

Equipment List and Notes

General

Before setting off on your trip, we recommend that you have a look at our suggested equipment list below. Having the right equipment can really make the difference to your trekking experience. It is important you chose equipment that fits you well and that you feel comfortable with.

Manufacturers' marketing material often looks and sounds fantastic so it is easy to be tempted by the latest, top-end, expensive stuff, with all the features and amazing colours. There is absolutely nothing wrong with choosing this equipment, as long as you bear in mind the most important criteria for any equipment - IT HAS TO FIT YOU. In our experience, equipment that is simple yet functional is generally the best. For clothing, we find that a layering system is the most flexible and economical.

We recommend buying equipment from a specialised retailer that stocks a variety of makes, models and sizes and who has experienced staff, ideally trekkers themselves, who can offer advice. Unless you know exactly what model and size fits you, it can be a gamble to buy equipment on-line. If possible, the best test is to use the equipment before you go on your trip. Most equipment is better when 'worn in' and it will give you an opportunity to identify any shortfalls. Having said that, most trekking destinations, like Chamonix, have many very good gear shops.

Base layer

The most important function of the base layer is to transport moisture away from your core so it has to have a wicking effect. Cotton is not suitable. Modern base layer tops can be used as t-shirts on warm days and as extra warmth on cold days. A selection of short and long sleeved tops gives most flexibility. Wicking underwear is also recommended although less important. If your trip is longer than 2 days bring more than one set of tops and underwear.

Mid layer

The purpose of the mid layer is to provide warmth. This is typically a fleece but other materials such as wool and 'Primaloft' are also good. One top is often enough but for flexibility to deal with all types of weather it is worth having one lighter top (or vest) and one warmer top (or jacket).

Trekking trousers and shorts

You need to be able to move unrestricted in your trousers. Too long or too wide trouser legs may cause a tumble. Many modern materials are light and dries quickly. A few pockets are useful. Shorts are great for warmer days. Some trousers have detachable legs that convert to shorts.

Wind and waterproof

Heavy winds and showers are not uncommon in the Alps, so jacket and trousers of a good wind and waterproof material is essential. The jacket should have a hood. Trousers with half-way or full length leg zips are the most practical. 'Shell' type jackets and trousers without insulation are recommended.

Socks

Technical trekking socks are recommended. These are padded in the right places and have a wicking effect to keep feet dry. If your trip is longer than 2 days you should bring 2-3 pairs.

Boots

Your boots are very important, as you will be spending all day wearing them, covering many kilometers over a variety of terrain. Trekking shoes and trainers are not suitable, as you need good ankle support. Look for a sturdy sole with good grip ('Vibram' is the benchmark but other makes are also good). Choose leather boots or boots with a goretex-type lining that are waterproof. Make sure your boots have a perfect fit and wear them before your trip. Getting a custom-made sole is money well spent.

Hats

A light coloured sun hat with a wide brim is important. A warm hat is also necessary, particularly if hut stay is included.

Gloves

It can get chilly, even in summer, particularly if staying overnight in a mountain hut. Fleece gloves with 'Windstopper' material are light and warm.

Sunglasses

Sunglasses with protection from all types of UV rays are essential. Models that wrap around the face and prevent sun coming in through the sides are recommended.

Sun protection

A high factor sunscreen and lip balm is essential. Choose a sunscreen that doesn't run in the eyes when sweating.

Rucksack

If your trip consist of day tours from a valley base 20-30 litres is enough. If you have a single overnight stay in hut you may need 30-40 litres. For multi-day hut tours 40-45 litres is enough. A waterproof rucksack cover or liner is highly recommended to keep things dry during a rain shower. Your rucksack should have a good hip belt for support and should fit you well. Special ladies models are available.

Gaiters

Gaiters can be useful in very wet/muddy conditions.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles can help take the strain off your legs on descent. They will also relieve the legs on ascents as the arm muscles are also used. In addition they aid balance. Telescopic poles with a comfortable grip and adjustable wrist loops are recommended.

Hydration system

Whether you prefer bottles or bladder is a personal choice. Bladders are easier to drink from on the move whereas wide mouthed bottles are cheaper and sturdier and are easier to refill from streams and in huts. One litre is the absolute minimum you should carry and in the hot months two litres are recommended. A flask for hot drinks is also popular with many but is quite bulky and heavy.

Personal Medication and first aid

You must carry any personal medications that you take. It is also highly recommended to carry blister treatment such as 'Compeed' or sports tape, pain relief, etc for personal use. On multi-day hut trips throat lozenges and diarrhea treatment may also be useful.

Sanitary kit

Some may like to take a few tissues for unplanned toilet stops and some wet wipes or dry soap for additional hygiene, particularly when staying in huts.

Other equipment

Depending on your preference and how much weight you like to carry some people like to take items such as camera, penknife (remember to pack knives in haul bag if flying), binoculars and navigational aids such as map, compass, GPS and altimeter (your guide will have necessary navigational aid but some like to practice with their own equipment).

Hut extras

If your trip includes overnight stay in a mountain hut or gite it may be useful to have a sleeping bag liner and earplugs for added comfort. Some huts have basic washing facilities so a small travel towel can be useful. A small head torch can also come in handy.

Money and Travel documents.

Passport, visas, insurance documents, money, credit cards etc. Always carry a copy of your passport and insurance documents in a zip lock bag or other watertight container in your rucksack.

Valley clothing and equipment.

Don't forget to bring any smart clothes you wish to wear around town and any other essentials you need when not trekking e.g. wash bag, toiletries, hair dryers, books, mp3 player etc.

Printer friendly equipment check-list:

Item	Day walks	Overnight	Multi-day	Check ✓
Base layers	M	M	M	
Mid layers for warmth	M	M	M	
Trekking trousers	M	M	M	
Trekking shorts	O	O	R	
Wind and waterproof jacket	M	M	M	
Wind and waterproof trousers	M	M	M	
Trekking socks	M	M	M	
Trekking boots	M	M	M	
Gaiters	O	O	O	
Trekking poles	O	R	R	
Sun hat	R	M	M	
Warm hat	R	M	M	
Gloves	R	M	M	
Rucksack	M	M	M	
Hydration system (bottles or 'bladder')	M	M	M	
Sunglasses	M	M	M	
Personal medication and first aid	M	M	M	
Sun protection (sun screen incl. lip balm)	M	M	M	
Sanitary kit (tissues, wipes)	O	O	O	
Extras (penknife, camera, binoculars, navigation aids)	O	O	O	
Hut extras (sleeping bag liner, ear plugs, head torch)	-	O	R	
Travel documents (passport, visas, insurance, money)	M	M	M	
Valley clothing and equipment.	R	R	R	

M = Mandatory - this equipment is essential for your comfort and safety.

R = Recommended - we believe your experience will be improved with this equipment.

O = Optional - go on, you gear freak.

If your trip itinerary mentions the possibility of an overnight stay in a mountain hut or gite you should take the items in the 'Overnight' column. If your trip is a longer hut-to-hut tour you should take the items in the 'Multi-day' column. Otherwise, just take the equipment for 'Day walks'. If you are in doubt then please contact us.