

10 essential items for the perfect day hike

Synopsis: "Failing to plan is planning to fail." Here are 10 must-haves for your next day hiking adventure!

Since day hikes are typically less than 24 hours long, you are free to carry less gear.

Swap out bulky items such as a sleeping bag or tent with other items you wouldn't normally bring with you if space was limited, such as extra cameras, lenses, and video equipment.

Even though a day hike is usually just a few hours or a day at most, you will still need to pack some absolute essentials in order to make sure your next day hike is memorable for all the right reasons.

10. Hiking boots

Sure you could probably navigate various trails and terrain in sneakers, but you won't have the support, protection, and waterproofing of a good pair of hiking boots.

Remember, you will be on your feet for most of your day hike and it's important to be wearing comfortable hiking boots, preferably a pair that is already "broken-in" before your trip.

9. Water and snacks

It is important to always be hydrated while participating in any exercise, not just hiking.

How much should you bring?

"More than enough" is always a good place to start when it comes to water for day hikes. Invest in a quality BPA-free steel water bottle for durable drinking.

You need to also keep your energy up and your focus on the beauty of the outdoors—which is hard to do on an empty stomach!

Pack easy to eat and non-perishable food items and snacks to keep your engine room working.

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, beef jerky, trail mix, granola bars, and fruit are terrific day hike food and snack fare.

8. Change of clothes

While your day hike may only be a few hours long before you head back, it's still a good idea to prepare for scenarios such as unforeseen rain or getting your clothes torn or dirty on the trail.

Consider throwing a rain jacket, extra socks, t-shirt, and a warming layer such as a hooded sweatshirt or fleece jacket in your daypack.

7. First aid kit

You can purchase a pre-packed kit or make your own to treat minor cuts and scrapes with bandages, anti-bacterial ointment, gauze, and moist towelettes or alcohol wipes.

Handy tip: add a book of matches. You never know when you'll need to start a fire to stay warm or to signal rescuers. Just remember, [Smokey the Bear](#) says, "Only YOU can prevent wildfires."

6. Bug spray / Suntan lotion

Protect yourself from bites and burns. Look for waterproof bug spray and SPF of at least 100 or more.

5. Bandana

Bandanas serve multiple uses, and not just as a sweatband or handkerchief. They can also be used as a tourniquet or sling.

4. Hat / Sunglasses

Even if it's just a baseball cap, your scalp and forehead (two easily sunburned areas) will thank you.

For added protection around the particularly burnable top of ears, try a bucket or floppy hat.

Not only will you look cooler (if that was at all possible), but you will protect your vulnerable corneas from harmful UV rays.

3. Compass, map

GPS systems may be great, but it's always good to have a backup navigation option that won't require batteries.

A trail map of your planned hiking area as well as a compass to point you in the right direction are smart items to bring with you on the trail.

2. Cellphone / SPOT

In the event of an emergency, you will be able to phone 911 if you were to get lost, stuck, or injured and cannot continue home.

Cellphones can also be tracked by GPS satellites. Similarly, SPOT is a small device that sends your GPS position to satellites alerts rescue personnel.

At the very least, it is important to tell somebody, such as a trusted friend or family member, about where you will be and when to expect you back.

1. Knife or multi-tool

Pocket knives and multi-tools can be a lifesaver, which is why they are number one on this list.

Use the blade as an ax to make firewood (either for warmth or to signal rescuers) by hammering the blade's back with something heavy.

This list is by no means exhaustive, nor should it be considered the absolute end-all be-all of day hike essentials lists.

But it should at least get you started in the right direction.

Just remember, be safe, use common sense, and have fun so you can enjoy day hikes for many more days to come.

Did we leave out anything on this list that you wouldn't dare leave home without? Let us know and leave a comment below!