weight or ultralight quilts are very specialized pieces of lightweight gear. Standard sleeping bags designed for traditional three-season backpacking are acceptable, but will likely be too much warmth and too much heavy. Quilts are zipperless and hoodless with an open back for weight savings. When choosing a bag or quilt, please be aware if you typically get cold at night, even in warmer temperatures. If you have the option to bring a quilt or an ultralight mummy, hoodless, or "top" bag (e.g., a bag with no bottom insulation), we recommend that you do so to save weight and learn the skills required to effectively use these bags. **MAX Weight: 25 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Quilts are available from BPL, Fanatic Fringe, GoLite, and Jacks 'R' Better. Hoodless and top bags are available from Feathered Friends, Western

Mountaineering, and Rab. Ultralight mummy bags are available from GoLite, Feathered Friends, Rab, Marmot, Western Mountaineering, and others.

21. Sleeping Pad: A lightweight torso-sized sleeping pad is ideal for your trek, and either inflatable and closed cell foam are acceptable. Your pad need not be any thicker than 3/8 inches and can certainly be thinner depending on your own personal preference. You will be using your backpack itself to insulate your legs. Keep in mind that an inflatable torso pad is considered more comfortable than the lighter foam – you may be camping on rocky ground in shared shelters, and perfectly flat ground to sleep on may not always be available. We will have a group repair kit to fix any punctured pads. **MAX Weight: 10 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Bozeman Mountain Works TorsoLite (9.9 oz), a modified (cut) closed-cell foam pad, or Therm-a-Rest ProLite 3 or NeoAir.

22. Bivy Sack: (optional) A lightweight cover for your sleeping quilt. Added protection for camping under a tarp. We don't recommend heavyweight waterproof bivy sacks for tarp camping. If you bring a bivy, it should have a water-resistant top. **MAX Weight: 7 oz.**

23. Pillow: (optional) A simple little inflatable pillow. If you wear all your clothes to bed, what do you put your head on as you sleep? Plus, they're cute. **MAX Weight: 1.2 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Flex-AIR dual chamber pillow from the BPL online store.

g. PACKING

Notes: Your packing system needs to have the ability to (a) fully protect your sleeping clothes and bag from heavy precipitation, (b) resist water absorption and not gain dramatic amounts of water weight, and (c) the material needs to be robust enough to survive some off trail travel.

24. Backpack: Capable of comfortably carrying 25 pounds of total gear. You should shoot for approximately 50 liters (3000 cubic inches) of volume. Packs with internal frames (or frame-sheets) are considered "traditional" gear and should be avoided. Simple packs without frames are much lighter, and we can teach you how to incorporate your sleeping pad as a supportive structure to solve any comfort issues. **MAX Weight: 24 oz.**

EXAMPLES: GoLite Jam 2 (22 oz), Gossamer Gear Mariposa UL Backpack (16.0 - 18.3 oz).

25. Pack Liner: {provided by BPL} Waterproofing the pack is essential. Pack covers do not truly provide complete waterproofing, and they are not a multi-use item. A simple and low cost option is to line your entire backpack with a waterproof trash compactor bag. A large waterproof, seam-sealed silnylon stuff sack is also acceptable, but these are not completely waterproof under the higher pressures of gear compression. **MAX Weight: 3 oz.**

EXAMPLES: Backpacking Light Pack Liners (1.5 oz), XL or XXL sizes are perfect. Also good, the HEFTY compactor bags (2.1 oz) designed for electric kitchen trash compactors and easily found in the grocery store. Either of these are plenty big to line a small backpack with enough extra to wrap over at the top for absolute waterproofing. These are highly specialized, heavy gauge plastic and sturdy enough to last for multiple trips.

26. Stuff Sacks: (*mostly optional*) Traditional campers are fraught with multiple stuff sacks. We teach advanced lightweight skills, and we'll minimize the number of items in the backpack, including stuff sacks. Your only required stuff sack will be for food storage, all others will be extraneous. The food sack should be at least 600 cubic inches in volume and made of lightweight material. That said, it can be nice to organize gear using a few stuff sacks. So, if you have some lightweight sacks, feel free to bring 'em. And for small items (like toiletries) a simple Ziploc sandwich baggie is perfect. **MAX Weight for ALL stuff sacks: 3 oz.**
EXAMPLE: Backpacking Light Spin-Sack NANO Ultralight Stuff Sack (Size M) .2 oz.

h. PERSONAL ITEMS

27. LED Flashlight: One lightweight tiny flashlight with neck lanyard or a headlamp, with fresh batteries. Extra batteries should not be needed if you put new ones in at the beginning of the trek. Should be suitable for short-range navigation and task lighting. You might be setting up camp in the dark at least once! **MAX Weight: 2 oz.**
EXAMPLES: Black Diamond Ion, Petzl e+lite, Photon X Freedom (cheap, light, and powerful).

28. Sunscreen: High elevation mountain travel in summer can be hard on your skin. Bring a small bottle of high SPF waterproof sunblock, fragrance-free for bear country. Repackage into a smaller bottle if needed. Also, long sleeves and long pants will minimize sunblock usage, and thus - the weight on your back! **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

29. Lip Protection: (*optional*) A simple tube of high SPF Chap-Stick is fine. Some sunscreens double as lip protection, thus this is noted as optional. **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

30. Compass: A simple compass with a base-plate is all you'll need. Navigation with a map will be an important component to the course. **MAX Weight: 2 oz.**
EXAMPLES: Brunton Base-plate Map Compass

31. Whistle: Emergency Gear. Loud whistle on neck lanyard or backpack strap to be worn at all times. Also, some backpacks have a whistle built into a plastic buckle. **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

32. Pen and Paper: (*optional*) Teeny-weenie is fine. There may be occasions to take notes (this is a school) and you might want to journal. **MAX Weight: 2 oz.**

33. Bandana: (*optional*) A true multi-use tool. Cotton is fine. **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

34. Mug: *{provided by BPL}* Between 500 and 750 ml volume preferred. This will be your main eating vessel and a mug for hot drinks. Titanium is very light, but very expensive. So, a simple plastic mug or "Glad Bowl" is OK too. **MAX Weight: 2 oz.**

35. Spoon: *{provided by BPL}* Titanium is nice, but a cheap-o from the Dairy Queen is just fine. And so are chopsticks. **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

36. Water Bottle: We'll rarely carry more than 1.5 liters of water while trekking, and we'll be moving quickly between water sources, so there will be no need for more than 2.5-liter (max.) capacity. Options for hydration include a soft-sided 1.5-liter water bottle or a 1-liter standard plastic soda bottle. (a very inexpensive option). Soft-sided, collapsible bottles are *highly encouraged* for ease of storage and weight savings. Please leave the porky (6.1 ounce) hard-sided Nalgene bottles at home; they are unnecessarily heavy. Also, hydration bladders (e.g., Camelbaks) are surprisingly heavy, and are NOT recommended. **MAX Weight: 3 oz.**
EXAMPLES: 1.5-liter Nalgene Canteen (soft sided & collapsible), Platypus 2-liter size, Evernew 2-liter size, the humble 1-liter water bottle pulled from the recycle bin.

37. Trekking Poles: (*optional*) Most hikers love their trekking poles, but they are not required. They are a multi-use item because they are part of the tarp set up. **MAX Weight per pair: 11 oz.**
EXAMPLES: Gossamer Gear Lightrek Plus, BPL STIX, Komperdell FeatherLite.

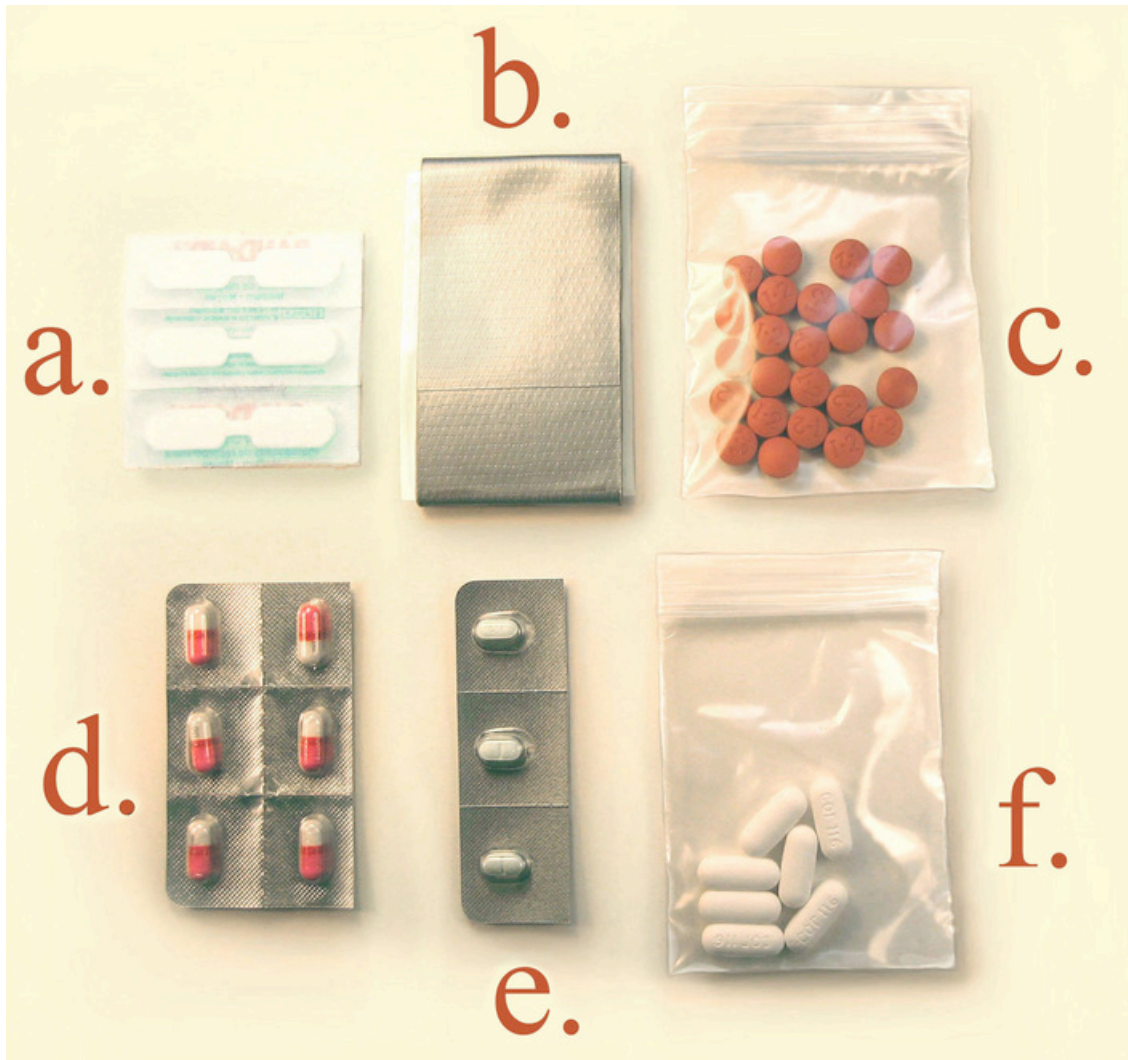
38. Mosquito Repellent: (*optional*) The Northern Rockies are funny; the bug season is short (especially at high elevations), but it can be brutal. The primary protection is long sleeves, long pants - and a headnet. A small amount of 100% DEET (or eco-groovy alternative) can preserve sanity. Repackage in a smaller bottle. **MAX Weight: 1 oz.**

39. Personal Hygiene: (*optional, but can be nice*). Toothbrush, toothpaste, personal medications, other personal hygiene items (NO PERFUMED OR OTHER FLOOFY SCENTED ITEMS - you may be in bear country!). Please, repackage all tiny items in smaller bottles. These items can be stored in a simple plastic Ziploc sandwich baggie. **MAX Weight: 3 oz.**

40. Personal Medications / First Aid Items

The goal of these courses is to set each participant up so they have the skills to take on the challenges of ambitious personal outings. This will require that you carry some sort of first aid and medications kit. We are asking that you prepare a spartan set of medications, which will involve a little bit of time before coming to Montana. These items are inexpensive and easy to find at any drug store. After your course you will be set up well with your own kit for future lightweight trips.

NOTE: As part of the team gear, there will be a extra first aid kit carried by the instructors with enough supplies to cover any unforeseen accident.



This photo shows a simple medication / first aid kit, easily stored in a small sized Ziploc snack baggie. *It weighs a total of 1.4 ounces.*

- a. Butterfly wound closures (3x)
- b. Duct tape (approx. 6 feet)
- c. Ibuprofen (24x)
- d. Antihistamine (3x)
- e. Immodium AD (3x)
- f. Acetaminophen (7x)

This list is set up for a seven-day outing. These were all purchased as generic brands at a local drug store for under \$14, and there is plenty left over. This small kit can be easily re-stocked, and can be used for future outings:

- Over-the-counter anti-inflammatories (e.g., minimum equivalent 800 mg/ trail day such as ibuprofen)
- Over-the-counter analgesics (e.g., minimum equivalent 800 mg/trail day such as acetaminophen)
- Anti-diarrheal medication (2-3 small tablets such as Immodium AD are ideal)

- Antihistamine tablets such as diphenhydramine (aka Benadryl) (max. 50 mg per day on trail if you're a severe allergy sufferer, 50 – 100 mg total if not).
- Three butterfly wound closures
- Approx. 6 ft. duct tape and/or Leukotape

MAX Total weight: 3 oz.

41. Camera: (*optional*) You'll be in some of the most beautiful country you've ever seen. Still, this isn't the time to pack your assorted lenses, filters, and such. Camera and battery must be tiny and lightweight and not a part of your cell phone. **MAX Total weight: 7 oz.**

i. SNACKS, TRAIL FOOD, and DRINKS

42. Food: BPL will provide your breakfast (approx. 600-800 calories) and dinner (approx. 800-900 calories) during your time on the course. We have received high praise for our meals, and we are dedicated to smashing the misconception that ultralight hikers eat bland glop. Not on our courses, they don't!

Snacks are the food that gets eaten after breakfast and before dinner. Basically, it's the treats you munch on while hiking. For this article we'll refer to this as "snack" food, but the terms "trail food" and "goodies" mean the same thing. You'll be *required* to bring your own snack food that'll be eaten on the trail throughout the day. Everybody has their favorites, and it would be impossible for us to keep everybody happy if we provided these snacks. Please bring what makes your heart go pitter-pat.

EXAMPLES: energy and/or protein supplement bars, trail mix and dense salty crackers, chocolate (unless your course is during HOT weather!), nuts, dense cookies, peanut butter, Pringles, etc.

How much trail food? Bring between 1200 and 1500 calories of trail food per day. To compute the weights of the total TRAIL FOOD required, there are approx. 100 to 125 calories per ounce, which works out to approximately 10 to 15 ounces per day

We are using the number of 1.4 Pounds Per Person Per Day (PPPPD) as a way to do the food calculations.

1 full days of camping = 1.4 pounds of food requirements
 1.4 pounds = 22.5 ounces
 approx. 12 ounces of food provided by BPL per DAY (that's b'fast and dinner)
 22.5 - 12 = 10.5 ounces remaining for SNACK food
 10.5 oz = (approx.) 1,300 calories of SNACK food PER day.

If you have a high metabolism, or if the weather is predicted to be colder, round the calculation figure up to 1.6 (approx) to get your snack food data. Just so you know, these Wilderness Trekking courses have been consistently going out with 1.4 PPPPD and coming back with a minimum amount of leftover food. This number may seem low, but the experience (year after year) shows it's working.

During each course, the instructors will scrutinize every ounce that goes into your backpack before heading off into the mountains, including food. As we factor in all

the data, we will probably even trim down the volume of trail food and leave a small percentage behind.

43. Drinks: You are also responsible for bringing your own drinks and mixes. These include hot cocoa, tea, sports drinks, Gatorade, Tang or Crystal Light, and Emergen-C packets.

NOT in the food calculations: Important fact, COFFEE is NOT food, so it isn't factored into these numbers. People have gone for weeks without food, but if the coffee disappeared during an expedition, we would (justifiably) be forced to call in the helicopters.

NOTE: If you have any questions or any dietary needs (if you are vegetarian, vegan, kosher, groovy-biotic or have allergies), please contact the BPL Wilderness Trekking School ahead of time.

j. EXTRA GEAR INFO:

Base Camp Gear: The initial day (or two) will be spent in a classroom setting at the Lion's Ridge retreat center in the Gallatan foothills, just outside of Bozeman. This is decidedly NOT camping, we have beds, showers, and meals served to us. So, for the classroom time before and after camping, please bring a duffel bag, suitcase, or extra backpack that will be used to store all of your non-trekking gear back at base camp while you are trekking. We will keep all gear locked up and safe during our time in the mountains. Bring an extra change of casual clothing, personal toiletries, a notepad and pen. The use of cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices are welcome at the base camp, but will not be allowed while on trail.

Other Gear: If you want to bring something else that is not on this list, please feel free to contact us about the item. Our goal is to have you hike safely and comfortably, with as little weight as possible.

Extra Personal Gear: We want to make sure you are set up well for future personal outings. So, if you have any personal lightweight gear you WANT to bring, please feel free to bring it to Bozeman. We can make good decisions on any gear before we head into the field. For data purposes, please know the weight ahead of time. You are welcome to bring your own lightweight shelters and cook kits, if they weigh less than our gear - we'll carry them into the field. But, the team of instructors will be working to get every student to go as light as possible, and that means we may STRONGLY encourage you to leave a favorite item behind.

BPL can supply some group gear (see the list below). But, if you have any items like the list below, bring `em if they seem like they'll work for you, and the rest of the team can learn about your systems too!

44-58. Gear Provided by BPL (so you don't have to worry about it)

- Shelter systems (stakes, guylines, ground protection, shelter canopy)
- Cook kits (stoves, pots, fuel)
- Foot care kits
- Group maps, navigation and emergency equipment

- Water treatment (Chlorine Dioxide solutions and tablets)
- Small bottles & containers for repackaging toiletries etc.
- Hand sanitizer
- Soap
- Repair kit
- Hydropel sports lubricant
- Extensive group first-aid kit
- Bear hang kits
- O.P. Saks for bear camping
- Lighters and fire starting gear (*)
- Bear spray (for travel in bear country) (*)
- Ultralight knives (*)
- Stove fuel (*)

(*) Unfortunately, some items are illegal in your carry-on airline luggage. These items include knives, matches, lighters, bear spray and stove fuel. We will provide each of these so you won't need to worry about any added travel complications, just leave 'em at home. If you choose to drive, feel free to bring your own gear, and we can carefully review before the trekking part of the course.

NOTES on Water Treatment: We will be providing Chlorine Dioxide solutions and tablets during this course. We will encourage leaving the heavy (and easily clogged) water filter behind. If you are not comfortable using this type of chemical treatment, you may bring one of the following for your own personal use: iodine tablets, water filters, UV pens, etc.

k. Simplifying the experience

Banned items: Here's a truism: *Eco-grooviness counts for a lot*. That said, certain items are *verboten* from our courses. These have the potential to distract from a simplified wilderness experience. These items will minimize the an important philosophy of our educational experience, learning to do without. And, they add unnecessary weight to your pack. The only student items (in the field) requiring batteries should be a headlamp and a camera (and the camera's optional).

For these reasons, the following items are banned from the trekking portion of our course: any device capable of radio, cellular, or satellite communications, including radio receivers, two-way radios and phones, satellite phones, PLBs, GPS units, timekeeping devices (especially watches), altimeters, pedometers, electronic compasses, electronic entertainment, including MP3 players, radios, iPods, Gameboys, etc.

Also banned: Tobacco products, illegal drugs/substances, alcoholic beverages, firearms, fireworks, and excessively large knives. And while we're at it, anvils, lead pipes, power tools, railroad ties, cellos, and heavy-duty external-frame backpacks. Leave this stuff at home.

Instructors will carry a GPS unit, cell phone, and a satellite phone to be used only in emergencies that threaten life, limb, or coffee supply.

Normal, day-to-day items like watches, cell phones and laptops may, of course, be brought to the classroom portion, but must be turned off or silenced while class is in session upon penalty of instructor scorn - or worse.

ANTICIPATED WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS – Northern Rocky Mountains

Overview. Warm summer days matched with the cool nights offer some of the best trekking weather possible in the mountains of southwestern Montana, yet the classic afternoon lightning storm will refine your layering skills and expose the team to the awesome power of alpine weather systems.

Temperatures. We will be trekking and camping at altitudes ranging from about 6,000 to 10,000+ feet (lower elevation for early and late season courses due to snow at higher elevations). At these altitudes, the summer months historically have daily temperatures ranging from 35F to 95F and averaged 66F. However, more severe extremes can occur. For a quick guess, visit your favorite weather site and look at the weather forecast in Bozeman, MT (ZIP code 59715). Remember, temperature varies with altitude by about 2-3 degrees F per 1,000 feet. Courses that take place in September can expect cooler days with a hint of fall in the air, and nights might get below freezing. Although unlikely in mid-summer, snow can fall anytime throughout the year.

Precipitation. In the summer, our mountains are relatively dry with respect to rainfall. Afternoon thunderstorms are to be expected, and these can bring a short burst of heavy rain or even hail. We can't guarantee dry weather, and we will prepare for the unlikely event of long stretches rain.

Terrain Types. Much of the travel will be on well maintained hiking trails, but we put an emphasis on some off trail travel. Our travel plan will emphasize efficient route choices within the confines of safe exposure at an appropriate comfort level for all team members. Mountain travel means you'll be moving through a variety of eco-systems at different elevations. Low elevations (less than 6,000 feet) can be open areas of dry sage brush. Mid-elevations (6,000 to 9,000) can be dense forests of lodgepole pine and sub-alpine fir. Higher elevations (above 9,000) feet can be open meadows of wildflowers, tundra, snow or a jumble of rocks. The trail systems sometimes have foot-bridges over most streams, but not always. Expect shallow but wet stream crossings to be probable, but infrequent. The winter snow-pack recedes slowly throughout the season. In June it will be normal to walk across large patches of dense summer snow, but by August we should be encountering minimal snow at only the highest elevations.

Daylight. Summer at the Northern latitudes of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem offers long days and short nights. During the Solstice (June 21st), the sun will rise early, before 4:00 AM and there will be usable light until about 10:00 PM. So, early summer, the headlamps might get used rarely, if at all. By August the sun will rise around 6:00 AM and set around 8:30 PM.

Wildlife / Insects. The Northern Rocky Mountains are home to grizzly bears, black bears and wolves. Please realize that while negative encounters with these animals are extremely rare, such encounters are still possible. Your instructors will provide you with the information and skills you need to remain safe at all times, but be advised that we will be following strict protocols for our safety. We'll be sharing these mountains with grizzly bears, the largest North American predator,

and this makes for a very real wilderness experience. Mosquitoes and other biting insects are in these mountains too. Their intensity will change throughout the season and at different elevations. During the middle of the summer, be sure to pack a headnet and bring a small amount of repellent. In early June and late in August, they are usually not an issue at all.

Elevation and Altitude. There may be multiple days spent above 10,000 feet. This is a zone where travelers from sea-level might feel the symptoms of mild altitude sickness. It is not uncommon to suffer from shortness of breath, headaches, nausea, and fatigue. The human body is quick to adapt, and these symptoms will disappear after only a few days, but it can be unpleasant until you adapt. If you are coming from a low elevation (like sea level) and arriving by plane into Bozeman (approx. 5,000 feet), and then quickly hiking up to 10,000 feet you can expect some issues with the thin air. Our altitude can be challenging, no matter what your fitness level. Students attending longer courses (a week or more) are strongly encouraged to come to Bozeman a few days early and spend some time hiking or biking in the surrounding mountains BEFORE your course begins. This advice comes from our students in previous years. Exercising high (about 9,000 ft.) and sleeping low (in town) is an excellent way to adapt to the lower oxygen levels of our mountain environment. The town of Bozeman offers lots of opportunities for mountain recreation, and it's pretty. Since it's not always feasible come early to acclimatize for short (3-day) courses, we try to limit most of our trekking to altitudes below 9,000 feet. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Any questions? Please, feel free to contact us at: school@backpackinglight.com

this document was edited by Mike C! on June 30, 2009