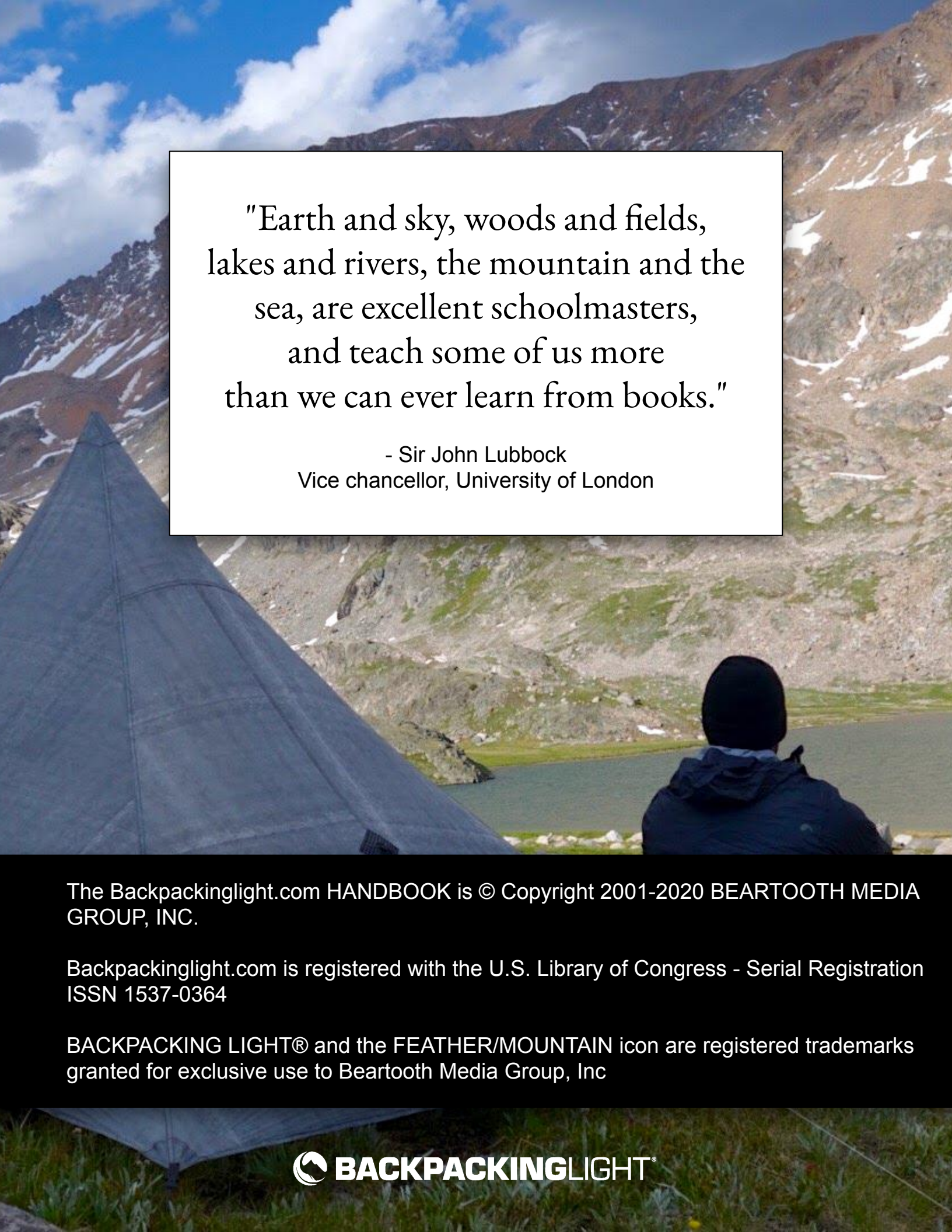


Backpackinglight.com

Handbook

**A resource guide
for backpackers.**

1st Edition, 2020



"Earth and sky, woods and fields,
lakes and rivers, the mountain and the
sea, are excellent schoolmasters,
and teach some of us more
than we can ever learn from books."

- Sir John Lubbock
Vice chancellor, University of London

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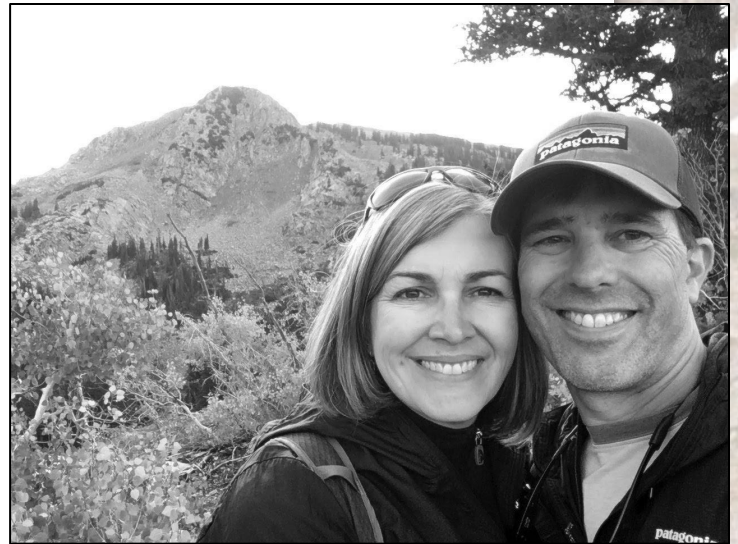
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Letter from Our Founders

We are obsessed with helping you reduce your pack weight, learn outdoor skills, and not waste money buying gear you don't need.

Because when you lighten up your pack, you enjoy hiking more.

And when you enjoy hiking more, you'll do it more. And when you hike more, you'll connect with nature more. When you connect with nature more, you'll be happier.



We started Backpacking Light in our garage in 2001, have employed mostly friends and family, let people bring their dogs and babies to work, and remain committed to owning a company that values community – and a passion for restoring our soul outside.

We welcome your experience, your participation in our community, and of course, the opportunity to serve and help you as well.

Please [join us today](#) and support our community's efforts to help people enjoy a less burdened life in the wilderness – and beyond.

Godspeed and Go Light,
Ryan and Stephanie Jordan

Our Vision

More safety, comfort, accomplishment, and enjoyment - for **all** backcountry enthusiasts.

Our Mission

Backpacking Light helps people save time and money learning about the philosophy, gear, and skills required to pursue their outdoor adventures in lightweight style.

Our Customers

Human-powered adventurers - hikers and backpackers, climbers, backcountry skiers, thru-hikers, packrafters, kayak campers, backcountry hunters and fishers, adventure cyclists and bikepackers, search and rescue and disaster relief personnel, expeditionary and special forces military personnel, and more.

Our Values

We provide thoroughly-researched information and education about gear and skills that is trustworthy, fair, and balanced.

How we earn your trust.

Product reviews are developed over the course of several weeks to several months; the process includes (but isn't necessarily limited to) the following components as necessary:



1. Field testing appropriate to the type of product being reviewed.
2. Side-by-side comparison between similar products.
3. Interviews with users who have extensive experience with the product being reviewed.
4. Consultation with subject-matter experts about materials, design, and engineering.
5. Research about the product from other editorial sources, and evaluation of the sources in terms of their bias, reviewer experience, conflicts of interests, reputation, and review methodology.
6. Research about customer experiences from published user reviews, and analysis of those user reviews for both positive and negative experiences with the product being reviewed.

In our reviews, we will disclose our review methodology and include in that disclosure the following as deemed necessary for justifying review claims: description of field testing, description of reviewer experience, and history of reviewer experience with related products.

Excerpted from [Backpacking Light Publisher and Founder Ryan Jordan's letter to readers about journalistic integrity, product reviews, and affiliate commissions.](#)

What is Ultralight Backpacking?

"To me, ultralight backpacking is a practice centered around the idea that one should solve a problem using as little as possible, but that which is used to solve the problem should be as effective as possible. Defined as such, the actual weight of individual pieces of gear, or one's pack weight, matters less and takes a back seat to the performance-to-weight ratio of your gear."

Ryan Jordan

Excerpt from [What is Ultralight Backpacking?](#)



Core Principles of Lightweight Backpacking

In [*The Art of Ultralight*](#) we proposed the seven tenets of lightweight backpacking:

1. Take inventory;
2. Simplify;
3. Limit contingencies;
4. Value core function;
5. Consider multiple use;
6. Build systems;
7. Develop your skills.

Learn more about these tenet's in our online video seminar [*Ultralight Style: Core Principles*](#).



Backpackinglight.com at a Glance

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- Go to the [education center](#).

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- View [current gear deals](#).
- Shop for gear sales using our [Gear Finder Search Engine](#).

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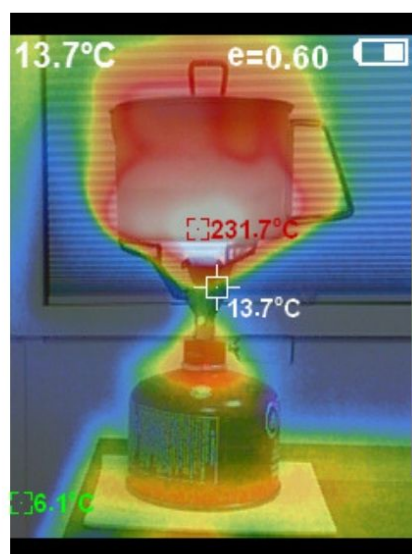
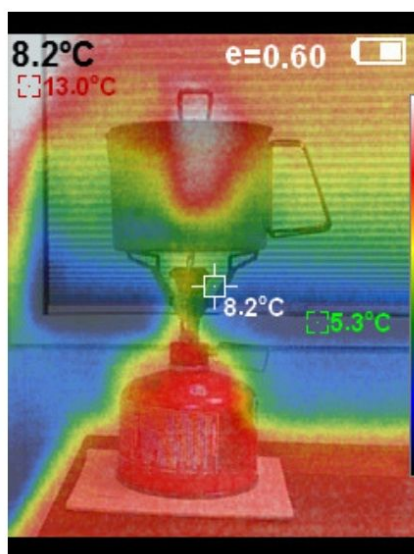
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2. [Resources, Tools, and Processes for Planning Nontechnical, Off-Trail Backpacking Routes](#)
3. [How to Use Trekking Poles](#)
4. [Wet, Cold Feet When Backpacking - How to Keep Your Feet Dry and Warm in Inclement Weather](#)
5. [How to Choose Backpacking Gear for Inclement Conditions: Clothing, Sleep, and Shelter Systems](#)
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Top Video: [Ultralight Tent in 65+ mph Wind](#)

Top Gear Review Videos:

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5. [Upright Canister Stoves](#)
6. [Training for Backpacking](#)
7. [Trekking Poles](#)

The Backpacking Light Podcast explores the technology, gear, skills, and philosophy of backcountry wilderness travel through stories, interviews, and investigative reports.

[View all podcasts...](#)

“In-Depth and Well Made – This podcast is fantastic and extremely helpful if you are looking to gain knowledge in the area of backpacking. It’s clear the creator of this podcast has plenty of experience on the trail.” – SixStringAT2012 (iTunes Review)

Backpacking Light Podcast

Backpackinglight.com

WILDERNESS · 2018 – 2019 ★★★★★ 5.0, 103 RATINGS

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How do I start?

Start by taking inventory! ([Watch this Video](#))

You'll never know where you need to go if you don't know where you're at right now.

1. Download and print our [Gear List Inventory PDF](#),
2. Weigh your stuff and log it on the gear list.
3. Add up the weights in each category, and total them.



Now you know where you're at!

How do I start?

The next step is to start the process of lightening up.

Some resources we recommend:

- [Post your gear list in the forums](#) and ask for feedback from other members in our community.
- Watch the [Core Principles Video](#).
- Start familiarizing yourself with some of our [recommendations for lightweight gear](#).
- Take our signature online course - the [Ultralight Backpacking Boot Camp](#).

3-Season Gear List


How about carrying a pack that weighs less than eight pounds?

[Here's a 3-season gear list](#) that shows you one way to be safe, warm, and comfortable in most of the US Mountain West during normal backpacking seasons.

[See More Gear Lists in our Archives](#)

Printable Gear List

Print the next page for a quick and easy gear list you can adapt for any trip.



ULTRALIGHT BACKPACKING GEAR LIST

<p>Clothing / Items Worn / Carried</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> hat with brim<input type="checkbox"/> trekking shirt<input type="checkbox"/> underwear<input type="checkbox"/> trekking pants<input type="checkbox"/> trekking socks<input type="checkbox"/> trail running shoes<input type="checkbox"/> bandana or buff<input type="checkbox"/> shortie gaiters<input type="checkbox"/> sunglasses with retaining strap<input type="checkbox"/> trekking poles<input type="checkbox"/> emergency whistle on neck lanyard <p>Storm Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> wind shirt<input type="checkbox"/> rain jacket<input type="checkbox"/> rain pants<input type="checkbox"/> beanie hat<input type="checkbox"/> liner gloves<input type="checkbox"/> rain mitts<input type="checkbox"/> fleece or wool base layer hoody <p>Camp Clothing & Sleeping Gear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> high loft insulated jacket<input type="checkbox"/> high loft insulated pants<input type="checkbox"/> sleeping bag or quilt<input type="checkbox"/> sleeping pad + pad repair kit<input type="checkbox"/> ground cloth<input type="checkbox"/> sleeping socks / extra pair of trekking socks<input type="checkbox"/> tarp / shelter<input type="checkbox"/> shelter stakes<input type="checkbox"/> shelter guy lines <p>Packing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> backpack<input type="checkbox"/> waterproof stow bags for sleeping bag and insulating clothing<input type="checkbox"/> water resistant stow bags for organizing the rest of your gear	<p>Cooking & Hydration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> stove kit (burner, windscreen)<input type="checkbox"/> stove ignitor / sparker / lighter / etc.<input type="checkbox"/> cooking pot<input type="checkbox"/> fuel storage container / canister<input type="checkbox"/> eating utensil / spork<input type="checkbox"/> water bottle(s)<input type="checkbox"/> water treatment kit / device <p>Navigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> map(s)<input type="checkbox"/> trail data book page(s)<input type="checkbox"/> compass / GPS<input type="checkbox"/> LED headlamp<input type="checkbox"/> extra headlamp batteries <p>Other Essentials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> first aid kit (minor wounds, meds, blisters)<input type="checkbox"/> firestarting kit (sparker, fire starters)<input type="checkbox"/> communications device (sat phone, SPOT, etc.)<input type="checkbox"/> toiletries (TP, toothbrush, toothpaste, hand sanitizer)<input type="checkbox"/> camera / batteries / case / memory cards<input type="checkbox"/> miniature journal & waterproof pen<input type="checkbox"/> ice axe & crampons (for early season mountain or glacier travel) <p>Add Custom Items Here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> _____<input type="checkbox"/> _____<input type="checkbox"/> _____<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <p>Consumables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> food<input type="checkbox"/> fuel<input type="checkbox"/> water
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PACK LESS backpackinglight.com **BE MORE**



ULTRALIGHT BACKPACKING GEAR LIST

Clothing / Items Worn / Carried

- hat with brim
- trekking shirt
- underwear
- trekking pants
- trekking socks
- trail running shoes
- bandana or buff
- shortie gaiters
- sunglasses with retaining strap
- trekking poles
- emergency whistle on neck lanyard

Storm Clothing

- wind shirt
- rain jacket
- rain pants
- beanie hat
- liner gloves
- rain mitts
- fleece or wool base layer hoody

Camp Clothing & Sleeping Gear

- high loft insulated jacket
- high loft insulated pants
- sleeping bag or quilt
- sleeping pad + pad repair kit
- ground cloth
- sleeping socks / extra pair of trekking socks
- tarp / shelter
- shelter stakes
- shelter guy lines

Packing

- backpack
- waterproof stow bags for sleeping bag and insulating clothing
- water resistant stow bags for organizing the rest of your gear

Cooking & Hydration

- stove kit (burner, windscreen)
- stove ignitor / sparker / lighter / etc.
- cooking pot
- fuel storage container / canister
- eating utensil / spork
- water bottle(s)
- water treatment kit / device

Navigation

- map(s)
- trail data book page(s)
- compass / GPS
- LED headlamp
- extra headlamp batteries

Other Essentials

- first aid kit (minor wounds, meds, blisters)
- firestarting kit (sparker, fire starters)
- communications device (sat phone, SPOT, etc.)
- toiletries (TP, toothbrush, toothpaste, hand sanitizer)
- camera / batteries / case / memory cards
- miniature journal & waterproof pen
- ice axe & crampons (for early season mountain or glacier travel)

Add Custom Items Here

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Consumables

- food
- fuel
- water

Trip Planning & Logistics

Here's an example of how to use a spreadsheet to plan your route, food requirements, gear, and more.

The image displays several spreadsheets and a map used for trip planning. The top spreadsheet is a gear list with columns for 'item', 'quantity', 'category', 'weight (oz)', 'packed weight', and 'volume (inches³)'. The middle spreadsheet is a food requirements table with columns for 'select', 'meal type', 'description', 'qty per day (oz)', 'total # days', 'item weight for trip (oz)', 'primary macro type', 'calorie', 'carb (g)', 'fat (g)', 'protein (g)', and 'Calories'. The bottom spreadsheet is a route table with columns for 'Leg #', 'Start', 'Finish', 'Via', 'Camp?', 'Miles', and 'Corrected'. A topographic map on the right shows a trail route through a mountainous area.

Study Ryan Jordan's detailed trip planning and gear list spreadsheet for backpacking in inclement conditions and download his [Masterclass Trip Planner](#).

- Learn more about the ["Backpacking in Inclement Conditions" Masterclass](#).

Safety Considerations for Backpackers

1. First Aid skills and knowledge can help save pack weight, and make you safer.

- Get some training in first aid and wilderness emergency management. NOLS Wilderness First Aid is a gold standard.
- Check out our article about [Lightweight First Aid and Trauma Kits](#).

2. On Hiking Solo

- Our community talks about [staying safe while hiking solo](#) or review these ideas for [creating a safety plan and itinerary](#).

3. Use a Satellite Communications Device

- Here's a primer on [satellite communications devices for backpackers](#).

Highly Recommended: the Garmin inReach Mini

The [Garmin inReach Mini](#) offers SOS + 2-way texting. Communicate with friends, family, and rescuers. At 3.4 oz, it's the lightest two-way communicator available.

See our in-depth [Garmin inReach Mini Review](#).



Luxury Items for Lightweight Backpackers

One way to save weight is to eliminate luxury items. That's helpful to some extent, but once you lighten up, consider adding back a pound or two of gear to dramatically increase your comfort.

Increase your backpacking comfort dramatically with these "light but comfortable" luxury items (click image to read reviews of these products).



Luxury Items for Lightweight Backpackers

Of course, whether or not you should take a camp chair a controversial topic in our community.



[Read our comprehensive state-of-the-market report about ultralight camp seating](#) options and make your own informed decision.

Lightweight Backpacking in the Winter?

Sure! Lightweight principles can be applied even in cold, snowy climates.

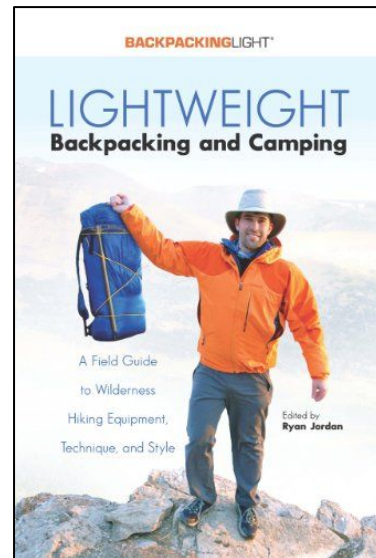
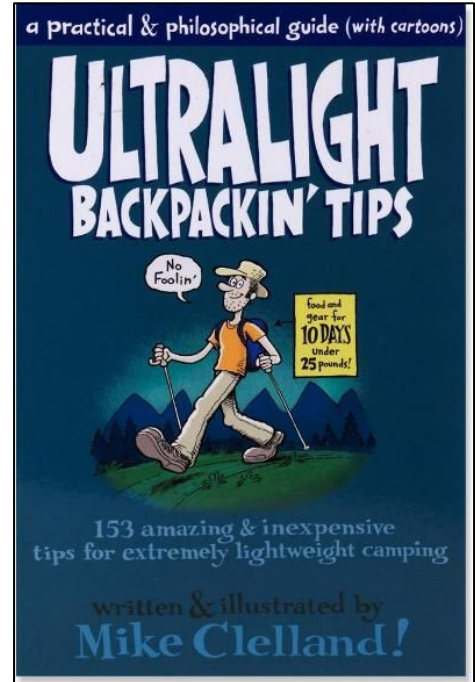
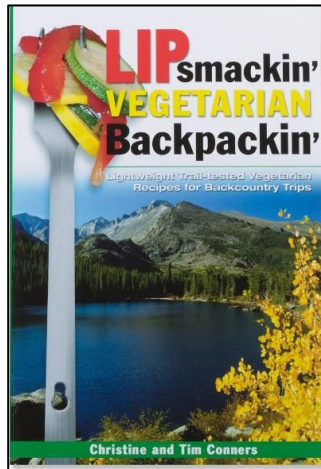
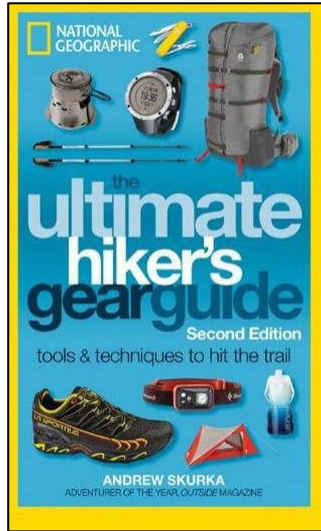
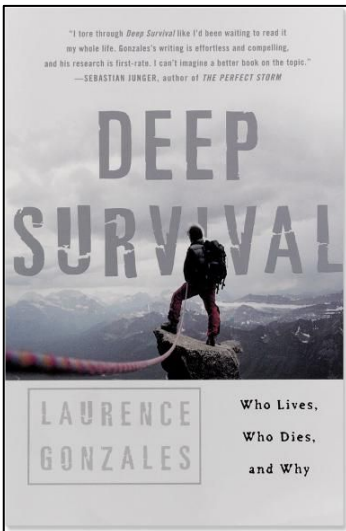
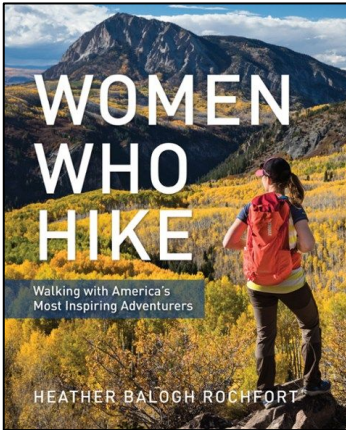
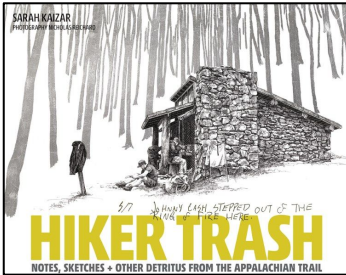


Here are a few resources to keep you warm and safe:

- [Lightweight Backpacking in Winter - Gear and Techniques from the Arctic](#)
- [Ultralight Winter Backpacking Gear List](#)
- **(Video)** [Winter Backpacking in Southeast Wyoming](#)

Backpacking Books We Recommend

Click book cover images to learn more, or [see more of our book recommendations!](#)



Backpackinglight.com Membership

We are a Membership Community:

Whether you want to join our community and share ideas, gain access to our 4.3-million word archive for research, stay abreast of new lightweight gear and trends, or enroll in our education programs, you can do it all at Backpacking Light.

- Interact with our community in the [Forums](#).
- See our [options for membership](#).

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