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Ultralight Tip of the Week

Rotating feature with tips and illustrations from Mike Clelland's new book: *Ultralight Backpackin' Tips*

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by Mike Clelland! | 2011-12-03 12:00:00-07



(Excerpted from *Ultralight Backpackin' Tips: 153 Amazing & Inexpensive Tips for Extremely Lightweight Camping* by Mike Clelland!)

Tip # 61: A breakdown of EVERY gear item

This list has pretty much every item that you *might* need in your arsenal of lightweight camping gear for our model trip. It's meant to be used as a starting point in your planning. Each item has a maximum weight noted in bold text; these are suggested target numbers to help your planning.

Not all of these items are required. There is more listed here than what you'll truly need, so lots are noted as optional. Many maximum weights are pretty high compared to the very specialized gear available. Obviously, if you choose a lighter item, you'll reap the benefits of a lighter backpack.

Compare this to the sample spreadsheet (see Tip # 20: Create a spreadsheet), and you'll see that the weight of the actual items carried on the model trip is much less than this list below.

Clothes

- **Warm hat:** Wool or fleece, watch-cap or balaclava. If you have a torso layer with a sewn-in hood, a warm hat is useful, but not required. This should be considered as part of the sleeping system. **max: 2.5 oz.**
- **Sunglasses:** Protect your eyes. **max: 2.5 oz.**
- **Sun hat:** Baseball cap or a fully brimmed, for sun and rain protection. Synthetic quick drying only. **max: 3 oz.**
- **Short sleeve next-to-skin layer:** (optional) Synthetic or wool, no cotton. Short sleeves are nice in hot weather and add warmth underneath your other layers. A long sleeve shirt can be used instead. **max: 5 oz.**
- **Long sleeve next-to-skin layer:** Synthetic or wool, no cotton. Zip necks and hoods are nice options. **max: 7 oz.**
- **Insulated jacket:** Your primary insulation, either down or synthetic, often referred to as your puffy layer. Hoods are nice, but not required. An essential part of your sleep system. **max: 14 oz.**
- **Wind shirt:** (optional) Super versatile and breathable while hiking in chilly conditions. These provide a lot of extra warmth for minimal weight. **max: 5 oz.**
- **Rain jacket:** Waterproof-breathable shell jacket with a hood. Ponchos are an option. The less durable Frogg-Toggs and Dri-Ducks brand jackets are extremely light, but require extra care. **max: 12 oz.**
- **Extra insulating layer:** (optional) Maybe an extra shirt, depending on the expected weather. Cold sleepers might need more oomph at night. **max: 7 oz.**
- **Gloves:** (optional) Thin synthetic or wool glove liners. Nice if you get cold hands. Y'might never use 'em for an entire trip, but they are delightful on that one chilly morning. A nice addition to the sleep system. **max weight per pair: 1.5 oz**
- **Shorts:** (optional) Quick dry synthetic running shorts, these act as underwear and a bathing suit. **max: 5 oz.**
- **Hiking Pants:** Long pants made of lightweight, breathable, quick-drying synthetic fabric. Long pants lessen the need for sun-block and off trail travel is less painful. Convertible zip-off pants are an option, but dorky. **max: 11 oz.**
- **Rain Pants:** (optional) Lightweight breathable fabric, full waterproof protection is NOT essential, quick drying fabric is okay. Most UL hikers forgo true rain pants. **max: 7 oz.**

- **Rain skirt:** (optional) Functional and cute. **max: 3 oz.**
- **Long undies:** (optional) Either synthetic or wool, these are helpful as part of the sleep system. **max: 7 oz.**
- **Puffy pants:** (optional) Scrumptious insulated joy. Either synthetic or down, helpful as part of the sleep system, especially if you have a really wimpy quilt. **max: 8 oz.**
- **Underwear:** (optional) Some long-distance hikers recommend underwear (compression shorts) for chafe-resistance and added warmth. One pair, no redundancy. Another option is wearing synthetic running shorts (see above). Men do NOT need a second pair. Women might find that exercise and change of environment will influence their monthly cycle, extra undies might be helpful. No more than three total needed. **max per pair: 2 oz.**
- **Shoes:** Trail runners or lightweight hikers. Synthetic non-absorbent fabric that dries quickly (no leather!) **max per pair: 36 oz.**
- **Socks:** Low cut running socks made of wool or synthetic (or a blend). Thinny-thin liners okay. Two pairs at the minimum, one for hiking and another for sleeping. **max per pair: 2.5 oz.**
- **Shorty gaiters:** (optional) No need for waterproof fabric. These help keep dirt out of low-cut shoes. **max per pair: 4 oz.**

Sleeping

- **Sleeping Bag or Quilt:** Quilts are zipper-less, hoodless and have an open back for extra weight savings. An ultralight mummy has a hood and zipper. **max: 25 oz.**
- **Sleeping Pad:** A torso-sized sleeping pad is all you truly need, either inflatable or closed cell foam. You'll be using your backpack itself to insulate your legs. **max: 10 oz.**
- **Bivy sack:** (optional) A thin fabric cover for your quilt provides added protection and warmth. Waterproof bottom and highly breathable water resistant top. **max: 7 oz.**
- **Pillow:** (optional) If you wear all your clothes to bed, what do you have left to put your head on? (see tip: The pillow) **max: 2 oz.**
- **Shelter system:** (stakes, guy-lines and tarp) The tarp with string should weigh around 10 ounces, total weight of stakes should be less than 5 oz. **max: 15 oz.**

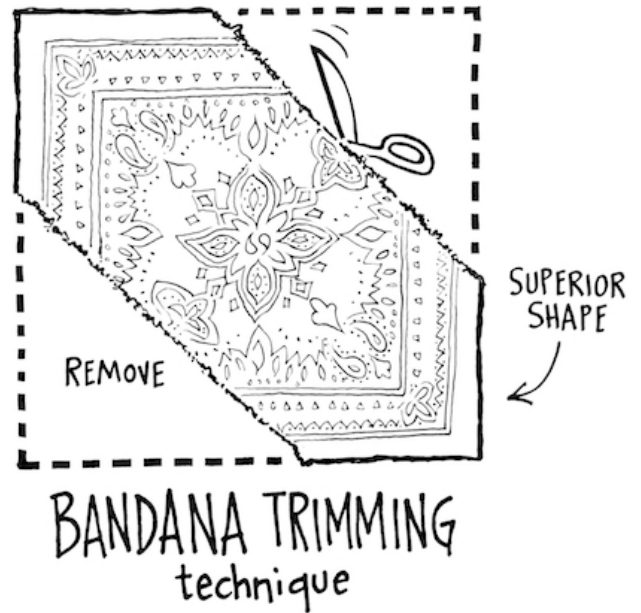
Packing

- **Backpack:** Pack-weight up to 25 pounds for the 10-days model trip, 50 liters volume, no more than 22 oz. For a weekend, 36 liters volume, as low as 3 oz! **max: 22 oz.**
- **Pack Liner:** A waterproof trash compactor bag lines the entire interior of your backpack. **max: 2.5 oz.**
- **Stuff Sacks:** (mostly optional) Traditional campers love stuff sacks. Very few are actually needed, and dinky items fit in Ziploc baggies. **max for ALL stuff sacks: 2 oz.**

Essentials

category	item	notes	weight in oz	
CLOTHING CARRIED	insulating down jacket	montbell inner jacket	7.9	
	rain coat	drop stopper	7.1	
	rain skirt	home-made	2.0	
	long undies	synthetic	4.6	
	wind shirt	GoLite	3.3	
	warm hat	w/headlamp sewn on	1.7	
	extra hiking socks	thinny-thin	0.6	
PACKING	backpack	GoLite JAM (trimmed)	17.0	
	pack liner	plastic compactor bag	2.2	
	stuff sack (A)	for food	0.6	
	stuff sack (B)	for cook gear	0.3	
COOK GEAR	titanium mug	cooking & eating	1.7	
	mug lid (home-made)	foil	0.2	
	cozy (home-made)	insulating foam	0.2	
	spoon	titanium	0.3	
	stove (home-made)	cat food can	0.2	
	fuel bottle (1-liter volume)	platypus w/ squirt lid	0.9	
	wind screen (home-made)	aluminum foil	0.2	
	pot grabbers	trangia	0.6	
	bic lighter	mini (cute)	0.4	
	SHELTER	2-person tarp	SpinTwin with string	9.8
titanium stakes (11 total)		with tyvec envelope holder	3.2	
<i>no poles, I can find sticks</i>		WEIGHT NOT NOTED	0.0	
SLEEPING	sleeping quilt	golite down	19.0	
	sleeping pad	inflatable torso pad	8.0	
	bivy sack	vapr brand	5.9	
	balaclava	synthetic	1.8	
	sleeping socks	shorty wool blend	1.3	
	glove liners	thin synthetic	1.1	
	pillow	home-made w/ ziploc bags	1.8	
ESSENTIALS	large water bottle	1-liter soda bottle	1.5	
	small water bottle	500 ml water bottle	0.6	
	bandana (cotton)	trimmed	0.4	
	camera	digital with case	6.1	
	mosquito head-net	doubles as stuff sack	0.4	
	maps (in ziploc)	estimate varies w/route	2.5	
	first aid kit	in ziploc sandwich bag	2.6	
	repair kit	in ziploc sandwich bag	1.8	
	bear hang kit	45 feet of cord	2.2	
	<i>bear spray w/ holster (13.2 oz)</i>	WEIGHT NOT NOTED	0.0	
	DINKY STUFF	water treatment	Aqua-Mira repackaged	1.2
		Hydropel (for feet)	repackaged	0.3
		toothbrush	cut-handle	0.2
toothpaste dots		in tiny ziploc baggie	0.3	
paper book of matches		in tiny ziploc baggie	0.2	
soap		Dr. Bronner's repackaged	0.7	
hand sanitizer		repackaged	0.7	
single edge razor		w/ cardboard holder	0.1	
lip stuff		burt's bees (luxury item)	0.3	
sun block		repackaged	0.8	
small compass		carried with maps	1.1	
ziploc FREEZER bag		holds all dinky stuff	0.2	
TOTAL base weight (oz)			128.1	
TOTAL base weight (lbs)			8.0	

- **Water Bottle:** Dig a 1-liter soda bottle out of your recycle bin and you're done. How much capacity do you need? (see tip # 102: What's the best tool to actually carry water?) **max: 1.5 oz per liter.**
- **Bandana:** (optional) A true multi-use tool. Your only piece of cotton gear. **max: 1 oz.**
- **Trekking Poles:** (optional) Most hikers use trekking poles. **max per pair: 11 oz.**
- **Camera:** (optional) Lot's of lightweight options. **max: 7 oz.**
- **Mosquito head-net:** (optional) Mesh head covering this doubles as an UL stuff sack and triples as coffee filter. No wire loops. **max: 1 oz.**
- **Maps:** The weight of the maps depends on the length and complexity of your route. Carried in a Ziploc baggie. (see tip # 57: maps and scissors) **max: 4 oz.**
- **Cook-System:** (stove, cook pot, lid, wind screen, fuel vessel) Lots of very light solutions here. (see tip # 118: stoves and cooking) **max: 7 oz.**
- **Mug:** 500 ml volume is plenty. For solo trips, this is your pot (so part of cook system), eating vessel and mug for hot drinks. Titanium is great, aluminum is fine. **max: 3 oz.**
- **First-aid kit:** (see tip # 55: first aid kit) **max: 3 oz.**
- **Repair kit:** (see tip # 56: repair kit) **max: 3 oz.**
- **Bear hang kits:** (only for travel in bear country) At least 45 feet of strong cord. (see tip # 114: Hanging food at night) **max: 4 oz.**
- **Bear spray:** (only for travel in bear country) This requires the extra weight of a holster, putting it in a side pocket is unacceptable. (see tip: Bear spray) **max: 13 oz.**



Consumables:

- **Stove fuel:** Weight varies (see tip: Alcohol fuel calculations)
- **Food:** Weight varies (see tip: How Much Food is Needed per Day?)

Dinky stuff!

This is an area where too many campers go completely overboard. When you get right down to it, there actually isn't that much you really need. All the dinky stuff should easily fit in one Ziploc baggie. This list may fluctuate a little between an overnight and a 10-day expedition, but not much.

- **Aqua Mira Kit:** Re-packaged into smaller bottles. The little bottle with the pre-mix usually gets carried in a pocket. I'll usually carry this in it's own snack sized ziplock. (see tip # 106: Revising how AQUA-MIRA is used) **max: 1.2 oz.**
- **Hydopel:** (optional) Re-packaged in a smaller bottle. Use a simple plastic balm jar, no need to carry the big tube. Size it to your needs. **max: 0.7 oz.**
- **Toothbrush:** The chopped handle is the Badge-of Honor for any UL camper! **max: 0.6 oz.**
- **Toothpaste dots:** (see tip # 54: toothpaste dots) Count 'em out for your needs. **max: 0.5 oz.**
- **Tiny size BIC lighter:** I've used nothing but a tiny bic for over a decade, and it's always worked fine. Keeping it dry is vital. **max: 0.4 oz.**
- **Paper book of matches:** This is the lightest solution for a redundant way to start a fire. The standard book has 20 matches. Keep 'em dry in a tiny Ziploc. **max: 0.2 oz.**
- **Dr. Bronner's soap:** Re-packaged in a smaller bottle. I don't take toilet paper, but I do carry soap. Dr. B's is highly concentrated and comes in an unscented version. **max: 0.7 oz.**
- **Hand sanitizer:** (optional) Re-packaged in a smaller bottle. This isn't required if you have soap. That said, I use it sometimes. **max: 0.7 oz.**
- **Single edge razor:** The absolute lightest cutting tool, costs less than five cents. **max: 0.1 oz.**
- **Simple cardboard razor holder:** You don't want to put anything sharp in your pack without a sheath. Make it yourself, cereal box cardboard and scotch tape cut like an envelope. **max: 0.1 oz.**
- **Lip stuff:** (optional) This can actually get nixed if you use a sunblock that works well as a lip protectant. **max: 0.4 oz.**
- **Sun-block:** Re-packaged in a smaller bottle. Take as little as you think you can get away with. This usually gets carried in a pocket for easy access. Also, long sleeves and long pants will minimize sunblock usage, and thus - the weight! **max: 0.8 oz.**
- **Small compass:** This usually gets carried in the map bag. **max: 1.2 oz.**
- **Head-lamp:** Lots of high quality UL options out there, easily sewn onto your hat! **max: 0.8 oz.**
- **Titanium spoon:** This usually gets carried in the stuff sack with the cook-gear. **max: 0.5 oz.**

