


Planning a trip along the trails? There are so many factors to consider – and if you’re not prepared, you can end up in a real pickle when plans start to veer off-track (pun intended). Nonetheless, there are many tips and tricks you can implement to promise a successful hiking trip. Read on for my top ten pointers to kick-start your next outdoor expedition.

 *Read on for my top ten pointers to kick-start your next outdoor expedition. Image: Sea to Summit*

## 1. Bags, Bags, Bags

You need bags. You need more bags than you think. A garbage bag. A dirty laundry bag. A wet-stuff bag. A dry-stuff bag. A bag-to-keep-the-spare-bags-in bag. Plastic garbage bags weigh absolutely nothing, but become the handiest items you’ll ever need on the track. Pack at least three or four, and you’ll thank me later.

## 2. Pack Right


I’ll keep this simple because I could write a whole article on this.

Put your heavy, least commonly used items down the bottom of your rucksack. This could include your sleeping bag, tent, mat, some food or fuel, and spares.

Stick your water and hiking food in the middle, so you can easily hydrate and eat on the track without having to dig.

Finally, pack your essential items at the top: a map and compass, an extra layer/outer shell of clothing, first aid kit, camera, and maybe some snacks.

 *The more bags, the better! Photo: Exped*

 *If you take your time packing your bag properly, so you can access everything easily on the trail. Photo: Sea to Summit*


## 3. Light it Up

One more thing for the top of your rucksack: your head torch. Trust me, the times you need this item are the times you don’t want to be rummaging around blindly for it. It’ll be dark. So put it in a spot you know you can easily find it by feel.

I always put my head torch in the top lid compartment of my rucksack, where I know I can find it with minimal fuss in a dark, cramped tent.

## 4. Easy-Use Hydration System

Instead of carrying more than one water bottle or container, kit out your rucksack with an easy-to-use reservoir. That way, you can have easy access to your water supply without having to reach around your pack.

 *When the sky gets dark, you’ll want to be able to get to your headtorch easily. Photo: Sea to Summit*

✘ *Kit out your rucksack with an easy-to-use reservoir. Image: Exped*

## 5. Sharing is Caring

The smart hiker knows they might forget something, which hopefully your hiking buddy will have. You are going to need bargaining power to get this coveted item off them, without being reminded of it for the remainder of the trip!

Pack something you know your buddy is going to need or like, but you have no interest in whatsoever. Snacks or drinks are the obvious commodities here.

## 6. Skin Deep

Try wearing a pair of old skins, at least on your legs.

Here's why: they provide your legs with low-friction and lightweight scratch-resistance from low-level shrubs. As any cyclist will tell you, they also breathe exceptionally well but allow your legs a little insulation against cold conditions (at least long enough for you to fetch your pants from your rucksack).

Another advantage is the exceptional flexibility they grant you. When you're climbing and rock-hopping, you can sometimes be restricted by conventional clothing.

✘ *Your buddy will probably have something you need and vice versa. Photo: Sea to Summit*

## 7. First Aid

Most good first aid kits cover the basics of wound dressing: sterile swabs, saline water, and various bandage options. Keep this maintained every trip, but add in the following over-the-counter medications:

- Anti-inflammatory gel and/or tablets
- Pain relief
- Blister relief pads
- Muscle relief gel
- Antihistamines
- And of course, any other prescribed medication you might need

Just make sure you don't take any contraindicated medication, and consult your doctor if you're not sure. You see where I'm going with this. Hiking is physical; it's hard and it's rough. You need to make repairs and maintenance on your body as you go. Part of that is pain relief, inflammation relief, or just helping your body relax and repair overnight – so stock up on whatever 'help' you can give it and thank me in the morning.

## 8. Carabiners

Get your hands on some small spring-clip carabiners. You're not trying to look like a grade-32

rock climber, you just need a couple of small cheapies. They are super convenient for clipping stuff on to your rucksack securely: mugs, gloves, even a camera strap if you have to. Also, clip one on to that rucksack zipper you can never find in a hurry. You'll never lose it again!



*Make sure you stock up your first aid kit with hiking specific essentials. Image: Exped*

## 9. New Cologne

This tip is my personal favourite. Pack a unique, previously unused deodorant, cologne or perfume. Your brain is wired with strong neural connections between scent (olfactory) and memory functions. By using a brand-new scent, you'll grow strong associations between your new experiences hiking, and the new smell.

Months or even years later, your memories of good times on the track will come back vividly with the mere whiff of the ol' cologne.

## 10. The 3:30 Rule


It's time to start looking for a campsite at 3:30 in the afternoon. Trust me, years of research have been devoted to figuring out this magic, 'Goldilocks' moment in the day.

Three o'clock is too early. You can still be moving, making ground. Four o'clock is pushing it.

The sun will be down over those mountains in an hour - are you gonna have your tent up, fire set, and be in position for your scenic sunset photography session in an hour? Well, maybe.

But you'll be pushing it.

So trust me, 3:30pm is campy-time. Mmkay? Break the rule, and refer to Hack #3!

 *When it starts to get closer to sundown, be sure to scout out somewhere to camp. Photo: Sea to Summit.*

*This article was updated for 2024.*

**Got any other camping hacks to share?**