

# A Guide to the Top 10 Hiking Gear Essentials

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Embarking on a hiking adventure is a thrilling experience, but ensuring You have the right hiking gear is essential for a safe and enjoyable journey.

If you're looking to get out on the trail, but you're unsure what to take with you, I've created a list of the **Top 10 Hiking Gear Essentials** I always use when out on a day hike. So grab a hot brew, and come with me whilst we take a closer look at some of the essential hiking gear every hiker must have.

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## **My Top 10 'Must Haves'**

1. Hiking Boots
2. Hiking Socks
3. Hiking Trousers
4. Base & Mid Layers
5. Waterproof Jacket
6. Water Bladder or Bottle
7. Headtorch
8. First Aid Kit / Sun Protection
9. Snacks
10. Rucksack / Trail Vest



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## **1. Hiking Boots**



Undoubtedly the most important thing to consider is our feet. After all, you can't get too far without them!

A good pair of hiking boots will last a long time, so it makes sense to take the time to choose the perfect ones. So let's take a closer look at what you need to look out for?

The main things to consider are - cut, fit, tread, and material.

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## Cut

When looking at all the various styles of hiking boots, there are three types - low-cut, mid-cut and high-cut. Each offer different levels of ankle support.

**Low-cut boots** provide flexibility and are suitable for well-maintained, and well-established trails. They tend to have the look and feel of a trainer, and although they tend to be light, and much easier to break in, they won't provide the necessary ankle support for tougher hikes on uneven terrain.

**Mid-cut boots** offer a balance of ankle support and flexibility, which makes them extremely versatile for different terrains. I tend to use this type of boot for the majority of my hikes, long or short. They offer stability and protection.

**High-cut boots** provide maximum ankle support and are ideal for rugged and uneven terrain, offering stability and protection against twists and sprains. I wear these boots when hiking in more hilly or mountainous trails. As a heavier type of boot, they help you to stabilize when you're carrying a weighted backpack.

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## Fit

Just as when you're buying regular shoes, the overall fit and feel can be different from one pair to another. The same applies for when choosing the right type of hiking boot.

For a start, the sizes tend to vary dependent on the brand, and also from the country of origin. So you may not be surprised that it might take you several attempts, trying on different types of hiking boots until you figure out which ones are the most comfortable.

So what are the main things to look out for?

**Size:** Ensure the size is accurate. Your toes should have enough room that they don't touch the front of the boot, and you have enough space to wiggle your toes when walking. This is essential to help prevent discomfort and potential toenail issues.

**Width and heel:** Your boots should feel snug, but not too tight. The heel should sit comfortably in the boot without excessive movement. Whilst some boots take time to break in, if they feel too tight to begin with, that can lead to blisters and a lot of pain!

## My advice

1. Always try on both boots. Your feet can vary slightly from one to the other. Ensure you have a balanced fit.
  2. Walk around: Pay attention to any discomfort, pressure points, or rubbing
  3. Break-in period: Recognise that hiking boots might require time to loosen up and mould to your walking gait. This is especially important before you attempt a long or strenuous hike!
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## Tread

The tread of hiking boots plays a crucial role in providing traction and stability on various terrains. Here's what you should consider;

**Lug pattern:** Deeper, more widely spaced lugs are effective for muddy and loose surfaces, whilst shallower lugs work well on smoother trails.

**Material:** Tread materials can vary. What you need to look out for are the boots durability and grip.

**Directional tread:** Some boots have a directional tread pattern. Check if the design is optimised for forward movement, providing enhanced traction on the trail.

**Caring for treads:** Regularly clean and inspect the treads to ensure optimal performance. Worn down treads compromise traction, which could lead to further discomfort and poor performance.

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## Material

There tends to be two main types of material for hiking boots - synthetic and leather, the latter comes with an obvious environmental consideration.

**Synthetic hiking boots:** For me the benefits of these tend to outweigh leather hiking boots. Why?

- **Weight:** Synthetic boots are typically lighter, and provide agility and ease of movement.
- **Breathability:** Synthetic materials often offer better breathability, which has huge benefits in warmer climates. They wick away moisture, reducing the likelihood of overly sweaty, and/or swollen feet.

- **Vegan-friendly:** An obvious choice for those who prefer cruelty-free, and environmentally friendly options.
- **Less Maintenance:** Synthetic boots generally require less maintenance to help retain their water resistance or appearance.

**Leather hiking boots:** Everything said about synthetic hiking boots, leather ones do have some obvious benefits;

**Durability:** Leather boots are known for their durability and longevity. They can withstand rough terrain and are resistant to abrasions.

**Water resistance:** Full-grain leather tends to be water-resistant, but over time may require further waterproofing. they can resist light moisture, making them suitable for wet conditions.

**Breathability:** Although leather boots are generally less breathable to synthetic ones, they offer excellent insulation, making them ideal for colder climates.

**Break-in period:** Despite them often taking longer to mould to the shape of your feet, once broken in they tend to be very comfortable.

**Maintenance:** They do require more maintenance, and the occasional waterproofing and leather conditioning, but this will help to preserve their overall quality and appearance.

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Recommended hiking boots

### **Low-cut hiking boots - Men**

I wear these [Merrell Capra Gore-Tex](#) on a lot of easy going hikes, or [Salomon Saliba](#) , or [Shadow waterproof softshell](#)

### **Low-cut hiking boots - Women**

I would recommend [Merrell Crosslander](#), or the [Salomon Saliba 23](#). Plus these from Mountain Warehouse [Curlew Waterproof](#)

### **Mid-cut hiking boots - Men**

I wear these [Scarpa Mistral GTX](#) on a lot of longer hikes. I can also recommend [Berghaus VC22 Gore-Tex](#) and these from Mountain Warehouse [Adventurer Waterproof](#)

### **Mid-cut hiking boots - Women**

I would recommend [Scarpa Mistral GTX](#) as I have the men's version and they are great! Plus these from Decathlon [Berghaus VC22 Mid Gore-Tex](#), or [Extreme Byzantine Waterproof Vibram](#) from Mountain Warehouse

### **High-cut hiking boots - Men**

I wear these [Salomon Men's Quest Element Gore-tex](#) on hilly or mountain hikes. Plus these from Decathlon [Crisport Evolution](#) or [Berghaus Men's Hillmaster II](#) at Amazon.

### **High-cut hiking boots - Women**

I would recommend [Forclaz leather Vibram MT500 Ultra](#) from Decathlon, or the [Karrimor Mendip 3](#) from Amazon, or the [Salomon Quest 4 Gore-tex](#) at Decathlon

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## **2. Hiking Socks**



As well as having a great pair of hiking boots, another top priority for me is making sure I always wear the right socks on my hikes. Your feet do a lot of work, so it's important to take care of them.



I've trialled many types and brands of hiking socks in order to find the ones that suit me best, dependent on what type of hike I'm doing and in what type of conditions.

I'm going to narrow it down for you to three types of sock;

1. Toe socks (Injini)
  2. Merino wool hiking socks
  3. Waterproof socks (Sealskinz)
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### Toe Socks (Injini)

Now, the concept of these 'glove like' socks took me a little time to get around to, but for any long or mixed terrain hikes, and challenge events, I wear them every time!

The market leader for toe socks is **Injini**, and they have a variety of styles to suit everyone. They're popular with hikers as the material between the toes stops them rubbing and helps to prevent blisters in those areas. Plus they have the added benefit of keeping your feet cool.

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### Recommended Toe Socks

I opt for the [Injini liner crew socks](#), which come just above the ankle. I wear them underneath a thicker pair of hiking socks. But you can go for a [longer trail sock](#), which could save you from wearing an additional layer if you wish.

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### Merino wool hiking socks

For the vast majority of hikes, you'll need a good pair of merino wool hiking socks. Merino wool has natural wicking properties, which pull away any moisture from your skin. This helps to keep your feet dry by absorbing and releasing sweat, which in turn reduces the risk of blisters and discomfort.

Merino wool also has excellent thermal regulation. So they will keep your feet warm in cooler weather, and vice versa in warmer weather. A good pair from a reputable brand will last a long time.

When I'm on full-day hikes, I wear merino wool socks over my Injini toe socks, and my feet never feel too hot, and I never get blisters!

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## Recommended Merino Socks

I tend to opt for Bridgedale merino wool hiking socks, which are available at Decathlon.

### **Women's socks**

[Heavyweight](#) [Midweight](#) [Lightweight](#)

### **Men's socks**

[Heavyweight](#) [Midweight](#) [Lightweight](#)

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## Waterproof socks (Sealskinz)

If you didn't know, it rains a lot in the UK! I guess it rains in other countries too for that matter! When it rains, footpaths and trails don't tend to dry out quickly, resulting in oodles of muddy tracks to navigate!

You can't rely on just having a great pair of waterproof boots, and perhaps gaiters to help keep your feet dry. They help to a point. But on long hikes, where you encounter wet grass, puddles, or mud, most boots will become saturated, and that leads to wet socks.

If you know you're going to be out on the trail for a few hours or more, you might benefit from some waterproof socks.

The market leader is **Sealskinz**. Yes, they are expensive! But in my view, well worth it! When I first purchased them, I was a little concerned that they might feel uncomfortable, as they feel different from your usual hiking socks. But they are perfectly comfortable, and extremely breathable.

Now when I wear them, I don't worry about navigating around puddles or mud (ok, up to a point!). They give me the confidence that my feet will stay dry.

In terms of sock size, they tend to be quite roomy, as they are gender neutral. So you can opt for a smaller size if you want to have a snug fit. But always check the size chart first just to be safe.

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## Recommended Waterproof Socks

**Sealskinz** socks (available at Amazon) have a range for warmer, cold, extreme cold, and all weather.

[Warmer](#) [Cold](#) [Extreme Cold](#) [All Weather](#)

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### 3. Hiking Trousers



Whether you're embarking on a long hike in the hills or just going for a leisurely woodland walk, investing in a good pair of outdoor trousers is crucial to ensure that you get the most out of your adventure. It's important to feel comfortable and protected from the elements, especially in the colder months.

Why can't I wear jeans or tracksuit bottoms? I always wear them when I go outdoors and they feel comfortable...Well, it's up to you obviously. But the problem with cotton or synthetic materials is that they aren't designed with the technical properties needed to cope with strenuous activities and adverse weather conditions. Cotton for example will absorb moisture very quickly, and trust me you don't want to be stuck in the elements feeling soaked to the skin!

Outdoor trousers however, are better equipped with features that will enable you to hike for longer. Good quality hiking trousers are designed with comfort and mobility in mind, as well as many having breathable materials.

Another great benefit is that most have a degree of water resistance, others offering full waterproof protection.

Plus they tend to be far more durable than cotton trousers. So they'll give you the added protection from any scratches or scrapes you may incur whilst on your hike.

So all in all, they are well worth investing in!

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Features to look out for

The choice of which trousers to buy is vast, all with many features and technologies, dependent on the type of activity you're planning on doing. Here are some of the features explained.

**Articulated knees:** Which give you increased mobility.

**DWR finish (durable water-repellent):** Allows water to run off and increases breathability.

**GORE-TEX:** For full waterproof protection.

**Moisture-wicking fabric:** This will draw sweat and moisture away from the body, usually made of polyester or nylon.

**UPF rating:** This helps to protect the skin from sun, with the rating indicating how much of the sun's UV radiation is absorbed by the fabric..

**Zippered vents:** Allows you to zip down sections of the trouser to circulate air and aid with ventilation.

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Types of Outdoor Trousers

### **Walking**

These are your basic type of outdoor trousers, which will be suitable for most hikes, except for winter. They tend to be lightweight and comfortable, and water-repellent.

I wear [Montane Men's Terra Lite](#) or [Quechua MH500](#)

For Women I recommend [Regatta Pentra Stretch](#)

### **Softshell**

Softshell trousers will tend to be slightly thicker than basic outdoor trousers, and perhaps the best option to go for when the weather is colder. They usually come with a degree of water repellent and UV protection.

I wear [Craghoppers Kiwi Pro](#)

For Women I recommend [Regatta Fenton](#)

## **Zip Off**

Convertible or Zip Off trousers give you that added layer of versatility for when the weather changes whilst you're out on the trail. So you can change between trousers to shorts at your whim! They also tend to come with extra pockets, which I find particularly useful!

I recommend [Mountain Warehouse Forest Trekkers](#) or [Jack Wolfskin Active Track](#)

For Women I recommend [Jack Wolfskin Glastal Zip Off](#) or [Mountain Warehouse Explorer](#)

## **Waterproof**

These tend to be worn as an outer layer, and will offer protection from the rain and the wind. Most will come with a zip opening from the ankle up the thigh, so you can put them on or take them off very quickly without having to remove your hiking boots! Outer layer waterproof trousers also tend to pack down really small, which makes them easy to store in your rucksack.

I wear [Quechua MH500 lightweight](#) or for more added protection I opt for Gore Tex, for example these [Berghaus Maitland](#)

For Women I recommend [Regatta Highton](#), or [Haglofs LIM Gore Tex](#)

## **Leggings**

These tend to be for people who like to have more of an active fit that hugs the body, which keeps you warm. They are lightweight, and quite stylish (so not made for me then!).

Harder for me to personally recommend as I don't wear them! However. A Popular brand I see within the hiking community are [Tikiboo](#) Leggings. But there are other brands available at a more reasonable price...

For Women you may wish to check out [Jack Wolfskin Kammweg](#), or these [Urban Classics](#) on Amazon.



For Men, if you're feeling brave enough to wear them, then these [Canterbury Thermoreg](#) Base Layer Leggings on Amazon might just be for you!

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#### 4. Base & Mid Layers



#### What does 'layering' mean?

If you're fairly new to hiking and are unfamiliar with the layering system, I'll explain. Whenever we go outdoors, whether it's a day hike or multi-day hike, you want to wear clothing that ultimately will keep you warm, dry and protected from the elements.

So, by dressing in layers, you're able to quickly respond to changes in the weather, by adding or subtracting layers as you get warmer or colder.

I've covered outer layers in the next section on waterproof jackets, plus earlier when I talked about waterproof trousers. So let's focus for now on **base layers and mid layers**.

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## Base Layers

The base layer is your first layer you put on, so it's right against you, and will help to wick away moisture from your skin.

- Wicks away sweat from your body, so that you remain dry and warm
- Tend to be made from natural or synthetic material
- Has a snug fit

There are two types of materials for base layers: wool or synthetic (or a mix of the two). When it's really cold, I tend to wear a merino wool base layer, and when warm I'll opt for a synthetic one, which will offer better moisture-wicking.

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### Warm weather base layers

Aside from the event specific technical t-shirts I've accumulated over the years, I still have several 'go to' warm weather base layers which I've purchased. They tend to be the same as the ones I would use for the gym.

I recommend the [Endurance Isocool Active T-Shirt](#) from Mountain Warehouse. Or, something like this one from [Nike](#) on Amazon.

For women I recommend the [Endurance](#) at Mountain Warehouse. Or this [Tech TW](#) functional tech shirt at Jack Wolfskin.

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## Mid-Layers

Mid-layers provide insulation to help retain your body heat. The most common type bring in the form of a fleece or synthetic lined top, either pull on or zip-up.

Others come with a down fill, which yes do provide the best insulation, but they don't perform as well as fleece when wet.

Even if you don't think it will be too cold, I would always recommend bringing a mid-layer top with you, especially if you're likely to be hiking for a few hours or more.

The benefits of a fleece top are that they are warm, dry quickly, and can be relatively lightweight.

Over the years I've tried and tested many types of mid-layer tops, and my wardrobe is full of them! Even when I'm not hiking I wear them all the time as they are really cosy!

So let's take a look at some of the best options...

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### **For Men**

For the majority of my hikes I like wearing a full-zip fleece. I would recommend the [Snowdon II](#) from Mountain Warehouse. or there's the [pull on version](#) which is really light but warm!

On colder hikes, I personally like wearing something of a hybrid fleece/jacket, such as the [Quechua SH500](#)

### **For Women**

I would recommend the [Snowdon Melange II](#) full-zip from Mountain Warehouse. Or the [Snowdon pull over fleece](#) is well priced on Amazon.

Or for colder and longer hikes the [Routeburn Pro Hybrid](#) from Jack Wolfskin

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## 5. Waterproof Jacket



One of the most important ways of equipping yourself for the great outdoors is ensuring you have the right type of waterproof jacket. One that you can depend on protecting you from the wet and from the wind.

The ability to stay dry and warm when you're out in the wilds can make all the difference between having a great adventure, and having complete nightmare! Trust me, I've been there, out in heavy wind and rain, with a jacket that wasn't completely waterproof, and needless to say I was soaked to the skin!

So, having a good waterproof jacket when you're out on your hikes is well worth the investment. Just having it with you in your rucksack will be a huge reassurance.



Some of the key things you'll need to think about when buying a waterproof jacket are...

## **Waterproofing**

It might sound a bit obvious, but there is a big difference between water-resistant and fully waterproof. A waterproof jacket (typically *Gore-Tex*) will keep you dry, even in heavy rain. Whereas a water-resistant jacket will only repel water for so long, until it becomes soaked, and therefore won't keep you dry for too long.

*What is Gore-Tex? - Is a highly durable, breathable, waterproof and windproof fabric. You'll see it quite a lot in the outdoor clothing market, from jackets and trousers, to gloves and hats!*

## **Breathability**

Even in cold weather, you build up heat when you're out hiking. Choosing a breathable jacket will help to prevent you from getting overly heated and sweaty, and in turn then feeling cold once the sweat dries.

## **Fit**

Obviously the more layers you have on will mean you should choose a waterproof jacket that is looser fitting. This will ensure you still have plenty of movement. I sometimes just opt for wearing a technical t-shirt under my jacket, and if that's more like something you'd choose to do, then you could go for a tight fitting jacket.

## **Hood**

Many will come with a hood, which you can adjust to ensure you have a snug fit. This is a great feature for when it's windy or raining heavily.

## **Weight**

You may want to consider that you're likely to be carrying your jacket with you in your rucksack (unless wearing it). In which case you'll need to think about its overall weight and how you'll be able to pack it away in your rucksack.

## **Additional Features**

Other things to consider include - quick-zip pockets, key clips, and drawcord hems.

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Recommended waterproof jackets

I have the [Rab Kangri GTX](#), which I use all the time, both here in the UK, and when I went to Everest Base Camp! I highly recommend it!

For a lightweight packable waterproof jacket, I would recommend the [pack and go](#) from Jack Wolfskin.

For women. The [North Face Dryzzle Futurelight](#) Jacket comes highly recommended!

For women. The [Highest Peak](#) Jacket from Jack Wolfskin was voted as **best value** by [The Telegraph](#)

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## 6. Water Bladder or Bottle



Keeping ourselves hydrated is a basic common need, and even more so when we're out hiking! Being out on long treks, where you're breathing become hard, induces sweating which, without sufficient water can lead to dehydration. You can't rely on their being a safe drinking source when out on the trail. That's why it's one of the Top 10 Essentials you must have in your hiking armoury.

But, what's best? A bottle or a bladder? Good question!

Until the early 1990's there wasn't much choice. However, the water bladder was invented by Camelbak in 1988, which allows hikers to sip water without using their hands, or even slowing down. That changed the landscape. But water bottles haven't gone away. There is a firm argument for either.

**Water bottles** - I don't need to explain what these are! Nowadays however, they do come in all shapes and designs, including BPA-free plastic, aluminium, or insulated. Some come with straws, and filters.

**Hydration Bladder** - These are plastic, with a long hose and a locking mouthpiece attached, that serves as a drinking straw. They are stored in a pouch at the back of your rucksack or hiking vest. The hose slides through a loop over your shoulder, with the mouthpiece being easily accessible to your face for whenever you need to take a sip of water.

Capacity

The key to either is to ensure you are carrying enough water to keep you going throughout your hike. For a long hike, especially when it's hot or dry, it's essential to carry quite a bit of water!

Your average water bottle will hold 750ml to 1 litre of fluid. A hydration bladder can hold a lot more, sometimes 3-4 litres of fluid! Of course that comes at a price, being a heavier load to carry. However, as a bladder has a soft pouch design, it can sit very comfortably against your lower back, which makes it easier to carry a heavier load. In comparison, if you carried 3 water bottles, they would take up much more space in your rucksack, and would feel quite uncomfortable! (note there are soft water bottles or pouches you can buy).

### **Water Bladder Pros**

- Huge Capacity
- Easy to sip water and stay hydrated
- Easy to pack and feel snug

### **Water Bladder Cons**

- Heavier
  - Hard to know how much water you have left
  - Can be prone to breaking
  - Hoses can freeze at higher elevations
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### My Preference

Given everything above, it's all a matter of personal preference. Personally I like switching between bladder and bottle, depending on the type of hike I'm doing.

For the majority of my hikes in the UK I tend to use my [1 litre Camelbak water bottle](#), and carry one to two smaller [500ml soft water pouches](#) as back up. For longer and more challenging hikes I use my [Osprey 2.5 litre Water Bladder](#).

When embarking on high elevation treks, such as Everest Base Camp or Kilimanjaro, you'll need to have a 2.5 litre water bladder, and have 2 x Camelbak water bottles for summit night!

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## 7. Headtorch





It might seem a little strange for me to include a headtorch as a Top 10 Hiking Gear Essential, especially if you're hiking in the longer Summer months!

However, it's an absolute MUST HAVE, and for a number of reasons...

## **Safety**

No matter what time of day you venture out, you just never know what can unfold. You could end up being out longer than you had planned, others could be much slower than you, or someone might get injured. Any one of those reasons could mean you ending up walking back in the dark.

The added benefit if you do get into any trouble, is that a headtorch can be used to signal for help. Many have multiple light settings which can aid rescue services to easily find you.

## **Dawn and Dusk**

If you're like me and like to get out on the trail really early, that can often mean you're starting either in the dark, or in very poor light. Other hikes or challenges like the 3 Peaks for instance mean you'll definitely be walking both before sunrise and after sunset!

## **Night Walks**

There are many charity walks that start late at night. So a headtorch will be essential for those. Organisers won't actually let you go out without one! You definitely can't use your phone light, as it's simply not adequate.

Choosing the right headtorch

It can be a bit overwhelming when choosing the right headtorch, as there are many on the market, with varying levels of ability and indeed price! But these are some things to consider to help get you started.

## **Lumens**

Lumens measure the brightness of the headtorch. The higher the number, the higher the brightness. For most night time hikes you should go for something between 300-600 lumens, but that depends on how much you're willing to spend!

## **Battery Life**

What settings you use on the headtorch can drastically affect it's battery life. The higher the setting, the shorter the battery life. You can buy chargeable headtorches. I tend to take 2 chargeable headtorches with me, which offers

me much more security knowing I'll never run out of battery! If you go for a battery option, then it's best to carry spare batteries.

## **Distance**

Choosing a headtorch that offers a longer distance is a good option, especially if you're trekking in rugged terrain or mountainous regions.

## **Light settings**

I find it really useful to have a headtorch with different light settings, so I can switch my beam's focus depending on the activity I'm doing. They tend to be controlled by using buttons, but some come with reactive light technology, which will adjust the light automatically. the Red Light setting is particularly useful for reading maps, or if you're in a group and don't want to shine a bright light into someone's eyes!

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## Recommended Headtorches

One of the most highly rated headtorches is the [Black Diamond Storm 500-R](#), for its brightness, battery life and intuitive controls.

Petzl is a popular brand amongst the hiking community. The [Petzl Actik Core](#), with around 600 lumens brightness, is excellent.

Another one from Petzl has to be the [Petzl Tikkina](#). This represents great value at around £25 for 300 lumens brightness, and is easy to use. It comes with 3xAAA or rechargeable battery.

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## 8. First Aid Kit / Sun Protection



Sometimes things don't go to plan when we're out hiking, and it's vitally important to be prepared. Slips can easily happen which can cause wounds or grazes. Blisters can strike at any time, seasonal allergies can be triggered, or an upset stomach could strike perhaps. There could be many more reasons why having a basic first aid kit on your hikes is an absolute must.

A first aid kit should be ideally tailored to your own needs. So you can go out on the trail with the confidence that you have the necessary supplies to handle most situations that could arise unexpectedly. If you're going out with other hikers, you could always take a few additional items as an extra precaution.

Aside from any personal medication you take, you don't need to go mad and carry a whole pharmaceutical shopping list, but there are some essentials that you should include...

- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Gloves
- Wound Dressings
- Blister plasters
- Cotton buds
- Assorted bandages
- Plasters
- Paracetamol / Ibruprofen / or Aspirin
- Immodium (anti-diarrhoea)
- Anti-Histamine
- Foil blanket / Bivvy bag
- Sun protection

That might sound like a lot to carry, but most first aid kits that are designed for trekking, come with some of these items, and are easily stored in a lightweight bag.

In addition to your first aid kit, it's also important to ensure you take sun protection. You're likely to be spending a great deal of time outdoors exposed to the elements. Even in cloudy weather the Sun's UV rays can find a way through, especially at higher altitude.

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## 9. Snacks



Whenever we go hiking, our body burns a great deal of energy, which means we're likely to get really hungry, tired, dehydrated, and ultimately grumpy! That of course is if we haven't brought sufficient and appropriate snacks to fuel us along the way.

Hiking takes preparation, and good preparation is thinking about food! What food to have before you set off on your hike, what food to take with you to keep your energy levels up, and then what food you'll need once you've finished!

Pre-hike food

I don't know about you, but first thing in the morning my body doesn't always want a huge breakfast. However if I'm going out for a long hike, I always ensure I fuel up before I set off. Fuelling up doesn't mean you need to have a full English with all the trimmings...although go for it if you choose to! Taking slow release energy foods such as muesli, porridge or bananas for example, will be sufficient, and a great and delicious way to start the day!

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## Snacks on your hike

This is where the pre-hike preparation comes in. Obviously much of it is down to personal choice, but the key thing is to have a balance. It's all well and good taking sugary treats, which will give you a quick hit of energy, but sugar alone won't replace your body's fuel, which is why you need to consider snacks that have other, longer lasting benefits to keep you going, for longer.

So what types of snacks should I take?

**Protein/Carbs:** Snacks that are rich in carbohydrates and proteins, provide a steady release of energy, which will help to keep you going without succumbing to fatigue. There are plenty of options you could choose from including - protein or cereal bars, gel shots, oat cakes, fruit cake for example.

My personal favourites are [Cliff Bars](#) and [Nature Valley cereal bars](#). Or a firm hiker's choice [Kendal Mint Cake](#)

**Salt and savoury snacks:** When we hike for long periods our body's response is to sweat, which in turn causes us to lose salt (sodium) from the body. There are various ways we can manage our salt intake. One way is to take electrolytes, which you can add into your water. This will help to regulate our salt intake as well as keeping our body hydrated. I take [SIS electrolyte tablets](#).

Another great way to maintain our salt levels is by eating snacks. Some great options include crisps, crackers, nuts, (as long as no one in your group has an allergy), trail mix, protein bars, oat cakes.

**Fruit and Veg:** There's nothing like having fresh food with you. Bananas, apples, oranges are great options.

**Hot food:** A great option If you're going for a long hike in the cold! You will need to prepare food in advance and be able to store it in packaging that will retain its heat.

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## Food after your hike

No advice or guidance needed...have anything you want, you've earned it!

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## 10. Rucksack / Trail Vest



Lastly, but most importantly, is looking at 'how' we will store and carry our essential hiking gear items when we go out on the trail. We can't carry all our stuff in our hands after all!

This is where having a good quality hiking rucksack/backpack or Trail Vest will be really useful. Not only does it serve to carry all your essential gear, but it aids weight distribution, hands-free movement, and convenience, enhancing your overall hiking experience.

Things to consider when choosing a rucksack

**Weight** - especially if you plan to carry it over long distances. A lighter rucksack or trail vest will help you reduce the total weight of your load, and make it much easier for you to move about.

**Fit:** You need to feel comfortable when you're out hiking and on your feet all day. If your rucksack doesn't feel right, it can cause discomfort and, over a long period can lead to back problems.

**Features:** One thing that's quite common is how much heat you can generate when hiking. So choosing a rucksack that enables ventilation to increase the airflow between your body and your back is a good idea. Look for a rucksack that has a stretch net back design.

**Compartments:** Given all the essential hiking gear we've covered in this article, you'll want to have easy access to essential items whilst you're walking. Some rucksacks / Backpacks will come with extra pockets and compartments to allow for items to be clearly separated, such as electronic equipment and liquids.

**Waterproofing:** Even on a short hike the weather, particularly in the UK, can be unpredictable. Most modern hiking rucksacks these days come with waterproofing. Additionally look for a bag that has a rain cover (which is normally accessed at the underneath of your rucksack).

**Straps and Belts:** These will enable you to customise your rucksack to fit to your specifications. That means you're more able to distribute the weight more evenly.

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## Choosing the right rucksack for your hiking activity

In order to choose the right type of bag you will need, consider the type of hiking activity you'll be doing.

**Walks and short hikes:** This is where a small, lightweight 10-20 litre rucksack or even a trail vest would be ideal. You won't need to be carrying too much gear and other items, so going light is best for this type of activity. The [Evadict 10 litre trail vest](#) or the [Aonijie 5 Litre trail vest](#) are ideal for this type of hike.

**Hiking and long distance hiking:** Typically if you'll be out on the trail for several hours, or perhaps venturing up in the hills/mountains. This is where you'll need a rucksack with a capacity of between 20 to 50 litres (ideally somewhere in between). These types of hikes make up the majority of my activity, so it's important I have a rucksack that is comfortable and durable. I use a [30 litre Berghaus rucksack](#) for many of my hikes. The [Women's Osprey Tempest 30 litre](#) is highly recommended.

**Multi-day hiking:** You'll need to choose a rucksack or backpack that not only will feel comfortable and well-balanced, but also has a large enough capacity to store more essential items you'll be needing to get you through

a few days. Typically you'd be looking at a capacity of around 40-60 litres. I recommend the [Men's Forclaz 50+10 litre rucksack](#). For women the [Forclaz Ultralight 45+10 litre MT500 rucksack](#) would be ideal.

**Camping / Expeditions:** For these type of treks, you're going to need a fair bit of stuff! So ideally you'd be looking at a capacity of somewhere between 55-75+ litres. For men I recommend the [Osprey Rook 65 litre](#) rucksack. For women the [Osprey Renn 65 litre ventilated](#) rucksack.

**Challenge / Charity events:** These can vary from 1/2 day to a full day, or through the night. For most 1/2 day or full day events I tend to wear my [trail vest](#), as it's incredibly light, and I won't need to worry about food as there tends to be rest stop along the way. At most I'd wear my [30 litre rucksack](#) for a 1/2 day or full day event. Most event organisations have facilities where you can leave a spare bag with them, which you can access further along the distance, if you need a spare change of clothes for example.

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## Summary

Once you have all these hiking gear essentials you should be ready to embark on your hiking adventures with confidence. At the very least you've now got a handy checklist when packing for your next hike!

If you enjoyed reading this blog, you can also check out my [Comprehensive Guide to Hiking for Beginners](#).

Happy Hiking!

Marc

If you enjoy my blogs feel free to [buy me a coffee!](#)