



WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING

ALASKA PACKING LIST

WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING



Never set off without rain gear, extra clothing, gloves and a hat when hiking in Alaska.

THE BASIC GEAR

The rule of layering applies to hiking too, but there are some extra gear considerations before you take off down the trail. Even on a bluebird-sunny day, we never set off without rain gear, extra clothing, gloves and a hat—because temps can drop fast. Here's the complete rundown of what you need for a day hike in Alaska:

HIKING BOOTS

- Don't buy the classic, hard leather boots. They're too heavy for most day hikers, and hard to break in.
- Your best bet is a pair of lightweight boots with good ankle support.
- Trail running shoes are fine, too, if you're used to them on uneven terrain.

CHANGE OF CLOTHES

In case your clothes get wet, be sure to have:

- Extra pair of socks
- Extra long undershirt or upper body inside layer

ADVANCED GEAR

Thinking about a more extended hike? Or going off-trail or across tundra? Here are some tricks of the trade we've learned through experience.

ZIP-OFF LEG PANTS

- These are a huge convenience. If you get hot or cold, zip the lower pant legs on or off in a snap—no need to find a place to sit down and remove your whole pants.
- Pant legs also protect your calves when walking through brush.



HIKING POLES

First off, don't think of them as canes. Here's how any hiker will benefit from them:

- **Elevation.** When heading down hills, shifting weight to the poles will protect your knees.
- **Uneven terrain.** Using them on side hills—sloping terrain—can protect your ankles.
- **Whacking.** Poles are great for helping whack brush aside.
- **Water crossings.** Probe the depth of a stream before you plant your foot (or whole leg) into it.
- **An extra pair of feet.** They offer stability so you can look up and watch scenery, rather than look at your feet for every step.
- **Shopping for Poles.** Aluminum is cheaper and heavier, but carbon might not be as durable. Shock-absorbing tips are great if you're carrying a heavy load, but overkill for most day hikers. Look for something that can collapse and attach well to your pack. Cost: anywhere from \$70 to \$150.

ALASKA PACKING LIST

WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING

EXTRAS



GAITERS (more for the hard-core, off-trail hiker)

- These nylon coverings fit over your lower pant leg and strap around the bottom of your shoe or boot.
- Extra protection from water, scrapes and debris that can get into your boots.
- Great if it rains—ground brush and twigs can get mushy and messy fast.
- About \$25 a pair.



BEAR PROTECTION

- **Don't bother with bells:** your voice is just as much of a deterrent.
- **Bear spray** (pepper spray) has limited range, but is good to carry. Just remember to shoot downwind.
- **Your best bet?** Hike with a friend and keep the conversation, and moderate noise, going. Most bear attacks are on people going solo.



WATER

If you're heading out for a long hike, you're probably going to need more water than you want to carry with you. The good news: there are streams everywhere. We Alaskans tend to take a bottle for water when hiking, and then just refill it in a stream or river. **If you don't want to, here are your options:**



SteriPen. These UV lights kill bacteria like giardia, but don't get rid of silt or grittiness from stream water. About \$90.



Filter Pump. They're low-tech, but they're your best bet for removing bacteria and bulk. \$40 and up for portable models.

Purifying tablets. Iodine or Chloride tablets are cheap and lightweight, and make a great back-up plan. The downsides: They're slow (half an hour to four hours), and iodine makes the water taste funny, too. They cost just a few dollars.

LET US HELP YOU
PLAN YOUR TRIP



BKAUFMAN@ALASKA.ORG