

# The Big Four of Backpacking

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# The Big Four of Backpacking

- ▶ *Overview*
- ▶ Backpacks
- ▶ Sleeping Bags (Ground Pads)
- ▶ Boots (Socks, Trekking Poles)
- ▶ Raingear & Backcountry Clothing



# Overview

- Knowledge & Training are the best “equipment”
- Quality/Reliable brand
- Keep it simple
- Go to a Quality Supplier:
  - Major Stores: REI, Cabela’s, L.L.Bean
  - Local outfitters! Trail House (Frererick) et al
- Online: (Major above) Campmor, Hiker Direct
- SALES!



# Backpacks

## External Frame

- ▶ Cheaper
- ▶ Spaced from back
  - Cooler
  - Tolerates lumps
  - More flexibility in packing
- ▶ “Some” gear outside
- ▶ More pockets

◀ Trade-offs ▶

## Internal Frame

- ▶ Close to back
  - Hotter
  - Careful packing required
- ▶ Off-trail/ascent
  - ▶ Lower CG
- ▶ Most gear inside
- ▶ Compartments with divider/shelf



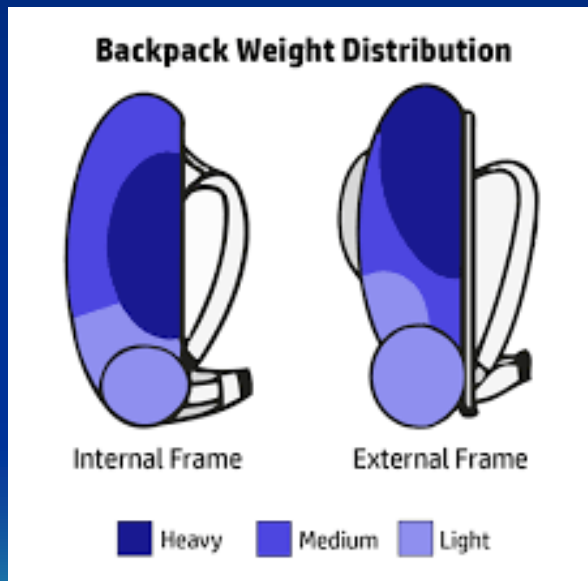
# Backpack Sizing

- ▶ Must fit YOUR body
- ▶ Large enough for personal AND crew gear  
(Crew “owns” about 1/3 of your pack volume)
- ▶ Recommend ~4500 cu in/70 liter capacity
- ▶ Try on several sizes and makes
- ▶ Fixed size or Adjustable Torso Length
- ▶ Weight of the pack itself - !



# Backpack Loading

- ▶ Panel (front) or top loading
- ▶ One large or several divided compartments



# Backpack Adjustments

## 1 - Hip belt

Rides on hips, full contact

## 2 - Shoulder straps

Width to fit shoulders

## 3 - Stabilizer straps

Chest

Side (hip) Load Adjusters

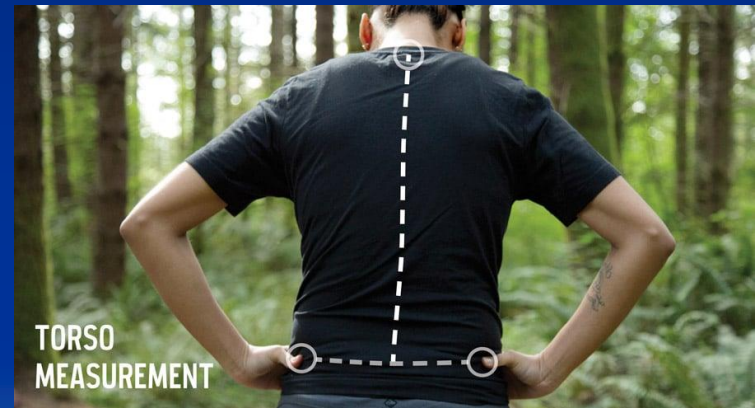
Load Lifters (top)

## Torso Length

Too short: Shoulders only

Too long: Hips only

C7 vertebrae to iliac crest



# Sleeping Bags

## Mummy

- Less room, less to heat
- Hooded
- Lighter

## Rectangular

- Roomier, more to heat
- No hood
- Heavier

- ▶ Temperature ratings: EN 13537 (European)
  - Not consistent throughout industry...
- ▶ 20° F bag = good year round
- ▶ “Loft” – Baffles – Tubes
- ▶ Liner can add up to 10° F add'l warmth
- ▶ Or sleep in long johns
- ▶ Double bag in waterproof sacks





# Sleeping Bags - Insulation

## Down

- ▶ Warmest
- ▶ Lightest
- ▶ More expensive
- ▶ Most compressible
- ▶ New “dry-down” doesn’t lose insulative ability when wet

## Synthetic

- ▶ Warm enough
- ▶ Moderate weight
- ▶ Cheaper
- ▶ Less compressible
- ▶ Retains insulative property when wet



# Ground Pads

$\frac{3}{4}$  length or full length

## Closed-cell foam

- ▶ Cheap
- ▶ Lightest
- ▶ Indestructible
- ▶ Packs quickly

## Self-inflating

- ▶ More expensive
- ▶ Heavier
- ▶ Less bulky
- ▶ More comfortable

## Inflatable

- ▶ Most expensive
- ▶ Lighter
- ▶ Minimal bulk
- ▶ Noisy
- ▶ Puncture?
- ▶ Most comfortable



# Boots

Lightest boot capable of handling trails and loads you'll have

## Leather

- ▶ More expensive
- ▶ Careful break in
- ▶ Heavier

## Fabric & Leather

- ▶ Less expensive
- ▶ Minimal break-in
- ▶ Lighter

- ▶ One pound of boot equals 5 pounds in your pack
- ▶ High or Mid or Low Cut
- ▶ It's the fit not the size...



# Fitting Boots

- ▶ Snug at instep, ball of foot, heel
- ▶ Room for toes; no contact with front on incline
- ▶ Walk around store:
  - Do they feel right?
  - Do they slip?
- ▶ Proper lacing

## Socks

- ▶ Wear 2 pair: thin synthetic liner, midweight wool
- ▶ “Hiking socks” - reinforced at stress areas



# Trekking Poles

- ▶ Essential for most adults
- ▶ Requires some practice to get used to
- ▶ Assists with uphill and downhill
- ▶ Use as tarp poles (multiuse concept)



# Rain Gear

Objective: stay dry and warm (comfortable)

Two piece rain suit (no ponchos)

**BREATHABLE**

Not worth it to go cheap

Nylon w/Gortex – Nylon – Vinyl

Packs small

Pants with side zips and/or boot zips



# Backcountry Clothing

- ▶ NO COTTON!
- ▶ Wicking material (nylon/polyester/wool)
- ▶ Use Layers
  - heat & moisture control (avoid sweating!)
  - easily adjustable
  - Example: t-shirt, fleece, rain jacket
- ▶ Hat (sun, rain, cold)



# Trail Wisdom

- ▶ High tech gives convenient options, but...  
What you have in your head  
*is more important than*  
What you have in your pack
- ▶ Fit, fit and... fit
- ▶ No such thing as bad weather, only inadequate gear...

