THE ULTIMATE

Remote Trekking Gear Checklist

PUBLISHED BY:

TAG International Pty Ltd
PO Box 504
NUNDAH
Queensland, 3012

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The Ultimate Remote Trekking Gear Checklist

'Adventure is worthwhile in itself' – Amelia Earhart

This guide is designed to provide the user with an understanding of the sort of gear I would carry on a trek into the outback, bush, or back country. By that I mean you are literally carrying your 'house' on your back into remote areas with no tracks (other than animal tracks). This is 'off piste' trekking.

Please note – as a former Special Forcers Operator I am used to carrying significant weight over long distances and rough terrain; this list is for remote trekking. Some of the equipment can be spread across several people if you are trekking as a group or team.

The gear described in this guide is broken into two main areas –

- What's carried on the person, and
- What's carried in the pack.

This had been clearly separated because there are certain items you should always have on you, whether it be in your pockets or in a belt kit of some description. The rest goes in your pack (ruck for our U.S. friends).

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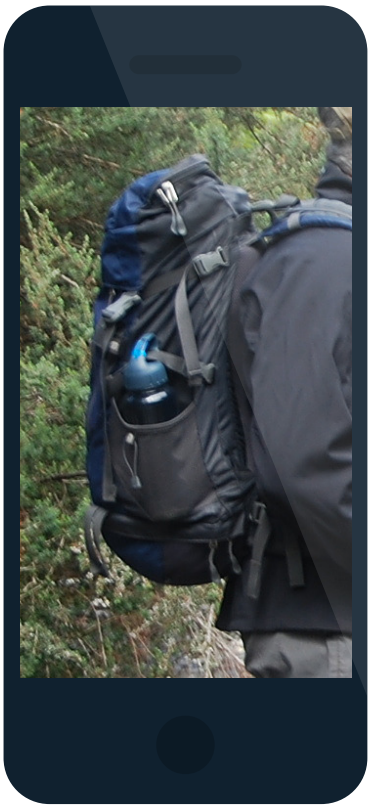
In the Pack



As I said, I carry a lot of gear with me when I trek. I'm used to carrying my 'home' on my back and having been without important bits of kit once or twice, I soon learned never to leave home without some essentials.

These are the items that I carry in the pack (ruck).
For advice on how to pack your pack see How to Pack Your Pack.

- **Cooking gear** – I typically carry an old school military modified cups canteen as a stove. I sometimes carry a Jetboil or MSR stove depending on environment and altitude. Eating utensils consist of my folding/pocket knife and a sturdy plastic 'racing spoon' (racing spoon – so named because of its shape/design which allows you to put as much food in your mouth as quickly as possible and has a extra-long handle to allow you to get to the bottom of food sachets). I use the cups canteen I carry on my belt kit to cook with or to make a brew (cuppa).

- **Sleeping gear** – depends on location, altitude and the season. I run with synthetic sleeping bags as they are still relatively warm when wet, albeit they are heavier and bulkier than down bags. If you have good shelter (4 season expedition tent or similar) and have weather proofed your pack adequately (or are in an arid environment) then a down bag is gold. I typically run with a Gortex bivy bag as well. Nowadays I also use a full length 'Whimp' mat (foam mat/inflatable mattress) – this provides for a better night's sleep and keeps you warmer from the cold ground. I also carry a 'sleeping shirt' which is a comfortable light weight long sleeved warm shirt that can be changed into at night so you can sleep in something comfortable and dry.

- **Shelter** – I typically don't carry a tent unless going into very cold/alpine conditions or altitude. In those circumstances a good quality 4 seasons expedition tent is essential. The rest of the time I make do with my bivy bag and, if necessary, a hoochie (military plastic sheet that can be fashioned to provide shelter from rain and wind). There's nothing better than being able to see the night sky or hear of something big and scary is approaching during the night! A hoochie is also ideal for use with a hammock and in the jungle/close country.

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- **Wet weather gear** – even in warm climates shelter from the rain is a good thing. Body heat is hard to replace and being constantly wet for days on end is not a fun thing….been there, done that and I'm over it! With that said, at a minimum I carry a light weight Gortex (or similar) jacket and a small travel umbrella. I carry a heavier jacket and pants in colder/wetter environments. The umbrella not only provides protection from rain, but also sun and can make a good emergency shelter. It is also ideal as a water catcher when inverted.

- **Cold weather gear** – it gets cold at night even in the jungle and the desert! Temperature changes can be significant and although the actual temperature is not that cold the differential makes it seem cold – this is exacerbated if you are wet. Therefore, I always carry a light weight shell jacket or micro fibre fleece pullover. They weigh very little and pack down into a compact size. The wet weather Gortex jacket can also double as your cold weather kit.

- **Solar charger or charging pack** – to charge those critical devices such as Satphone/ mobile phone!

- **Medical kit** – A compact medical kit is essential. Blister kit, some basic trauma, pain relief, 'coughs & colds' items, some bandages and basic antiseptic should form part of the kit – see separate blog on Medical Kits on the webpage.

- **Food** – this is a very personal choice. Suffice to say that it takes up room and if you're embarking on a long trek in remote areas you will need to carry most, if not all of your food from the start. Dehydrated meals will reduce the weight of the food carried but obviously require water (which is heavy!). Unless there is ample water in the trek area or some means of resupply you need to be careful about what percentage of this type of food you carry. Eat your heavy items first, if possible. If it is a long trek, you will get sick of your food regardless of what you take – my advice is to ensure you take some condiments. A little sauce and seasoning makes all the difference! You can get sachets of sauce and seasoning but if you do carry bottles ensure they are plastic (so they don't break – nothing worse than an 'exploding' sauce bottle to ruin your day!). Ration your yummy stuff (chocolate etc) because you'll need the moral boast towards the end of the trek!

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- **Water** – people typically underestimate their consumption rate and what they actually need to remain effective on a trek. On a long trek in a remote area water will typically make up a significant amount of the weight in your pack and take up a considerable amount of room. You really need to do your research with regards to available perennial water sources on your route and the ability of your support assets to get a resupply to you or to preposition it – be realistic! Water containers – water is precious so your containers need to be sturdy and not leak. Ideally they should have a fairly wide opening to make refilling easier and quicker. If possible they should be collapsible so when they are empty they take up less space. I carry a mixture of Australian and British Army standard water bottles, some US 2 quart bladders and some MSR collapsible bladders. However, if you want to keep costs down then 1.25 and 2 litre soft drink bottles work fine (I would tape them up with some gaffa tape to increase strength). Wine cask bladders also make good short term water bladders – you have to empty them first obviously… that's the fun part!

- **Spare batteries** (additional to the belt kit as required) – try and limit the type of battery your devices take. Therefore, when selecting/buying devices you should consider what batteries it needs. Try to use rechargeable batteries where possible, although always carry non-rechargeable ones as well in case you can't recharge.

- **Spare Poo tickets** (water proof bag) – take the loo paper off the roll to save space and ensure it is well water proofed.

- **Spare clothes** – Unless I am going for a very long trek I typically only carry spare socks and jocks (undies); only one set of each… and my 'sleeping shirt' (see sleeping gear).

- **Weather proofing** – critical to carry some bags and containers that will provide a high level of weather proofing for your gear. There is nothing worse than thinking you have a dry warm sleeping bag to get into only to find that it is absolutely soaking wet… or you pull out your spare socks to find that they have dust all through them! Zip lock bags are great as are various brands of weather resistant gear sack and compression bags. However, the cheaper option is plastic garbage bags – double them up for added strength and protection. They also make a reasonable emergency raincoat too!

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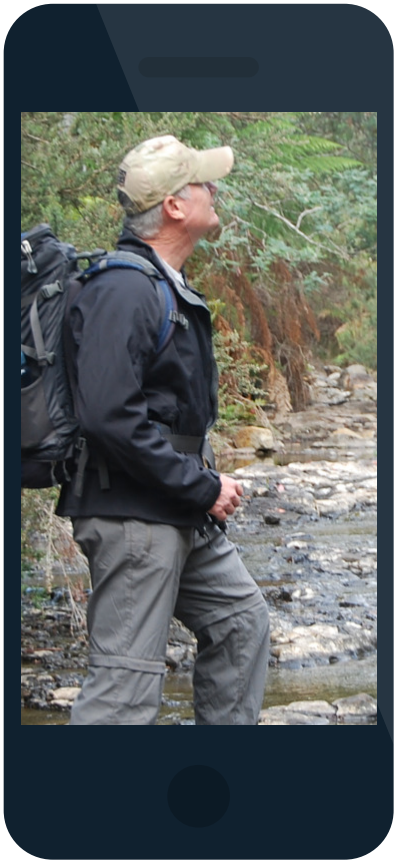
What I carry on my person



- Watch
- Compass
- Map
- Torch – small hand held
- Survival whistle
- Survival blanket
- Note book and pen
- Matches/lighter and flint
- Folding/pocket knife
- Hat
- Gloves
- Sweat cloth/Shamagh
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Nut or energy bar
- Signal mirror
- Survival Straw
- Paracord
- Poo tickets – enough for one event!
- Comms (mobile phone)
- A large clear plastic bag – can provide shelter but can be used to collect water

In order to carry all this you will need pants and a jacket or shirt with plenty of pockets

Luxuries

A few luxuries to consider taking if you have the room and are able to carry the weight:

- A camera – usually part of your phone these days!
- A book to read – I take a star guide as it does two jobs.
- A light weight hammock – cooler way to sleep and gets you off the ground which is ideal in the jungle or on steep slopes and uneven/wet ground.
- Condiments – taking a small quantity of seasoning and sauces can make all the difference at meal time!

Check out Mick's Top 10 Bits of Kit for Every Adventure

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Trekking Kit Checklist

Here's a checklist of all the gear I use. Check off what you already have and identify what you might want to get.

Item	Have	Get
Good quality pack (ruck) – see the blog series 'How to Pack your Pack'		
Sturdy belt		
Good quality well worn in boots – must provide adequate ankle support		
Sturdy long trousers and long sleeved shirt – rip stop material is ideal		
Good hat		
Sunglasses		
Sunscreen		
Good outdoor style watch (with luminous dial or light if its digital)		
Gloves – sturdy light weight construction to protect the hands		
Sweat cloth or Shamagh – typically worn around the neck but doubles as a towel and can provide shade		
Good quality compass		
Good quality sharp knife – carry two; one fixed blade and one Swiss Army style fold away		
Good quality topographic map – 1:100 000 at a minimum, 1:50 000 or 1:25 000 are better		
Electronic maps are shit, don't use them as a primary map/nav aid		
Good quality map case – essential! Even in dry climates your map will get wet (sweat), dirty and damaged		
GPS – hand held with map software if possible (as a back up)		
EPIRB or Spot Tracker		
Note book and pen – water resistant style is good; carried in a zip lock bag or similar water proof case		
Survival whistle		
Strobe light		
Space/survival blanket		
Signal mirror – for signaling aircraft or starting fires		

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Item	Have	Get
Illumination – a good head torch is worth its weight in gold! I carry a head torch and a small hand torch (that use common batteries to other devices)		
Paracord (15-20m)		
Solar charger and/or charging pack		
Secateurs – otherwise known as pruning shears; perfect for cutting foliage that's in the way (essential for rainforest and secondary jungle)		
Poo tickets – toilet paper (in a water proof bag). Yes you can use bark or your notebook paper, but if you actually want to clean as opposed to smear then there is no substitute (one of the few luxuries!)		
Spare batteries – for all devices. Try and limit the type of battery needed so there is a level of commonality		
Medical kit		
Survival kit		
Fire starting kit – should include water proof matches, a butane lighter and a flint fire starter (some cotton wool balls for tinder is a good idea – in a zip lock bag, of course)		
Cooking gear		
Shelter		
Sleeping gear		
Wet weather gear		
Cold weather gear		
Comms gear (communications)		
Water filtration and purification		
Water carriage		
Food		
Spare clothes		
Weather proofing		

Again, this is typically what I take with me. This list will and does vary depending on the environment in which the trek is taking place, the season and the duration.

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BECAUSE LIFE IS AN ADVENTURE

Final Word

Remote trekking is not for the faint hearted or the ill prepared – don't be the one that has all the gear and no idea! Planning and preparation are critical in most things in life, this activity you have to have your shit in one sock or things will go wrong… very wrong!

However, if you plan and prepare well to include the right gear remote trekking is a wonderfully fulfilling adventure. You may even be the first human to set foot on that particular patch of ground! Remember, if you pack it you have to carry it!

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