

QUICK STARTER GUIDE TO

# HIKING

LAST UPDATE - MAY 2018

41 HIKING TIPS FOR  
BEGINNERS

PAGE 10

&

EASY-TO-READ HIKING  
GEAR GUIDES

PAGE 14

&

THE INCREDIBLE  
HUAYHUASH CIRCUIT

PAGE 40



Believe it. Learn it. Live it.



# THE ADVENTURE JUNKIES

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SanderStock: p 12, 19.1  
blyjak: p 16  
Bondariev: p 17  
ninelutsk: p 18  
JackF: p 19.2



# WELCOME/ CONTENTS **HIKING**

## Get Started

- 06 Hiking FAQ: Your Questions Answered
- 10 41 Hiking Tips For Beginners

## Be Prepared

- 14 Essentials: Our Hiking Packing List
- 16 How to Choose a Backpack
- 18 How to Choose a Sleeping Bag
- 20 How to Choose a Sleeping Pad
- 22 How to Choose a Tent
- 24 How to Layer Clothes while Hiking
- 26 How to Choose Hiking Boots
- 30 How to Choose A Cooking Stove
- 32 Accessories: The 3 Important Items

## Go Hiking

- 34 The Ausangate & Colorful Mountain
- 38 The Huayhuash Circuit



18 Learn how to choose a sleeping bag.



40 Hiking the Huayhuash Circuit in Ancash, Peru.



# MESSAGE FROM **THE EDITORS**

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## Welcome to The Adventure Junkies Hiking Quick Starter Guide!

You've probably found your way to this ebook through our website, or maybe a friend passed it along to you. Either way, we're happy you're here.

We wrote this guide because when we were just starting out hiking we couldn't find a single easy to read resource about how to get into the sport. The techie articles from magazines and websites just made us more confused. Also, none of our friends were hikers so we had to go ask around to find the answers we needed. The process left us feeling lost and overwhelmed, we don't want that to happen to you.

The Adventure Junkies was created to inspire you and give you the right tools to explore the outdoors. We call it the dream it, learn it, live it process. First, you get inspired by others. Then, you learn the basics of the sport. And finally, you do it yourself. We do this by providing you with high quality and practical education, and connecting you with a community of like minded adventures from all over the world. And, because you are reading this right now means you're well on your way to achieving your goal!

This eBook is a quick starter guide, and the purpose of this guide is to do just that - get you started fast. It is not a hiking manual and we won't cover every aspect of the sport. It will, however, take you through the basics and give you the tools you need to take the first steps in becoming a hiker.

To all of our subscribers, followers and friends out there, thank you for the gift of your support. We only hope that this free guide can begin to repay you for the time you've given us. Here's to you and your many years of hiking adventures to come!

Antonio & Amanda







# ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED HIKING FAQ

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

## Do you want to get into hiking but have no clue where to start?

No worries, you're in the right place. One of our big goals here at The Adventure Junkies is to inspire you to get out and have new adventures and outdoor experiences. We know getting started is the hardest part so we want to get you all the info you need to get you on your way. That's why we put together some of the top questions about how to get into hiking and answered them for you.

### WHAT GEAR DO I NEED FOR HIKING?

First ask yourself two questions: how many nights am I going for and what's the weather going to be like? For day hikes you don't need much, just some comfortable shoes or boots and a backpack to carry water, layers and sun protection. For longer multi-day hikes, you'll need to bring camping and cooking equipment. Checkout our Ultimate Hiking Packing List to make sure you don't leave any essentials at home.

### WHAT KIND OF SHOES SHOULD I WEAR HIKING?

To determine what kind of shoes you need for hiking you need to consider how much weight you plan on carrying and what the trail

conditions are like. It also comes down to your personal preference, some people just aren't comfortable wearing heavy hiking boots. It's something you'll figure out as you go, but here's some guidelines to give you a place to start:

For day hikes, hiking shoes or trail running shoes are best. Since you aren't carrying a heavy backpack, boots are overkill.

For multi day hikes, mid cut boots and full boots are the best option. These will help support your ankles. Having said that, if you have strong leg muscles, you can probably get away with wearing hiking shoes.

For multi day expedition treks with tough trails and bad weather, those heavy duty, waterproof boots come in handy. They'll support your feet and ankles while carrying a heavy back and help you grip on rough terrain. Don't forget to check out the article on how to choose hiking boots for more in-

depth information.

### WHAT CLOTHES ARE GOOD FOR HIKING?

This also is dependent on the weather. For hiking, it's best to dress in layers, that way you're never too hot or too cold. Basically you'll want a thermal layer on the core, an insulating layer like a fleece for around camp and a waterproof outer layer to protect you from the rain and wind. As far as materials go, merino wool and synthetic fibers are the best options. Merino is soft on the skin, light weight, odor resistant and dries quick. Performance synthetic clothing also dries quick but it's not as odor resistant as merino.

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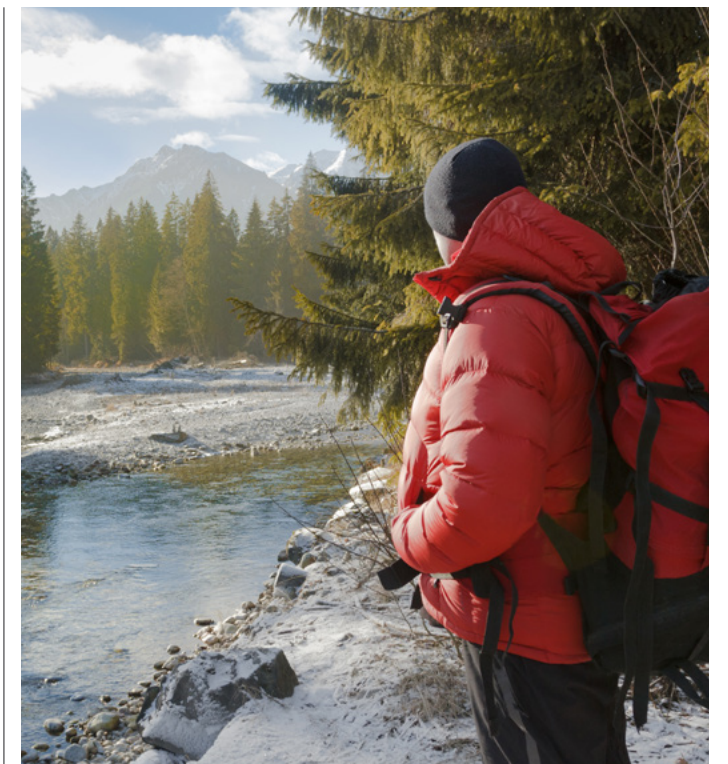
the skin, light weight, odor resistant and dries quick. Performance synthetic clothing also dries quick but it's not as odor resistant as merino.

### EVERY TIME I'VE TRIED HIKING I END UP GETTING BLISTERS, HOW DO I PREVENT THEM?

Preventing blister is a much better option than having to treat them. If you have new shoes make sure to break them in, you can do this by going on a shorter trail before taking on a big one. A little trick that I always use for multi day hikes is I rub a light layer of vaseline on my feet before I put my socks on in the morning. This helps prevent your socks from rubbing and creating a blister.

### SHOULD I USE HIKING POLES?

Hiking poles aren't just for grannies, they help you carry a heavy load and keep your balance while trekking. They're also knee savers for steep up hills and downhills. Some people love them and others don't bother, so it's really



“FOR HIKING, IT’S BEST TO DRESS IN LAYERS. THAT WAY, YOU’RE NEVER TOO COLD OR TOO WARM”

AMANDA ZEISSET





GET YOUR GEAR

Learn how to pick the appropriate hiking clothes for your journey.

PAGES  
24 - 25

“FULLY WATERPROOF CLOTHES HAVE A BREATHABLE LINER AND SEAM SEALED ZIPS. IF THEY DON’T, THEY’RE WATER RESISTANT, NOT WATERPROOF”

AMANDA ZEISSET

up to you. I’ve done an 8 day hike carrying a heavy pack without poles but I would have appreciated them. So while they aren’t always an absolute must, they’re a piece of gear worth bringing. Want to get a pair for yourself? Find out what are the best hiking poles out there.

WHAT SIZE BACKPACK DO I NEED?

The size of your backpack will depend on how many days you plan on hiking. Also, you need to consider if you’ll be camping or will you be staying lodges/ huts. Pack capacity is measured in volume (liters). Here’s some sizings to give you a place to start: Weekend Trips: 1-3 nights = 35-50 liters. Multi-day: 3-5 nights = 50-80 liters. Longer Trips: 6 nights+ = 70 liters+

I CAN’T AFFORD TO BUY ALL THE EQUIPMENT JUST YET, IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

Multi-day hiking is gear intensive and you’ll eventually have to invest. But, to get you started, you have some options. Team Up: You can buddy up with

a friend who has some gear. Huts & Lodges: Look for trails that huts or lodges along the way. This will cut out the need to have a tent and sometimes a stove (if they serve meals). Rent: If you are still testing the waters to see if you even like hiking, renting gear is a great option. Ask at your local outdoor store if they rent camping equipment.

WHERE’S A GOOD PLACE TO GET ADVICE ON BUYING OUTDOOR GEAR?

When it comes to choosing hiking gear, it’s easy to get overwhelmed with all the models and features out there. Local outdoor shops can be a good place to start, but keep in mind that the salesperson probably has sales targets to meet and might earn a commission on certain gear. They also tend to spend more time drooling over gear than actually using it (I know, I used to work as a sales girl in an outdoor store). Another option is to browse the internet. You can check out the gear reviews and guides we do here on The Adventure Junkies. We talk about the hiking gear we personally use as well as some other great products. Here’s a few articles to help get you started.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK IN MY FIRST AID KIT?

When it comes to preparing your first aid kit, consider the length of your trip, the size of your group, and your medical knowledge. You can buy a pre-assembled kits or put together your own. Basic first-aid essentials for most hiking adventures should be: adhesive bandages (various sizes), medical tape, moleskin, sterile gauze, ibuprofen, Benadryl, antibiotic ointment, and alcohol wipes.

I’M OUT OF SHAPE & NOT FIT ENOUGH TO HIKE FOR LONG HOURS, WHERE SHOULD I START?

The best way to get in shape for hiking is to get out on the trails. Start small, you don’t want to just jump right to the toughest trail and end up hating hiking. Perhaps, look at doing a local trail that’s relatively flat, one that you could tackle in an hour or so on the weekends.

DO I NEED SPECIAL HIKING SOCKS?

The simple answer is no, you don’t need hiking socks but, they will make your experience a lot more enjoyable. They provide cushioning and help keep your feet dry (which helps prevent blisters).

HOW DO I STAY DRY WHILE HIKING?

To stay dry while hiking be sure to carry a good quality, fully waterproof rain jacket and rain pants. Fully waterproof clothes have a breathable liner and seam sealed zips. If they don’t have these two features, it’s water resistant not waterproof. It’s also important to keep your backpack dry so you don’t arrive to camp with wet clothes and a wet sleeping bag. I recommend putting your sleeping bag in a dry bag and using a pack cover (which fits around you backpack). Another option is to use a pack liner, which is a bag that you first put in your backpack then pack everything inside that bag.

WHAT ARE SOME QUICK & EASY HIKING MEALS?

Meal planning is one of the most important skills to have as a hiker. It’s about finding the balance between taste and what’s practical to carry (weight and expiration). The easiest option is bring along some freeze dried meals, Mountain House is a good brand to start with. They’re light, surprisingly tasty and super simple to prepare (you just have pour boiling water into the bag). The downside is they’re expensive (around 8 bucks for a meal for 2).

If you don’t want to splurge on these, here’s some ideas to get you started. Breakfast: Oatmeal, fruits (fresh or dry), granola bars, bread, honey, jam, tea, coffee, juice (mix or fresh). Lunch: Sandwiches (salame holds up the best for multi-day trips). Dinner: Instant rice, pasta (with sauce), instant potatoes. a personal favorite of mine is pasta with garlic olive oil topped with fresh tomatoes. If you want more inspiration, don’t forget to check out the best camping food ideas for your outdoor adventures.

WHAT ARE SOME TASTY TRAIL SNACKS?

Nuts (almonds and cashews), dried fruit, chocolate, fruit, granola bars, cookies, trail mix cheese and crackers and jerky all make for good snacks.

WHAT’S THE BEST WAY TO TREAT WATER?

If you’re going to drink from a river, lake or stream, you should treat it. There are a few ways to treat water: Boiling, tables, pump filters and UV light filters. Boiling is the cheapest way to purify water. The downsides are you’ll have to light up your stove on the trail to get water during the day and you have to wait around for it to cool down before drinking it. Water purification tablets such as iodine or chlorine dioxide are super easy to use but you have to wait for them to work and they can have a bad taste. Pump filters work by of squeezing water through a ceramic or charcoal filter. Some modern models can pump up to 2 liters a minute but most are much slower than that.

The downside is the tend to be bulky and they require you to use a pot to collect the water (which can be annoying during the middle of the day). UV light filters are simple to use, you just press a button, swirl it around in your water bottle for 90 seconds and then you have safe drinking water. These tend to be the most expensive option but can be worth while if you spend a lot of time outdoors. We always go hiking with our beloved SteriPen Ultra.

WHAT DRINKS ARE GOOD FOR HIKING?

Just drinking water every day can get boring but carrying extra drinks like juices aren’t alway practical. The best option is to go for a drink power like Nuun or Tang. Bringing drink mixes are also a good idea for incase you get sick. Even if you can’t hold any food down, at least the drink will give you some calories to hopefully get you through.

WHAT ABOUT BEAR S & OTHER WILD ANIMALS?

Bears and pumas can be a real concern on some hiking trails. Luckily, having a run in with one of these creatures rarely leads to any aggressive behavior and attacks are even rarer. Before you hit the trails, do your homework and find out how to avoid bears and what to do if you’re attacked and what to do if you meet a mountain lion.

What do I need to do to stay safe while hiking?

Compared to other adventure sports hiking is one of the most safest activities, but there are still some risks involved. The best was to avoid these risks is to know what they are how to avoid them. Here’s 3 of the most common. Being underprepared: You never know when the weather will turn bad, so be sure that you’re prepared for the worst. Read up on the right gear to bring while hiking. Getting Lost: Bring a map AND learn how to read it. Not telling anyone: No matter how safe you think the trail will be, let someone know that you’re heading there and when they can expect you back.

None of my friends are outdoorsy, How do I find people to go hiking with?

If you don’t have any friends or family members you can drag outdoors, there are still plenty of ways to find hiking buddies. Open up google and type in hiking clubs near (your city or town). There are some websites and clubs that help connect hikers. Try Meet Up, Sierra Club, American Hiking Society, South American Explorers Club and Trekking Partners. ♦

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

If you still have more hiking questions you would like to get answered, head to The Adventure Junkies Forum and post it there. The supportive TAJ community is always happy to help each other out.

Hiking Forum



# BEGINNERS ESSENTIALS

## 41 HIKING TIPS FOR BEGINNER HIKERS

Preparing to set off for your first long hike is exciting. Whether you are about to embark on a multi-day trek or just a short day hike, there is a lot to consider before you set off. To help out first-time hikers we've compiled a list of our best tips, so you don't feel overwhelmed by all the information available on the web.



Some tips might seem like common sense but it's easier to see that from the comfort of your home. Like with anything you set out to do, you learn best by trial and error. However some pointers along the way can help you make the most out of your experience outdoors.

### PLANNING

**1 DO SOME RESEARCH** to find a trail suitable for beginners. For ideas, check out magazines like Backpacker and Outside. Websites and forums are also great places to start. If you want to hike in the US, Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean, take a look at Trails.com trail finder.

**2 MAKE CHECKLISTS.** One for food and another for equipment. Not sure what to pack? Check out our guide What to Bring: Our Multi-Day Hiking Packing List.

**3 JOIN A HIKING GROUP.** It's a fun way to meet people with similar interests. Check out local hiking clubs, online forums or sites like MeetUp.com to find hiking buddies. Some of the treks we organize have a trekkers wanted section like the Choquequirao Hike in Peru.

### HEALTH & SAFETY

**4 TAG ALONG WITH AN EXPERIENCED FRIEND.** The best way to learn new skills is first

hand with a knowledgeable person by your side.

**5 DRINK WATER OFTEN,** even before you feel thirsty. Dehydration can make you more susceptible to hypothermia and altitude sickness.

**6 BRING A MAP AND COMPASS** and learn how to use them. A good hiking GPS is very useful and makes your life easier, but it can fail or run out of battery.

**7 SUN PROTECTION IS IMPORTANT,** even more so if you are trekking at altitude. Always pack a hat, sunglasses and sunblock.

**8 LEARN BASIC FIRST AID** and carry a kit with you.

**9 IF YOUR SOCKS GET WET, CHANGE THEM** the first chance you get. This will prevent blisters from forming.

**10 TAKE A 10 MINUTE BREAK AT LEAST EVERY HOUR.** This quick break helps remove the metabolic waste that build up in your legs while hiking.

**11 STUDY YOUR MAP** before you begin the hike. This gives you a good idea of your route, possible emergency exit points as well as places to fill up on water.

“TAG ALONG WITH AN EXPERIENCED FRIEND. THE BEST WAY TO LEARN IS FIRST HAND WITH A KNOWLEDGABLE PERSON BY YOUR SIDE”

AMANDA ZEISSET





“PACK FOR EASY ACCESS. PUT ESSENTIAL ITEMS LIKE A MAP, FIRST AID KIT, FLASH LIGHT, AND SNACKS IN THE OUTSIDE POUCHES OR IN UPPER COMPARTMENTS OF YOUR PACK TO GET TO THEM EASILY DURING BREAKS OR IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.”

AMANDA ZEISSET

**12** CARRY AN EMERGENCY STASH OF FOOD. This is for in case you have to stay on the trail longer than you expected.

**13** LET SOMEONE KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING and when you plan to be back. Have you seen 127 hours?

### RESPECT NATURE & FELLOW HIKERS

**14** GIVE UPHILL HIKERS THE RIGHT OF WAY.

**15** DON'T TAKE SOUVENIRS. Nature is meant to be enjoyed by all, don't take home anything that you didn't bring with you.

**16** LEAVE NO TRACE, PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT! Bring a plastic bag to carry all of your rubbish with you, tie it your pack to keep from getting the inside of your pack dirty.

**17** REPECT OTHERS BY TALKING QUIETLY AND NOT PLAYING LOUD MUSIC. People go to the outdoors to get away from the noise of the city.

**18** TO PREVENT HARMING NATURE, stay on the trail.

**19** NEVER FEED WILDLIFE with food intended for humans as this disrupts their natural foraging habits.

**20** PACK FOR EASY ACCESS. Put essential items like a map, first aid kit, flash light, and snacks in the outside pouches or in

upper compartments of your pack to get to them easily during breaks or in case of an emergency.

### GEAR: WHAT & HOW TO PACK

**21** As a general rule for clothing, **NEVER WEAR COTTON** in the wilderness.

**22** **WATERPROOF YOUR PACK** either with a pack cover or pack liner.

**23** **PRACTICE USING YOUR GEAR AT HOME.** Set up your tent in the yard and light up your stove. It's much less stressful than setting up at camp.

**24** **DRESS IN LAYERS** to stay warm, dry and comfortable.

**25** **BRING A LIGHTWEIGHT DAY PACK** if you plan on doing side trips from your campsite, to carry your water, camera and sunblock along with you.

**26** **KEEP YOUR STOVE FUEL AWAY FROM YOUR FOOD.** If possible carry it on the outside of your pack.

**27** **PACK FOR EASY ACCESS.** Put essential items like a map, first aid kit, flash light, and snacks in the outside pouches or in upper compartments of your pack to get to them easily during breaks or in case of an emergency.

**28** **BRING SOMETHING TO PURIFY WATER** like tablets, pump purifier or a SteriPEN.

**29** **USE PACKING CUBES** to organize your gear. This saves you a lot of time having to repack everyday and makes things easier to find. For a long hike, I bring two large ones. One for bottoms and one for tops. Underwear and accessories go in which ever has more space.

**30** If you have bad knees, **GIVE WALKING POLES A TRY.**

**31** Ladies, two words: **MOON CUP.**

**32** **BORROW OR RENT GEAR** before you purchase. Especially big ticket items like tents. Or give it hammock camping a try!

**33** **PACK A QUALITY RAIN JACKET,** no matter what the weather forecast

**34** For first time backpackers, try to **MAKE YOUR FIRST TRIP SHORT.** This gives you a chance to test yourself without being too far from civilization if things turn bad.

### OTHER TIPS

**35** **REMOVE THE EXCESS PACKAGING** from food to save space.

**36** **DON'T HUFF AND PUFF.** Walking at a pace that allows you to be able to walk and talk means that your legs and your body are getting the oxygen needed to function efficiently.

**37** **FOR REALLY HOT DAYS** put your water bottle in an old sock, soak the sock, and hang the bottle

on the outside of your pack. This will keep your water from getting too hot.

**38** **TO STAY EXTRA DRY** in the rain fold a small towel or synthetic chamois into a long, thin strip. Wrap it around your neck before pulling over your hood. Any rain that may drip inside your jacket will be trapped in the towel instead of getting your clothes wet.

**39** **IF YOUR PACK BEGINS TO SQUEAK** rub a bit of lip balm on the troubled pin or grommet.

**40** **TAKE YOUR CAMERA** along and take some awesome hiking photos.

**41** **TO WEAR YOUR PACK CORRECTLY,** loosen all straps first before putting it on. First tighten the hip belt, which should sit on your hips, not above them. Then tighten the shoulder straps. Next, the load lifters (ones near your shoulders). Finally adjust the load stabilizer straps on the hip belt (at the back of the belt). Your sternum strap shouldn't be super tight but simply help keep the shoulder straps in position. ♦

Learn How to Plan & Prepare for a Backpacking Adventure

# BEGINNER'S BACKPACKING COURSE

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# GEAR FOR HIKING

## THE ESSENTIAL HIKING PACKING LIST

Are you planning a multi day hiking trip for the first time and not sure just what to pack? Are you worried about over packing or leaving something behind? No worries. We are here to help you with your hiking packing list.

This is our comprehensive packing guide to get you started. What you end up bringing comes down to the climate you plan to trek in and your personal needs. If you have questions about what to bring for specific weather conditions or a certain trek, drop us an email and we'll do our best to answer it.

Our hiking items list has been improved and modified over the years based on our experience

and travels around the world. Every hiker has different needs and preferences but there are some things you can't leave home without. This is the ultimate kit list for hiking.

The next chapters of this guide will focus on how to choose the best models for every piece of important gear that suits your needs best. When it comes to hiking, remember that it's not about getting what others use or the most popular models, but to find what really fits you best, based on your preferences and needs.

If you want the complete checklist, click on the button below so you can download it on PDF format from our site.



## WHAT TO CHOOSE & HOW FIND WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU



### BACKPACK

A backpack is one of the very first pieces of gear you'll need to get started hiking. And, considering you'll be wearing it for hours at a time, you'll want to make sure you pick the right one.

PRICE: \$150.00 - \$300.00

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### SLEEPING BAG

Having a good night of sleep is essential to hit the trail the next morning fully rested. Consider investing on a quality sleeping bag, specially if you're planning to hike in cold conditions.

PRICE: \$50.00 - \$300.00

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### SLEEPING PAD

Sleeping pads provide warmth and cushioning. As it happens with the sleeping bag, the right pad equates to a good nights sleep, something very important to fully enjoy your outdoor adventure.

PRICE: \$25.00 - \$125.00

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### CAMPING TENT

A tent is your house while exploring the outdoors. Depending on the type of hike you're planning, you might need a simple & cheap model or an advanced, and more pricey, one.

PRICE: \$200.00 - \$1,000.00

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### CLOTHING

There's a huge range for clothing you can use for hiking, but it's important to know how to layer clothes for winter and summer. You want to wear the right clothes to make sure you stay warm but don't over heat.

PRICE: Depends

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### FOOT WEAR

Good hiking foot wear are a crucial part of every hiker's equipment. They can make or break our outdoors adventures, so you need to find a pair that fits your needs (and your feet!) the right way.

PRICE: \$40.00 - \$200.00

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### STOVE

Having a good stove is essential for refueling after a long day of hiking and simply to enjoy tasty food while in the outdoors. Check out the next chapter to pick the stove that fits your needs and budget best.

PRICE: \$20.00 - \$150.00

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)



### ACCESSORIES

Using hiking poles, a hand-held GPS or a waterproof headlamp are accessories that come in handy while in the outdoors. In the next chapter we discuss different options to suit any budget and type of hiker.

PRICE: Depends

[MORE INFORMATION >>](#)





# HOW TO CHOOSE A BACKPACK

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset    EMAIL: [amanda@theadventurejunkies.com](mailto:amanda@theadventurejunkies.com)

## Do you want to get a hiking backpack but have no clue where to start?

No worries, we're here to give you a hand. There are a seemingly endless combinations of styles and sizes for a backpack, which can be seriously overwhelming when you're first starting out. That's why we've put together this guide. Follow these simple 5-steps and find the model that fits your needs best. That easy!

### CAPACITY

The very first step to choosing a backpack is deciding how big it will need to be. To do this, consider how many days you plan to go hiking for and how much bulk you will be carrying.

It's much easier to gather all the gear you will need then assess how big your pack will should be than it is to buy a pack then try to cram all of your gear inside.

Backpacks are sized by how much they can hold (volume), which is measured in liters. Here's some guidelines to get you started:

**DAY TRIPS:** 15-20L

**WEEKEND TRIPS:** 30-50 L

**MULTIDAY (3+ NIGHTS):** 50-80L

### PACK SIZING

The greatest pack in the world will do you no good if it doesn't fit you properly. When it comes to fitting, it's your torso length, not your height that matters most.

Determining your torso length is quick and easy, you only need a flexible tape measure and a friend.

First tilt your head forward and have your friend feel along the base of your neck for a bony bump. This is the top of your torso length (aka C7 vertebra). The bottom of your torso length is at the top of your hip bones. An easy way to find this spot is to put your hands comfortably on your hips, it's where your thumbs point to on your back. Have your friend measure between these two points, this is your torso length.

Here's a guide for how manufactures determine sizing:

**EXTRA SMALL:** up to 15 ½"

**SMALL:** 16" to 17½"  
**MEDIUM/REGULAR:** 18" to 19½"  
**LARGE/TALL:** 20" and up

### WEIGHT

When it comes to backpacking every ounce counts, but not when it comes to choosing a pack. In fact, the last thing you should try to cut weight on is the backpack itself. When you cut weight on a pack you lose comfort, especially when it comes to carrying heavy loads.

### ENVIRONMENTAL & HEALTH CONSCIOUS

Hiking is a fantastic way to enjoy nature and improve your health. When it comes to choosing outdoor products, we encourage you to make choices that are conscious of the environment and your well being.

PFCs are a chemical that are used to add waterproof and dirt-repellent finishes to outdoor clothing and gear, but they are hazardous to the environment and human health.

A study conducted by Greenpeace reports that some PFCs "can cause adverse impacts on the reproductive system and the immune system, as well as

being potentially carcinogenic in animal tests".

The report goes on to say that "once released into the environment most PFCs break down very slowly. They can remain in the environment for many years after their release and are dispersed over the entire globe."

The best way to determine if a pack is PFC free is to do your homework before buying by checking out the company website for information, such as the responsibility section from the Fjällräven website.

### WOMEN'S & YOUTH SPECIFIC

Many manufactures make women's specific backpacks. While it's true that women can easily wear unisex packs, some women will find these packs fit better and are more comfortable. Female specific backpacks are designed with shorter torso lengths, narrower shoulder widths, and curved waist belts.

If you're buying a pack for a kid, take a look at getting a youth specific one. These typically have smaller capacities and include an adjustable suspension to accommodate a child's growth.

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# HOW TO CHOOSE A SLEEPING BAG

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

## Do you want to get a sleeping bag but have no clue where to start?

Don't panic. It's a very common problem among hikers. To help you in the process of choosing a sleeping bag, we've created this simple 8-steps guide based on our own experience and the great recommendations of other adventurers to give you a good place to start. It's not about buying what others use, it's about finding what suit your needs best.

## WHAT TEMPERATURE RATING IS THE RIGHT ONE FOR ME?

The sleeping bag rating temperatures identify the lowest temperature at which a bag is intended to keep the average sleeper warm. These ratings assume that you are wearing a layer of long underwear and using a sleeping mat. Everyone's metabolism is different, and sleeping bag temperature ratings also vary from one manufacturer to the next. Use these ratings as a guide only, but not as a guarantee. We recommend you to select a sleeping bag with a temperature rating a bit lower than the lowest temperature you expect to encounter during your trip.

## RECTANGULAR, SEMI-RECTANGULAR OR MUMMY SHAPE?

Knowing how to choose a sleeping bag's shape is important for comfort.

A sleeping bag that is very tight may impair a good night's sleep, while a bag that is very roomy maybe comfortable but not as thermally efficient.

So the ideal situation is finding the balance between comfort and efficiency. Mummy bags are the tightest around your body but they retain the heat much better than the rectangular ones, which are more comfortable than the first ones. I wouldn't personally recommend to pick a rectangular sleeping bag unless you are planning a trip in warm weather. Mummy shape bags are the most popular choice among hikers the they keep you warmer and they weigh less.

## PICK THE RIGHT LENGTH

A bag that is too big will have a larger area for the heat to escape and will present a bigger volume for your body to heat. On the other hand, a bag that is too small will feel uncomfortable to sleep in. If you plan to use your sleeping bag in cold weather, having a bit of extra room can be a good idea

to keep clothing & boot liners warm, or for a nice warm water bottle to add supplemental heat.

## THINK ABOUT WEIGHT

If you are planning a hiking trip, then the weight of your bag is a very important factor to consider. Like with other types of gear, weight is related to price. For the same temperature rating, the lighter bags are normally more expensive.

## LINKING SLEEPING BAGS FOR COUPLES

Many models in the market offer left and right zips bags. This is particularly handy for couples who want to sleep together as a left side zip sleeping bag can be linked together with a right side zip one. Note that the zipped portion will be as long as the shortest sleeping bag.

## MATERIALS: DOWN OR SYNTHETIC?

The type of material is probably one of the most important decisions to make when picking a sleeping bag. There are two options, down or synthetic, and apart from the ethics against using down there are other factors to consider.

Down Sleeping Bags are warmer, very durable and they wicks body

moisture. However, they lose insulation when wet, they drier slow, requires special cleaning and are expensive.

A synthetic sleeping bags keeps its insulation when wet, dries fast, is cheaper than down bags and easier to clean. However, it's bulkier and heavier, less durable and doesn't retain heat as well as down

## SLEEPING BAGS FOR MEN, WOMEN AND KIDS

For the ladies, the sleeping bags are shorter and narrower at the shoulders, wider at the hips and add extra insulation in the upper body and foot box. The kids models come with a built-in sleeve on the bottom. This holds the sleeping mat so that the child, the bag and the mat stay together all night.

## SOME ADDITIONAL FEATURES TO CONSIDER

If camping in cold weather, consider a sleeping bag with a built-in hood. When cinched with a drawcord, the hood prevents the heat from dissipating. Some models also come with an internal pocket which is very handy to store things like headlamp, watch, glasses and MP3 players. If are planning to sleep

in a hammock, consider a warmer sleeping bag. It's also recommended to have a storage sack. This allows you to store it loosely in a cotton storage sack rather than rolled up tight in a stuff sack.

Don't forget to check out the article Top 10 Best Sleeping Bags for more detailed information about specific models.

traveling in warm weather, you can even leave the sleeping bag at home and use the liner only. ♦

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# HOW TO CHOOSE A SLEEPING PAD

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: [amanda@theadventurejunkies.com](mailto:amanda@theadventurejunkies.com)

## Do you want to get a sleeping pad but have no clue where to start?

We're here to guide you through the process. Sleeping pads have two important functions, they provide warmth and cushioning. Sounds easy enough, so why spend so much time considering which pad to choose? Because, the right pad equates to a good nights sleep, something very important to fully enjoy your outdoor adventure. That's why we've put together this 9-steps guide to help you out with this task.

### CAMPING SLEEPING PAD VS AIR MATTRESS

If you plan to drive to the campsite and set up camp, then one of those giant, comfy air mattresses is just fine to bring along. However, if you plan to carrying your pad in or on your backpack for hours, you'll want to consider a lighter option. Backpacking pads are much thinner, lighter and compact.

### AIR, SELF INFLATING OR CLOSED FOAM

There are three main types of sleeping pads to choose from: air, self inflating and closed foam. Choosing the right one will depend on how you intend to use it and the weather conditions you will face. Let's breakdown these three options so you can see the benefits and downsides to each.

Air pads must be manually inflated and use air for cushioning. Some models use reflective materials and insulation materials to increase warmth. While these pads are comfy, they are heavier than foam and backpacking mats. They are not very durable either and can easily be punctured or ripped.

Self inflating pads offer comfort and pack small. They use a combination of open-cell foam insulation and air. To inflate it all you have to do is open the valve and air fills automatically. They come in a wide range of models so we will talk about how to choose the right one in the following steps.

Closed cell foam pads are the cheapest, lightest and most durable option but they are not very comfortable.

### R VALUE

The R value is simply a measurement of a sleeping pad's ability to resist heat flow. The higher the R (resistance) value the better it will insulate you from the cold ground.

You need to consider what climate you'll be camping in most of the time. For cold weather camping, look for a pad with a R value over 5. In the summer months, you can get away with a pad with a lower R value. For very cold weather, put a closed foam pad under your sleeping mat for extra insulation.

### CONSIDER THE WEIGHT

Like any piece of gear you plan to put in your pack, you should consider the weight. If you are trying to go as light as possible, remember that foam pads are your best bet. If you really want the comfort of an inflatable pad, there are a few on the market that are very light weight. The lightest pad for warmth is the Thermarest Neo-Air XTherm, probably the best sleeping mat for hiking.

### LENGTH & WIDTH

Many manufactures make pads in a few different sizes. At a minimum, your shoulders and hips need to fit on a pad. Shorter people will be happy to save weight by carrying a short sized pad. Even tall people sometimes choose to buy a short pad, then use clothes to cushion the legs. If you have a small tent, be sure to take the dimensions in consideration when choosing a pad.

### PACKED SIZE

How much room your pad will take up in your pack is worth considering. Generally warmer pads are thicker and take up more space. This isn't always the case though, there are plenty of mats

that pack small, but tend to be much more pricier than their bulkier counterparts. These are normally the best option if you are looking for the best backpacking mattress in the market.

### CONSIDER WHERE YOU WILL BE SLEEPING

If you plan on camping on hard, rocky group or in winter, you will need a thicker pad. For summer camping and soft soil ground, a thinner pad will do. Hard, rocky camps, winter outings, and bad backs demand thicker pads.

### TRY A FEW OUT

The best way to choose the right mat for you is to go to the store and ask to try a few. This will give you an idea how much cushioning you prefer, if it is wide and long enough and how quickly it inflates and deflates.

### WOMEN'S VS MEN'S PADS

Some sleeping pads come in a women's version. These pads typically are a bit shorter and offer more insulation in the hips and feet. ♦



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# HOW TO CHOOSE A CAMPING TENT

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: [amanda@theadventurejunkies.com](mailto:amanda@theadventurejunkies.com)

## Do you want to get a camping tent but don't know where to start?

You've landed at the right place. With all of the options and features out there today it can be too complicated to know how to choose a tent that suits your needs. We've created this guide based on our own experience and the great recommendations of other adventurers to give you a good place to start. 10 easy steps for you to follow to find the best tent for you.

### SEASON RATING

To best determine which season rating you will need, think about which climates you are most often going to use your tent. A 3 season tent could be a good option for the tropics as the mesh lining provides more ventilation. However, if you plan on camping in high winds or during the winter months you will need a 4-season expedition/ mountaineering tent. It's always best to choose a tent designed to withstand the worst conditions you expect to encounter.

### HOW MANY PEOPLE?

Are you planning a solo trip or a trip with your friends or partner? Backpacking tents are categorised by their capacity and come in solo to 4-person models. When choosing which model is right for you consider how much gear you plan to bring and how you intent to use it.

### NUMBER OF DOORS

Most tents are either 1 or 2 doored, how important is this to you? As a couple we prefer having a 2 door tent for three reasons. One is that you don't have to wait for the other person to get in or out. The second is that 2 doors provides much more ventilation than a 1 door. The third is so each person can have their side of the tent, you can put your pack and smelly shoes outside your own door.

### FREESTANDING OR PEGGED?

A freestanding tent can be pitched without any pegs, this gives you a lot of freedom as to where you can put your tent. Although freestanding tents are a bit heavier we find it very useful. This is especially handy for bicycle tourist, who often sleep in unconventional camping locations like schools and fire fighter stations where you will most likely be pitching your tent on a

hard floor.

If you plan to use your sleeping bag in cold weather, having a bit of extra room can be a good idea to keep clothing & boot liners warm, or for a nice warm water bottle to add supplemental heat. comfortable wearing heavy hiking boots. It's something you'll figure out as you go, but here's some guidelines to give you a place to start: For day hikes, hiking shoes or trail running shoes are best. Since you aren't carrying a heavy backpack, boots are overkill. For multi day hikes, mid cut boots and full boots are the best option. These will help support your ankles. Having said that, if you have strong leg muscles, you can probably get away with wearing hiking shoes. For multi day expedition treks with tough trails and bad weather, those heavy duty, waterproof boots come in handy. They'll support your feet and ankles while carrying a heavy back and help you grip on rough terrain. Don't forget to check out our post on how to choose hiking boots for more in-depth information.

### WEIGHT

In recent years the technology of outdoor equipment has improved drastically, and now some of the best lightweight materials are available. As with any piece of gear you buy you need to consider the

quality and longevity of the product, many times the lightest option isn't the most durable.

### SIZE AND DIMENSIONS

If you plan to use your tent for bicycle touring, you need to choose one that will fit inside a pannier or on the back of your bike. Antonio carries our tent in the space between the saddle and the rack.

### VENTILATION

We briefly talked about ventilation but since it's such an important factor let's go into more detail. Ventilation should be one of your top considerations when choosing a tent. It simply means how well does the material allow air to enter and escape the tent.

Often cheaper tents are poorly ventilated, making it almost impossible for air to circulate. Not only is it uncomfortably warm but come morning you might feel a drop of water hit your head. This isn't rain water but condensation that has built up during the night and has now accumulated on the top of your tent. Not only is this puddle going to get you wet but your sleeping bag and all of your gear.

### COLOR

You might not consider color an important factor unless you intend to wild or stealth camp. For these types of situations when you are trying to be as discrete as possible, colors like green or brown would be a good choice as they blend in with your surroundings.

### PRICE

2 – person tents can range from \$100 to \$500, and the majority fall somewhere in between. Generally paying more will get you a lighter weight tent and some extra features.

### USE OF SECTIONS INDEPENDENTLY

This means that you can use the inner tent with or without the fly. We found this to be very useful in warm climates, especially if we were using the tent indoors. If you plan on using your tent mostly in cooler climates this will not be an issue for you. ♦

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# HOW TO LAYER HIKING CLOTHES

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## Do you want to go hiking and don't know what to wear?

Almost every hiker has been in that situation. Being outdoors, exposes you to the elements which has its benefits and downsides. It's important to know how to layer clothes for winter and summer. You want to wear the right clothes to make sure you stay warm but don't over heat. That's why we've created this guide with easy-to-read and practical information to help you dress accordingly when heading to the outdoors.

No one can tell about your needs, it's something you have to experiment with. Everyone experiences heat and cold differently. The most important point is that you need to layer if you want to stay warm and dry. Secondly, you need to think about what kind of activity you will be doing. Will you be carrying your gear, hammock camping or sleeping at lodges?

The best way to protect yourself from the elements is to wear three separate layers: a base, mid and outer. In this guide we will break these layers down to help you decide with options are best for you and the weather conditions you plan to face so you will learn how to layer clothes for cold weather and summer conditions.

### BASE LAYERS – MOISTURE MANAGEMENT

This is the layer closest to your skin and the one that collects the most sweat. It wicks away moisture and helps to regulate your body temperature.

Wearing a good quality base layer is an easy way to boost your comfort on your next outdoor adventure. Staying dry is essential for being comfortable. In warm weather, a base layer helps you maintain a cool body temperature and in cold weather to avoid hypothermia.

### HOW SHOULD THE BASE LAYER FIT?

To wick moisture properly, the base layer should fit snug. Heavy weight layers are the exception, and should be slightly bigger to add for additional layers underneath.

### WHAT MATERIAL IS BEST?

Most base layers are made from either synthetic or wool. Rather than absorbing moisture, like cotton, they transport perspiration away from your skin, dispersing it on the outer surface where it can evaporate. As a rule, never

wear cotton in the outdoors.

The benefit of synthetic clothing is that they are not itchy, tend to be less expensive than wool, are more durable, and dry faster. The downside to synthetic base layers is that they collect body odor fast and it never seems to air out.

### WHAT WEIGHT DO I NEED?

Base layers come in three weights: light, mid, and heavy. Choose the weight that is best for the activity and weather conditions you will experience. In general, lightweight fabrics wick moisture better and dries faster. In mid to cool conditions, lightweight base layers work great as stand alone pieces for sports like running or cycling.

In cooler conditions, a mid weight base layer can be worn as a second layer, over another base layer or on its own. For the coldest weather conditions, there are heavyweight base layers. These are typically worn over other base layers to add warmth.

### MID LAYERS – INSULATION

This insulating layer helps you retain heat by trapping air close to your body.

### WHAT OPTIONS ARE THERE FOR MID LAYERS?

There are four options: down fill, synthetic fill, fleece and hard shell fleece.

*DOWN* has the highest warmth to weight ratio and compresses easily into a very small volume for highly efficient packing. The downside is that it dries slow and is cold when wet.

*SYNTHETIC* fill is durable, lightweight, dries quickly, retains heat when wet and is easy to care for. The downside is it is less breathable and doesn't pack as small as down.

*HARDSHELL FLEECE* is a fleece with a smooth outer surface that resists snags and tears, making it exceptionally hard wearing. The downside is they offer less wind resistance than fill insulation. They also tend to be bulkier than fill insulation and fleece options.

*FLEECE* offers excellent air permeability and moisture management. The texture of the fabric is soft, which makes it very comfortable against the skin. A fleece works best when worn under a protective shell and offers the least stand-alone weather protection of all the options.

### OUTER LAYERS – WATER & WINDPROOF

This layer protects you from the wind, rain or snow. The outer shell is the most important layer when weather turns bad because it prevents wind and water from penetrating your inner layers.

When looking to buy an outer layer look for one that is waterproof and breathable. While this is often the most expensive choice, it is the most functional.

When trying on outer shells try to put a few other layers underneath to see how it fits. The outer layer should be roomy enough to fit over other layers and not restrict your movement. ♦

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# HOW TO CHOOSE A PAIR OF HIKING BOOTS

REPORTER: James Menta    EMAIL: james@theadventurejunkies.com

## Do you want to get a pair of hiking boots but don't know what to choose?

That's what this article is about. Good hiking boots are a crucial part of every hiker's equipment. They can make or break our outdoors adventures, so every hiker needs to know the basics of how to choose hiking boots the right way before shopping around. This can be overwhelming at first, so that's why we've put together this simple guide to help you choose the right pair for you.

### WHAT'S YOUR HIKING SKILL LEVEL?

Leg muscles "optimized" for hiking can only come from enough time on the trail. Those muscles make the world of a difference. For example – experienced hikers will also have more resistance to rolled ankles and tweaked knees.

The rule of thumb is – the more your "hiking muscles" strengthen the more support you can shed off your boot. As your feet get stronger you can move towards lighter hiking shoes.

### 9 FEATURES YOU NEED TO CONSIDER

#### 1. WEIGHT OF THE BOOT

There's a saying among hikers. One pound on the foot equals five on the back. The heavier the boot, the more work for our legs.

#### 2. WATERPROOF OR NOT?

Water in our boots is a definite no-no. It'll cause odor build-up, blisters and it's generally uncomfortable. So, we should include waterproof materials that allow our feet to "breathe" and let perspiration escape. GoreTex membrane is all the rage nowadays, provided the temperatures aren't too high.

#### 3. ARCH SUPPORT

Proper support won't let your feet flatten out under pressure, saving you a lot of pain. With high arches, you might consider buying additional orthotics insoles.

#### 4. INJURY PROTECTION

Two most common hiking injuries are twisted ankles and stubbed toes.

Therefore, the rougher the terrain, the more ankle support we'll need. Inclined surfaces will punish our toes for choosing a hiking boot without enough free room in the toe box.

#### 5. LOAD SUPPORT

Heavier backpacks require sturdiness and flexibility. We need a full range of motion, but also the kind of protection that'll stop our feet from bending too far backward or forward.

#### 6. GUSSETED TONGUE

It's a name for tongue connected to the upper to prevent dirt, small rocks, water and debris we'll find on-trail from getting inside the boot.

#### 7. RANDS

A tough guard made of rubber located either just in the front or all around the outer edge. It's there to reinforce the most impacted areas of the boot. It both increases the life of your footwear and adds more toe protection. They can come with a "toe rand", which is a toe cap also made of rubber.

#### 8. LININGS

GoreTex is a hard-core waterproof membrane. It offers some breathability but your feet will still sweat in high temperatures and direct sunlight. Linings with moisture wicking tech like Dri-Lex or

Cambrelle are our best bet for water-resistance with added ventilation. They'll often come with anti-microbial treatment for preventing odors.

#### 9. PADDED COLLAR

Thick hiking collars ensure proper comfort and ankle support on the trail.

### HOW CAN I TEST BOOTS IN-STORE?

Here you have a few ways to test if the boots are made for your feet:

#### THE FINGER TEST

This is also the beginning of a proper fit testing. Put the boot on, leave it unlaced and try to slide your finger behind your foot. It should fit right in.

#### THE SENSORY TEST

You'll have to put your bare foot into your boot of choice for this one. Try and feel all the places where the boot feels tight (if any). You can't really do this properly with socks on.

#### THE STRIDE TEST

What happens with the boots while you're walking? Does the top break as it should or jamming the area behind your toes too much? Is the heel moving together with the boot or sliding around? If your heel

and the boot moving as one, the boots are too large and will cause blistering without enough free room in the toe box.

#### THE SLANT BOARD TEST

To top it all off, ask the salesman for a slant board. We must test how the boot performs on an incline. Try walking down and see how it feels. If your toes are touching the front, ask for a half size bigger pair. If they're jammed, move on to the next model.

### HOW TO FIT HIKING BOOTS – 9 TIPS

"Fit is king," say the hikers. These are the steps we want to follow to choose the right fit:

1. Make sure it's, at least, late in the afternoon (evening is more preferable, though). Our feet will expand during the day, so the best time to shop for hiking boots is when they've reached their full size.
2. Test the boots wearing your favorite socks.
3. Include your orthotics.
4. Compare your feet to the footbed.
5. Slip your finger between the heel of the boot and the back of your foot. It should get there, no problem, if the fit is right.
6. As you lace up, your foot should start moving.
7. Your toes should have enough room at all times. They also shouldn't be touching the front of the boot.







“HOW WELL THE BOOTS ADAPTS TO YOUR FOOT SHAPE IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE APPEARANCE OR HOW FANCY THE BRAND IS.”

JAMES MENTA

8. See how they feel once you make a couple of steps.

9. We don't want any rubbing against your heel.

## HOW TO CHECK BOOT QUALITY IN THE STORE

Going with the famous brands is one way of determining quality because they have their name to live up to. But fancy logo doesn't mean the boots are your match. We need to dig a bit deeper.

So here you have some tips for checking boot quality in the store: **CHECK THE STITCHING.** We don't want to see any loose

threads or missed stitches.

**THE CONNECTION** between the sole and the upper should be tight and solid, without loose or weak spots.

**THE LEATHER SHOULD BE SMOOTH ALL OVER**, without thin spots, uneven edges, cuts or abrasion.

**THE THREAD** (meaning lugs) should be solid, tough and thick. If it's soft and spongy, it'll wear quickly.

We should opt for **BRAIDED NYLON LACES** instead of flat shoe laces. Eyelets should be durable and sturdy.

**PUSH YOUR FINGERS AGAINST EACH OTHER THROUGH THE SOLE OF THE BOOT.** They shouldn't get anywhere near each other. If you can almost touch your fingers or get close to that, the soles are too thin, therefore not protective enough.

**TRY TO WRING THE BOOT** like a towel. If you can twist it, the midsoles are too soft and not doing their job.

**CHECK THE HEELS.** We want tough and firm rather than soft and squishy.

I hope this little guide takes you to your “golden slippers”. Just ask

yourself these questions with every pair you think might be the one, and if it answers them correctly, we have our match made in Heaven. Choose smartly, stay safe and see you on the trail. ♦

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# HOW TO CHOOSE A CAMPING STOVE

REPORTER: Antonio Cala    EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

Do you want to get a camping stove and don't know where to start? Having a good backpacking stove is essential for refueling after a long day of hiking and simply to enjoy tasty food while in the outdoors. But with all the different models and types available it's not always easy to know how to choose a backpacking stove that fits your needs and budget. That's why we've put together this 8-step guide to help you out with the process.

**FUEL TYPE**  
There are 3 types of stoves depending on the type of fuel they burn: canister, liquid fuel and alternative fuel stoves.

**CANISTER STOVES**  
The canister stoves run on pre-pressurized gases, being isobutane the primarily gas used (some models also run on propane). The canister self-seals when the stove is detached, eliminating the possibility of fuel spills. They are lightweight & compact, don't require priming and are easy to use. However, their fuel is more expensive, they have a poor performance in cold weather and it's hard to gauge the remaining fuel.

**INTEGRATED CANISTER STOVE**  
A popular option emerging in the last years are the integrated canister stove systems like the Jetboil Series. These stoves are paired with a cooking

pot (other accessories available too) to make it all one piece of equipment. This way they provide super-fast boiling times, excellent fuel efficiency and a wind buffer. However, they're more expensive and less versatile.

**LIQUID FUEL STOVES**  
The liquid fuel stoves run on white gas and some models can also take kerosene, diesel and petrol. They require a bigger investment up-front and learning how to use them properly can take a few tries. They are great for international travel, have a more stable design and perform excellently in cold weather. However, most models require priming, maintenance and tend to be heavier and bulkier than the other models.

**ALTERNATIVE FUEL STOVES**  
The alternative fuel stoves fill a whole range of different models. These are the most popular ones:

**WOOD BURNING STOVE:**  
It burns leaves and twigs you find in the backcountry. You don't need to bring fuel but they tend to be heavy and bulky. Another disadvantage is finding dry fuel can be difficult in wet weather.

**DENATURED ALCOHOL STOVES:**  
They are light and burn silent, but you need more fuel and it takes longer to boil water.

**SOLID FUEL TABLET STOVES:**  
Also very light and compact, but they take a long time to boil water.

**HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE GROUP**  
Some ultra-light stoves are designed to be used by one person only, while most of the models can boil enough water for 2 people. Liquid fuel stoves tend to be more stable and therefore can hold a bigger pot. We've been cooking for 3 people with one of those but it's really on the limit.  
If you plan to cook for more than 3 people, consider bringing an extra stove. Also, bear in mind that liquid fuel is cheaper than gas canisters. So when cooking for big groups, using canister stoves can end up being more expensive.

**TRIP LENGTH**

You'll need to plan for the amount of fuel you need for the entire length of the trip. As a general rule, shorter trips are better suited for canister stoves as they are lighter and more compact than the other types. But the longer the trip, the more useful liquid fuel stoves become. A liquid fuel bottle will last longer than a canister and it's easy to pack an emergency small fuel bottle just in case you run out. With the canister stoves, you'll need to pack several canisters which will increase the weight and bulk of your backpack, plus you'll likely have to carry the empty ones all the way out.

**TRIP LOCATION**  
The place where you plan to go hiking can determine the kind of stove you need to bring. If you plan to traveling internationally, gas canisters might be hard to find depending on the location, and you can't bring them with you on the plane. However, gasoline can be found even in the most remote places so a multi-fuel stove would be the best choice in these cases. If you plan to go hiking in altitude or in cold weather, consider bringing a liquid-fuel stove burning white gas as they perform much better than a canister or alternative fuel stove.

**SIZE & WEIGHT**  
Depending on the type of

trip you are planning, the size and weight of your stove can be a critical factor. For ultra-light hiking adventures a canister stove is definitely the way to go. They're light, compact and easy to use. Ideally, you should only need one canister for the whole trip. For longer hiking trips where you might need more than 1 canister, a liquid fuel bottle can be a better option. The stove plus the liquid fuel will be heavier but more compact, as you only have to carry one bottle (as oppose to several gas canisters).

**EASE OF OPERATION**  
If you've never used a backpacking stove, this one is an important consideration. With canister stoves you only have to screw the gas bottle to the stove and light it up like you do with a normal gas burner. That easy. No maintenance is required. They are by far the easiest stoves to operate. With a liquid fuel stove you normally need to prime it before using it. This is done in different ways depending on the model you use and it takes a while to master it.

**BOILING OR SIMMERING**  
Are you are a camp chef type,

who cooks elaborate meals? Or are you just a hiker who wants to boil water fast? This answer will help you determine if you need a stove that simmers or just boils water. There are a few stoves on the market that can do both functions well, but normally they will excel in one or the other. You'll pay more for the fast boiling capacity of the stove.

**POT & STOVE STABILITY**  
A low-profile backpacking stove is the best choice for stability. With these models, the burner normally sits on its own base and a fuel tube is connected to either the fuel bottle or gas canister. They're heavier and bulkier, but also more stable. A high-profile backpacking stove is a common design among some canister models, where the burner sits over the canister. They are lighter and more compact, but they are prone to tip-over and can't hold large pots. ♦

CLICK THE LINK BELOW FOR OUR REVIEWS AND PRICES ON DIFFERENT CAMPING STOVES:  
<https://www.theadventurejunkies.com/best-backpacking-stoves/>





# HOW TO CHOOSE HIKING ACCESSORIES

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## Are you looking for some useful accessories to complement your hiking kit?

No problem. Let us guide you through the different possibilities. In this section we are going to walk you through 3 of the most useful and popular hiking accessories used by outdoor enthusiasts like you: hiking poles, hand-held GPS and headlamps. As in the previous chapters, we will focus on what's important to look at when looking for the model that fits your needs best.

### HIKING POLES

Hiking poles (aka walking sticks & trekking poles) are a very useful piece of gear. They help you balance a heavy load and save your knees out on the trail. Poles aren't just for grannies but for anyone who wants to make their hiking experience more enjoyable. Here you have some aspects to consider to find the best hiking poles for your needs.

#### COMFORT

The reason you're using poles in the first place is to make your hiking experience more comfortable, so this one is key. Comfort comes down to two main factors: ergonomics (the shape and design) of the pole handle & the material of the pole handle. Pole handles are made of either cork, rubber or foam.

Cork is one of the most comfortable and durable options. It's smooth and shapes to your hand overtime. It doesn't absorb much water (sweat) so it

won't cause chaffing.

Rubber grips are the best option for cold weather hiking and mountaineering. This is because it insulates better than cork. The trade off is they aren't the most comfortable for summer hiking.

Foam is the lightest of the three options. However, it's the least durable and loses its shape the fastest.

#### DURABILITY

Shaft construction and material used are the two main factors that come into play when considering durability. Poles are made from either aluminum or carbon fiber. Aluminum poles are more durable and can still be functional even with a bend. Carbon poles are lighter than aluminum ones.

#### WEIGHT & PACK SIZE

If you plan to travel with your poles or are planning a multi day expedition

where every ounce counts, weight and pack size are very important factors. Luckily for you there are lots of ultra light options on the market. For the poles that pack the smallest and are the lightest, have a look at getting a collapsible pole.

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#### HOW YOU PLAN TO USE THEM

Not everyone needs a super durable, bomb proof hiking pole. Day hikers can get by with a very light pole while backpackers carrying heavy packs over a rugged terrain will want something more hardwearing. Think about how you will use your hiking poles the majority of the time and buy accordingly.

#### GENDER

There are women's specific models on the market. The main differences are they typically have customized grips, straps and length ranges. These models cut a bit of weight and are more comfortable for women.

Check out the article [The Best 10 Hiking Poles](#) for more detailed information about the best

models on the market.

### HAND-HELD GPS UNITS

A GPS unit can make your life a lot easier in the mountains apart from increasing your safety in the outdoors. With a pretty easy learning curve, most of the models are simple to use. Here you have the 5 most important factors to consider when looking for your unit.

#### WEIGHT

As with any piece of gear you use for hiking, being lightweight is paramount. The best models on the market weigh less than 200g.

#### SCREEN

Size and colors are important here. You want to be able to see the map clearly without going blind in the process.

#### BATTERY LIFE

You don't want to be out in the mountains and find out your GPS just died after a few hours of hiking. A minimum of 15 hours of battery life is recommended. If the device can take rechargeable AA or AAA batteries, it is a big plus, as you can carry a spare set with you, if you plan to be without electricity for a few days.

#### CONSTRUCTION

Due to the nasty weather you can encounter while in the outdoors,



the handheld GPS units should be waterproof, shockproof and robust.

#### HANDHELD GPS UNITS VS SMARTPHONES & GPS WATCHES

The handheld GPS units have several advantages compared to smartphones. They are waterproof, more robust and durable, and can be used with rechargeable AA or AAA batteries (which allows you to bring an extra set with you). Also, the navigation is a lot easier in a handheld unit than in a GPS watch.

Check out the article [The 10 Best GPS for Hiking](#) for more detailed information about the best models on the market.

### HEADLAMPS

A simple headlamp will help you see while you wash your dishes at camp or find your way to the bathroom at night. But when you get into more serious activities like climbing, hiking or orienteering at night, you will want to have a good quality headlamp to fully enjoy those adventures safely. Here you have the most important factors to consider when choosing a good head torch.

#### IS BRIGHTNESS EQUIVALENT TO LUMENS? NOT REALLY...

Most of the manufacturers provide a specification for the lumens output of their headlamps. This is recorded from a device that measures the total light energy being emitted in any direction. The lumens measurement doesn't take into account the quality of the beam pattern, it only tells you the total sum of light in any direction. And for that reason we believe it's better to

look at beam distance instead of total lumens.

#### BEAM DISTANCE

Beam distance tells you how far the light can reach in one direction. It incorporates both the brightness of the light and the ability of the lens to focus the light into a beam. But it doesn't tell you anything about the optics quality. Even though, we believe it is the best factor to look at when comparing different models to find the brightest performance. You'll typically find two beam distance specifications, one for the high-output spot mode and one for the low-light close-proximity mode.

Some studies suggest to pay attention to the maximum beam distance number since it is a relative indicator of performance. Also, keep in mind that the manufacturers' specs are often overstated.

#### DURABILITY

Many of the higher quality models have a tough construction and are water resistant enough to use them during heavy rain storms. The most advanced devices are waterproof to several meters which makes these models particularly attractive for those going into the backcountry where weather tends to be unpredictable.

#### BATTERY TYPE & LIFE

An important factor is the battery type the headlamp uses. Most of the models operate with AA or AAA alkaline batteries, but some models come with rechargeable battery options such as Lithium Ion batteries or NiMH.

Don't forget to check the article [Top 12 Best Headlamps](#) for more detailed information about the best headlamps on the market. ♦





An incredible place in the Peruvian Andes

## A JOURNEY THROUGH A SACRED MOUNTAIN

# AUSANGATE TREK

REPORTER: Amanda Zeisset EMAIL: amanda@theadventurejunkies.com

An unforgettable adventure to the colorful mountain and the quechua culture.

The Ausangate trek is not only a hiking adventure but a journey through the spirit of the Peruvian Andes. The landscapes found here are unlike anywhere else. It's not hard to see why this route is considered one of the top South America dream destinations.

### OUR EXPEDITION TO THE APU AUSANGATE

Soaring glacier peaks scrape the sky to the left. A valley plummets to the right. Front and center is a mound of earth striped with intense turquoise, rust red and golden yellow. The colors flow like a wave so perfectly that you would believe they were painted by the gods. The only way to get to this secret corner of the earth is the Ausangate Trek.

From our perch, the Andean winds gust wildly as if to prevent any mortal from staying too long in this unworldly place. It's not an easy path but the views are the rewards for those who are up for the challenge of hiking days over high altitude passes.

It's a trail that cuts through a land seeped in legend. Wild, remote, beautiful and surreal. Nature is god here. Take a journey to this place and you will see why.

### AUSANGATE: THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

For the Quechua people of the Andean region of Cusco, Ausangate is an "Apu", a sacred mountain. At 6,384 meters (20,944 feet), it's the highest in the area, making it the most sacred of all the Apus. As the glaciers and snow of the high peaks slowly melt, they form rivers, sending water to the villages below. Water means life, therefore these mountains are the givers and origins

of life.

The trails that surround the mountain were used by the Incas as a pilgrimage route. They would take this long journey to ask the Apu questions to problems they were unable to solve and to give offerings in hope the mountain would bring them good fortune.

### HIKING THE APU'S TRAIL

For us, these trails would provide a route into a world that we never knew existed. Our goal was to go around Ausangate following a path that is over 4,000 meters above sea level.

There are many ways to do the Ausangate trek. We chose to do it in 5 days, starting from Chillca and finishing Trapiche. The trek covers an approximate distance of 54 km (34 miles). Each day we would stop off at one of the four lodges called "tambos" built by Andean Lodges that are tucked into the mountains.

These lodges are not simple refuges but luxury accommodations complete with private bathrooms and hot showers. After a long day of hiking, a warm fire place to sit by, a delicious meal and bed are much appreciated.

From Cusco, we had done other hikes before like the impressive Choquequirao Route. This time, we took a road into the Cordillera Vilcanota to reach the trail head. After a roadside picnic we set off through a gorge. We came to a glacial valley. A man fished for trout, kids ran home from school holding hands and alpacas grazed. As we walked by, a few "vizzcachas" (chinchillas) darted over the rocks. The houses that make up the town of Chillca dotted the mountain and further ahead was the lodge.

Orlando, the guardian who looks after the lodge, greeted us at the entrance with a big smile and pair of alpaca slippers. It was time to rest for the night. After dinner the house keeper, cook and guardian transformed into musicians and entertained us with Huayno style music, popular in the Peruvian Andes.

### LIVING CULTURE

The trail that we followed would not only transport us to incredible landscapes, it would serve as a time machine. Along the way we met Quechua people, believed to be direct descendants of the Incas. These

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AMANDA ZEISSET





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AND ALPACAS”

AMANDA ZEISSET

people continue to live as their ancestors had centuries ago, with very few influences from the modern world.

The people of this region are one of the few true shepherding communities left in the world. They raise alpacas and llamas, using every part of the animal to enable them to survive in this harsh climate. The wool is used for clothes, hides are used for sandals, the meat is eaten and the feces are fuel and fertilizer.

## LOOKING INTO THE HEAVENS

The days were spent hiking through the extreme landscapes and soaking in the views but once night fell, the routine was much different. After a hot shower we'd change clothes and head outside. On clear nights, the sky would be illuminated by millions of stars. The Willkamayu (Milky Way) stretched across the sky, creating a direct path to Ausangate, believed to be a cosmic connection with the Apus.

## BLESSED BY THE MOUNTAINS

Before we set off to climb Palomani Pass, the highest of the trek at 5,150 meters we gave an offering to Ausangate and asked him to protect us on our journey. The process involves collecting sweets and coca leaves. Each person takes four coca leaves and blows on them in the direction of each mountain peak while thinking good thoughts.

The leaves are then collected with the other offerings, then set on fire. If they burn well, Ausangate has blessed you. If it doesn't, you're on your own!

Once the ceremony was over and Ausangate gave us his blessing, we were off. We climbed up and up to reach the pass of 5,150 meters. While it was high, one of the best aspects of this trek is that the passes are relatively easy as you only gain a few hundred vertical meters unlike other treks we have done in Peru such as the Santa Cruz Trek and the Huayhuash Circuit.

## THE PAINTED MOUNTAINS

The climax of the Ausangate trek would come on the fourth day. As we climbed to the top of the pass a mountain appeared in the distance like no other I had seen before. It had intense pastel colors in a layered pattern.

Hours later we came closer to the mountain. Our guide told us to climb



a steep hill near by for the best view of our lives. When we reached the top, I told Antonio, “This is why we're here”.

It was clear this view was the reason we had spent four days hiking through the mountains. The painted mountain was right in front of us, with its ridge of colors continuing on into horizon. The views didn't stop after we passed the painted mountain. Every turn and corner of that day continued to amaze us.

## DREAM TO REALITY

The lodges were built between a joint effort of the communities of Chillca, Osefina and Andean Lodges. The people from these communities have lived for centuries herding llamas and alpacas. Before the government built roads through the Andes, these people made their living by transporting goods in between towns with their llamas. Once the roads were made, their llamas were replaced by trucks.

Instead of going to nearby Cusco to look for work, the communities found away to stay in the mountains in the 21st century. They did this with the help of Roger Valencia, the director of Andean Lodges. He plotted a route through the mountains that would give hikers the best views and raised 1 million dollars to build three lodges. The fourth would be funded by the community through a grant by the Peruvian government. This gave the members a financial stake in the project.

The communities' llamas were put to work again, carrying guests luggage from lodge to lodge. This enables hikers to only worry about taking pictures and having a good time.

The entire staff at the lodge, aside from the guide are from one of the two communities. The idea was that local populations should be active agents in the company's operations, to share their culture and natural resources with travelers, thus creating employment and improving their quality of life. Andean Lodges gives a portion of the profits back to the communities which is used for education and health projects. ♦





A world of snowcapped giants in the Andes

# AN EXPEDITION TO THE INCREDIBLE HUAYHUASH CIRCUIT

REPORTER: Antonio Cala EMAIL: antonio@theadventurejunkies.com

The wildest and most remote Peruvian Andes won't leave you indifferent.

High mountain passes, snow-capped peaks, immaculate lagunas and great camping spots make the Huayhuash Circuit one of the best treks in South America. This 8-day hike takes you through the remote lands of the Peruvian Andes where very few people venture this far every year.

## PACKING OUR BAGS AND HITTING THE TRAIL

We had spent the last 2 months in Huaraz cycling and hiking the Cordillera Blanca. It seemed that we couldn't get enough of these mountains. After completing the taxing Huascarán Circuit on a bicycle and hiking the Santa Cruz Trek we thought we had seen the best bits. That was until we decided to take on our Huayhuash trekking experience.

This time our adventure would take us to another area, the Cordillera Huayhuash. A less visited area where a remote, high altitude and challenging hiking route was awaiting. Less visitors venture this far when visiting Peru but we were assured that the rewarding of completing this route would be much bigger than in the Blanca. So we packed our bags and hit the trail.

## THE HUAYHUASH CIRCUIT: A DIFFERENT KIND OF HIKE

Since we arrived to the little town of Llamac, I knew we were in for a good one. One of those routes you will remember for years to come. The snow-capped peaks here are really high (many well over 6,000 mts – 19,500 ft) and the feeling of remoteness is fantastic.

Nothing like the busy roads around the callejón de Huaylas in the Cordillera Blanca. There are hardly any cars here. Donkeys and horses are the

main mode of transport in this area. I loved it.

The whole circuit takes anywhere from 8 to 14 days to complete as there are different routes available. There is only one small town where you can re-stock on supplies which means you will need to carry all your food for 7-8 days if walking independently.

For that reason, most of the hikers decide to go with an organized tour. But hey, we are the Adventure Junkies. We can't let a donkey carry our stuff up the mountain!

It's also a high altitude hiking route. You will be over 4,000 meters (13,000 ft) most of the time, never camp below that mark and will have to climb up to 7 passes of 4,500mts+ (14,700ft+). For that reason, being well acclimated is paramount.

## CUTTING THROUGH THE NEVADOS

Almost every day there is a pass to climb. But here in Huayhuash the passes are not as usual. Here you get really close to the snow-capped peaks cutting through the hand carved passes on the rock where the summits of these giants never seemed this close.

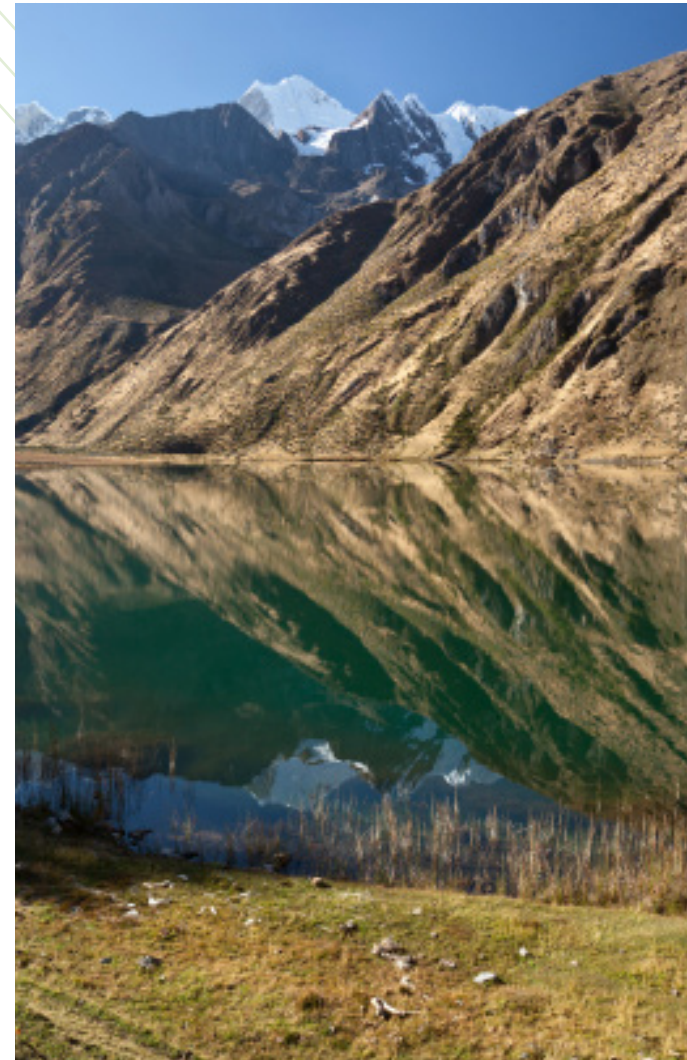
Being the circuit so high means that you will have to walk on the snow sometimes. Nothing major though. With the help of our GPS, and with normal hiking shoes, we were able to navigate these high passes without any problems.

## MEMORABLE CAMPING SPOTS

One of the best parts of the Huayhuash trekking experience are the number of incredible camping spots you will enjoy every day. There are plenty of opportunities to camp next to mirror-like lagunas, ranging rivers and snow-capped peaks.

For us, these trails would provide a route into a world that we never knew existed. Our goal was to go around Ausangate following a path that is over 4,000 meters above sea level.

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These camping areas are managed by the local communities and it's advised not to camp in other areas. All of them have toilets (most even flush toilets!) and the rubbish is taken away every day. By camping at the designated areas you contribute to keep this magical mountain range clean and trash free.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

It's not hard to see why the Huayhuash Circuit is considered by many as the best trek in the continent. High mountain passes, snow-capped peaks,

immaculate lagunas and great camping spots make this hiking route, together with the Ausangate lodge to lodge trek, as one of our favourite ones of all time. And that's saying a lot!

It's also a challenging hike, specially if you decide to go independently. Up to seven passes of 4,500mts+ (14,500ft+) need to be climbed and all the camping spots are well over the 4,000 mts – 13,000ft mark. But those who venture this far will be rewarded with some of the best landscapes of the Americas.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Allow enough days to acclimatize to the altitude before starting this route. It's possible to hike the Huayhuash Circuit independently as long as you can carry enough food for 8 days. Otherwise, going with an organized tour is recommended.

This trek is best enjoyed during the dry season, from May to September. April can also be a good choice.

Most of the hikers start at Quarterlhuain camp and hike the loop clockwise. If hiking independently, you will need to catch the 5:30AM bus with El Rapido or Nazairo from Huaraz to Chiquián (10 soles), and another one from Chiquián to Pocpa (15 soles). From Pocpa you will need to spend the rest of the day walking on the road to Quarterlhuain (4 hours) or hitch-hiking! To come back, the last bus from Llamac to Chiquian-Huaraz is at 11:30AM.

Don't forget to check out the article [Hiking the Huayhuash Circuit](#) for more detailed information about this hike. ♦





# THANKS FOR READING



We would like to thank you again for taking the time to check out the Hiking Quick Starter Guide! We hope you've found some value in it and can use it as a guide to help you get into hiking and explore the outdoors. Lots of great adventures are lying ahead waiting for you!

If for whatever reason you got this guide without ever subscribing to our email list (which is totally okay because we realize people love to share things like this), then please head on over to [TheAdventureJunkies.com](https://theadventurejunkies.com) and subscribe to our email list there.

We would also suggest you to check out the other Quick Starter Guides for scuba diving, bicycle touring, mountain biking, outdoor photography, kayaking, climbing, and liveaboard diving - just like this one!

And lastly, if you enjoyed this book, please feel free to share it on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

Cheers, best of luck and we look forward to helping you out again soon!

Antonio & Amanda

