



TREKKING EQUIPMENT & PACKING MANUAL



GREAT WALL OF CHINA



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Great Wall of China Packing List

Please note that our packing list continues to evolve as new and better gear comes onto the market and we encourage you to contact us after your trek to add or refine any bits that you think will benefit future trekkers.

We start with the most important question, what to pack given the seasonal weather variations on the trail.

Weather Variations

Autumn is considered the very best time to visit China as there is plenty of sunshine and mild temperatures (which drop sharply at the end of October). Temperatures will be dependent upon the weather which is usually clear and sunny. Some rain is to be expected in September and October but nothing like the heavy rain of the summer months. On average, the temperature will range between 19° - 26°C during the day and 5° - 15°C at night. It's important to be prepared for all weather conditions and temperatures by packing non-cotton trek layers and waterproofs. It's far better to have waterproofs and not need them, than to not have any when you need them!

Although the temperatures and conditions above are historically accurate, climate change can impact the seasons so you may experience uncharacteristic conditions during the trip which are out of our control. Should this happen your guides will assess the situation and make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and ultimately safety of the group.

Clothing

Non-trekking Days

- Sports sandals or comfortable shoes
- Tracksuits like joggers for when not trekking
- 2 pairs other socks for leisure
- Underwear (quick dry are best)
- Shirts - fabrics that wick are best particularly if you sweat a lot, they also dry faster than cotton t shirts (available at most gear shops).

Trekking Days

The best way to think about your clothing for the trek days are with the idea of layering in mind.

The ability to layer your clothing up or down from morning when it may be cold, to the mid-afternoon when temperatures reach their peak and then drop back down at night is key.

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Layering also comes in handy as you ascend higher that are exposed to winds. Effective layering only works if each layer allows moisture to pass through and escape to the external environment. In fact, the best layered clothing, like wool, promotes moisture transfer through its wicking properties. Cotton and denim absorb moisture and should therefore be avoided.

Below we set out the types of clothing you should bring with you and provide specific recommendations on what characteristics to look for in each.

Under Wear and Base Layers



You should bring 2-3 pairs of sports underwear, e.g. Icebreaker, or any other sporting brand. For ladies bring two pairs of sports bras.

Over your underwear you should wear a lightweight base layer (or next-to-skin layer). You won't wear this everyday day, just in case its cold in the mornings.

Trekking Shirts

In terms of shirts we recommend 3 x short sleeve shirts and 1 x long sleeve shirt. Ideal fabric is a breathable, lightweight and quick-drying polyester, merino or nylon. Make sure that your shirts are not cotton.

Great trekking shirts are made by Icebreaker, Craghoppers, Columbia and Patagonia (see their Capilene range).

Hiking Trousers and Shorts. Bring 1-2 x pairs of hiking trousers – 1 is fine for 3/4 day treks, an additional pair is ideal for treks greater than 4 days. Hiking trousers from Craghoppers or Fjällräven are great. You may prefer to take convertible trousers, for example these by Craghoppers are brilliant.

Also bring a few pairs of trekking shorts. Columbia make good and affordable hiking shorts for men and women.



Wind Breaker



You should have a water-resistant and wind-proof jacket shell layer. You want this to be relatively light (not a winter jacket), but still warm and sturdy. It needs to withstand any rain that you will encounter (although as you will see below we recommend taking a cheap poncho / rain gear in addition to your shell jacket).

We recommend the Patagonia Torrent shell Jacket, the North Face Resolve Jacket or the Marmot Precip Jacket.



Rain Gear / Poncho

Finally, you can never truly predict the weather. As an extra precaution you should bring lightweight rain gear, or preferably a poncho that sits over your body and rucksack as seen adjacent.

Headgear

Sun Hat



You should bring a lightweight, easy-to-store sun hat to protect your head and face from getting sun burnt and reduce the probability of heat stroke. We prefer sun hats that have an adjustable neck cover, like the one shown adjacent. Do not bring a large bulky hat, like a straw hat, as these are difficult to store.



Neck / Head Band / Bandannas



If your hat doesn't have a neck cover you might want to bring a neck or head band which can help protect against sun burn whilst doubling as a scarf or head and ear warmer during the cold nights.

Seamless Buff neck gaiters or Delicol outdoor bandannas are cheap and can be used as a neckband, head cover, scarf, bandanna or wristband.

Sunglasses



Good sunglasses are a must. The leader in mountain glasses is Julbo. All lenses provide 100% protection from UVA, B and C and their category 4 lenses block 90% of visible light. Nonetheless, a basic pair of Julbos' like their Montebiancos' for men and Monterosas' for women provide versatility, are awesome value, and can be used equally well in non-mountain environments.

Walking Poles



You will be trekking along an undulating landscape for up to 5-6 hours a day, for 3-4 days. Your leg joints, particularly your knees, will take a battering. With the aid of good trekking poles, you will reduce the impact on your joints by up to 25% (a 1999 research study published in the Journal of Sports Medicine showed even better results than 25%). Poles also give you better balance.

Your trekking poles should be lightweight (250-350 grams per pole), adjustable (ideally with a lever-locking, not twist-locking mechanism), aluminium or carbon-fibre (not steel which is heavy and susceptible to snapping), and with a good, water-resistant grip (cork is most durable and performs well in wet conditions, rubber and foam are fine but not ideal for wet conditions).

The Black Diamond Alpine Carbon Cork is up there as one of the best poles, albeit a little pricey. Further down the market but still pretty good is the Black Diamond Ultra Distance or Leki Corklite. A cheap and cheerful trekking pole of decent quality is the Black Diamond Trail Back.

Footwear

Hiking Boots



Hiking boots are one of the most important pieces of gear in your trek. Your feet are what get you up and down the wall! It is paramount that you bring a good pair of boots that are well-worn in (i.e. the inner sole should have started to mould to the shape of your foot). Do not arrive with brand new boots that you haven't worn yet – you will get blisters, sore feet and even loose toe-nails!

There are two key factors to look for in a boot – fit and quality.

To test good fit on a boot, place your foot inside the boot with a mid-weight trekking sock on. Push your foot all the way forward. Take your index finger and insert it between your heel and the back of the boot. A perfect fit is if your finger sits snugly in this gap. If it is too tight to get your finger in then the boot is too small, and vice versa.

In terms of quality you should look for these key characteristics.

- Medium to high tops to support your ankle. The higher the top the heavier the boot. Ideally, we recommend sturdy medium high tops made from leather or a leather-condura material
- The sole should be made from rubber and have mid-to-deep lugs for good traction. The deeper the lugs the heavier the boot
- Mid-weight boots are best for Machu Picchu. Heavy boots provide great cushioning and are very durable but can be a little heavy to trek in
- The inner membrane should be waterproof. Gore-Tex is the best material for this
- The lacing-system should incorporate speed hooks or D-strings which provide additional ankle support

The Italian brand, Asolo, make incredible hiking boots. Have a look at their Asolo Fugitive hiking boot. Other good hiking boot brands include Salomon (see their Quest range), Berghaus (see their Explorer range), the Timberland Chocurua or the Hi-Tec Altitude.



Trekking sandals



After a long day trekking the first thing you are going to want to do is take off your hiking boots and air your feet. We recommend bringing a basic pair of lightweight trekking sandals that you can slip into. Alternatively, you can bring a pair of lightweight trainers.

Here are some good hiking sandals (Keen make a good trekking sandal).

Trekking Socks



You should bring 4 x pairs of trekking socks. Look for a light-to-mid weight trekking sock made of high wicking material. The best trekking socks are made from wool, preferably merino, as they promote breathability and are very good at wicking moisture away from the foot. Avoid cotton as they absorb and retain moisture making your foot susceptible to blistering. If you are allergic to wool you can go for a synthetic acrylic or acrylic-blend sock.

Great trekking sock brands that meet all the criteria above include Smartwool, Bridgedale, Point 6 and Wigwam. These socks all have flat seams (bulky seams lead to greater friction and ultimately blistering) and provide great cushioning to the foot.

Rucksacks / Daypack

Good rucksacks are designed to transfer load weight to your hips. The shoulder straps should carry no more than 30% of the weight. Here are the key features to look for in your rucksack:

Size: The ideal size rucksack for the Daypack of 20/30 L with a waterproof cover. This is a small backpack to carry your personal requirements for each day. Water Bottles (either two 1 litre bottles recommended brands are Sigg or Nalgene) or a Camel Pack hydration system of at least 2 litres

Waterproof: Rucksacks are generally not waterproof, but good ones should be weather resistant. Look for design materials like pack cloth for the bag and Condura for high friction areas (i.e. inside of the straps). A water-resistant urethane coating is also beneficial



Design: For perfect fit the harness and suspension system should be multi-size and adjustable.

The shoulder straps should be well padded and not restrict movement, and there should also be a hip belt that's well padded. The best manufactures, like Osprey and North Face, design specific bags for women that have reshaped hip belts that are wider and more moulded; and narrower, but broader shoulder straps.

Don't forget to purchase a rain cover for your rucksack. See Osprey Rain Cover and North Face Rain Cover.

You should take three types of luggage with you for your trip:

1. A large suitcase or rucksack which you will check in for the flight
2. A holdall or soft rucksack for your trek luggage which will be transported between guesthouses for you
3. A daypack of 25-30 litres capacity which you will carry yourself during the trek.
4. Combination padlocks to secure your bags

Water Bottles / Hydration Bladder



You should aim to drink 2-3 litres of water a day. Water is typically supplied by your trekking crew at the beginning of each day. In order to carry 2 or more litres of water on you each day you can either use two 1 litre bottles. Use one 1.5 litre bottle (and drink half a litre before you head off in the morning) Use a hydration bladder (these can hold between 2-5 litres). In terms of water bottles we recommend either the 1L or 1.5L Camelbak Water Bottle.



Alternatively, if you are using a rucksack like the Osprey or North Face then a hydration bladder is very effective. You can go for the Osprey water bladder or our preferred water hydration bladder is made by Platypus.

Get a bladder that holds between 2-3 litres (anything more is too heavy!)

It is a good idea to add an isotonic powder, like Gaterade, to your water for additional energy and better taste.



Other Key Items to Pack

Passport – You need your passport! We recommend bringing a few copies of the identity page as well.

Insurance – You should have trekking and travel insurance for the Great Wall of China. Remember to write down your policy number and ideally carry a copy of your policy on you. If something does go wrong the trek you will want to contact your insurance company immediately. We have written a detailed guidance article on how to choose the right insurance [here](#)

Trekking Towel (optional) – A medium lightweight trekking towel to dry your hair, face and hands after a day's trekking.

Sweat Resistant Sun cream – Don't just get any sunscreen. You are trekking where the sun intensity is high, so you will need a high SPF (greater than 30). You will also be exerting yourself so a sunscreen that is sweat resistant is important. Speak to any athlete and they will confirm that the best sweat resistant sun cream is P20. Make sure to bring sun protection lip cream as well.

Insect Repellent – A basic insect repellent is important. Make sure to get a reliable brand that has a high Deet content – greater than 90% (Repel make a great product).

Wet Wipes – Great for cleaning your hands and face, and wiping down your body after a long days trekking. We also recommend bringing a small antiseptic hand-gel for dousing your hands before meals

Dry Plastic Bags – Bring a few large, medium and small plastic bags that you can use to source separate your wet and dry gear. Use zip-lock bags for your small gear like your wallet, money, camera, passport etc.

Pee Bottle (for the ladies) – We only hear good things about this from the ladies.

Blister Plasters – Trekking up to 4-5 hours a day can result in painful and debilitating blisters. Treat blisters early and take immediate measures to reduce friction. When applying a plaster, make sure you remove excess moisture from the blistered area and use a good blister plaster like those from Leukotape P. or Compeed. It's a wives tail that duct tape works well. In fact, duct tape is not breathable and hence the skin saturates under the tape and the blister worsens

General Meds – Take Paracetamol for headaches and Imodium. Your guide should be carrying a basic first aid kit, but you may want to carry some lightweight basics that are available in these outdoor kits

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Snacks – Take 2-3 x energy bars for each day on the trek, so 10-15 in total. Don't take milk based snacks as these melt. Nuts are also a good snacking food for the trail, just don't get salty ones as these lead to dehydration

Toiletries – One roll of toilet paper per trekker is a must (remove the cardboard roll to save space) and all your other toiletry basics (toothbrush, toothpaste, small travel soap)

Cash - The currency of China is Renminbi (人民币), the People's Money, and is abbreviated to RMB. The basic you will need to budget for local staff tips, laundry, drinks, personal spending money, personal equipment and souvenirs. There are lots of ATMs close to hotels if you wish to withdraw cash, but be aware that your bank may charge for overseas withdrawals and transactions and some banks block overseas transactions so inform your bank before departure. You can purchase Chinese Yuan in advance from bureau de changes in the UK but the rate of exchange is poor so it works out cheaper to withdraw cash on arrival. If you wish to exchange Pounds Sterling to Yuan this is possible too. Do not bring US Dollars.

Cameras – The scenery along the wall is extraordinary. Bring a decent camera to capture the experience. Here are some good digital SLR cameras, or if you want to go super light and capture awesome videos we recommend the GoPro. Remember to make sure your camera equipment is fully charged as there are no charging points along the trail, or bring a spare battery and SD Card for safety. If you want you can bring one of these backpack solar chargers.

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