

# PACKING LIST FOR ALC ALPS III 2012

## About this Packing List

This list has been thoughtfully prepared. If you follow it closely, you will be well prepared for all weather conditions, and your pack should be a reasonable weight. Though we always hope for warm and sunny weather, it can be cold and rainy/snowy in July and August, too. Temperatures can range from 32 at night to 80 during the day.

When selecting clothing, think about dual-purpose clothes and about layering for warmth and keeping dry. It is better to have several layers you can take off and put on one at a time versus one heavy layer.

**A word about cotton:** Do not bring cotton. When cotton gets damp/sweaty/wet not only does it become heavy and take forever to dry, more importantly it draws warmth from your body. It has no insulating properties. On a long, cold, rainy day, wet cotton next to your body is not only uncomfortable, it can cause hypothermia.

**Fleece and synthetic fabrics,** on the other hand, retain their insulating qualities. They keep you warm even when wet, dry quickly and are lightweight. There are many excellent synthetic fabrics known by many different names (PolarTec, Synchronia, Capilene, Bergelene, Coolmax, polypro, Supplex, Dryline etc.) and come in many weights and styles. Any reputable gear store will carry a good selection.

That said, we also recommend Coolmax or Capilene-type t-shirts instead of cotton t-shirts for hiking. These hand-wash easily, dry quickly and have wicking qualities that keep you cool on warm days and warm on cold days! ***Please do not*** bring cotton long underwear, sweatshirts or sweatpants.

Online links are included for examples of some of these items. This is included as a helpful reference only: it is not necessary to purchase these exact items or brands!

**READY, SET, GO!!! ☺**

**Pack** - A pack size of 38 - 54 liters or 2,300 - 3,500 cubic inches should be adequate. This pack was a favorite of several campers <http://www.rei.com/product/794532> Please see more detailed info about packs on page 4 of this list.

**Hiking boots** - We would recommend boots that have a lot of support because during the Tour du Mont Blanc portion is a lot of daily miles (9-15 miles per day) with a lot of elevation gain and loss. You should go to a store like REI to be outfitted to fit your foot. We recommend boots like : <http://www.rei.com/product/796033> or <http://www.rei.com/product/806620> Please see more detailed info about boots on page 4 of this packing list.

**PLEASE BREAK YOUR BOOTS IN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO DECREASE LIKELIHOOD OF BLISTERS WHILE ABROAD**

- 4 pairs of synthetic, quick drying underwear specifically for hiking (**not cotton**)
- 1 pair synthetic long underwear, tops and bottoms - light or medium weight (**not cotton**)
- 1 light weight fleece jacket:

<http://www.patagonia.com/us/product/patagonia-womens-r1-regulator-pullover?p=40116-1-085>

- 1 Heavy fleece jacket

<http://www.patagonia.com/us/product/patagonia-womens-r4-regulator-jacket?p=36113-1-171>

- 1 pair of running shoes. *These have two functions: 1. To give your feet a break for a day if you develop problematic blisters. 2. The “aqua trekking” activity requires tennis shoes for use in the river.*
- 1 pair flip-flops for shower
- 3 pair of hiking socks – (**not cotton**) – wool, Coolmax, Thorlos, Smartwool, Capilene etc.
- 1 pair of sock liners or regular socks to be worn with running shoes
- 2 t-shirts for hiking. (**not cotton**) Capilene, Coolmax, silk, polypro all hand-wash and dry on clothes lines very easily.
- 2 pairs of shorts, lightweight quick dry for hiking. One should be zip off pants/shorts.
- 1 pair of pants lightweight, also for use at night or while visiting towns.
- 1 long sleeve poly button up shirt. *These are perfect for hiking on cooler mornings, providing SPF protection when it is really sunny, and to be used a “dress shirt” for our dinners in town.*
- Rain Jacket and Pants (**Breathable and Waterproof**) *We cannot stress enough the importance of breathable rain gear created especially for hiking. Gore-tex gear works well. See note about Outer Gear on page 6!*
- Warm hat/Gloves or mittens (**not cotton**)
- Sun hat / baseball cap

## Personal Items

- 2 one-liter water bottles or hydration system large enough to hold 2 liters of water. *If you choose to bring a hydration system, which are are really convenient, please also bring a one liter watter bottle as a backup in case your system breaks.*
- 3 – 4 Stuff Sacks (**waterproof**) (**lightweight**) – Different colors and sizes help keep pack organized and items easy to find. Sea to Summit or other comparable products work well.
- 3 travel size antibacterial hand gel bottles.
- Sun block at least 50 SPF, sweatproof/waterproof.. This is an essential piece of equipment to prevent sunburns at high altitude where we spend at least half the trip. The sun is very intense on the glacier hiking day.
- Sun glasses **appropriate for glacier hiking**. These are also essential pieces of equipment for the glacier day because the sun reflection on the ice is very intense and can cause ocular damage if not protected properly.
- 1 Sport towel. (**Not cotton**) For use in the hostels and huts, they are not provided.
- 1 Bandanna
- Head lamp with extra batteries
- Personal toilet articles including soap (shampoo can be used for hair, body and laundry) and tissues; pack **small 3 oz size amounts**, as these can be carried on the flight and replenished during the trip. Some like to carry a small packet of “baby wipes” for washing hands on the trail.
- Sleep sheet - All refuges, huts and hostels provide a bottom sheet, blankets and a pillow. *A **sleep sheet** is a compact and lightweight sheet usually sewn in the shape of a roomy sleeping bag, that that serves a liner between you and the blankets and bottom sheet. They are made in cotton, silk or a non-woven material. I highly recommend the silk sleep sheet because it is light weight, very compact and dries quickly if it happens to get wet.*
- Waterproof pack liner – heavy duty trash bags work very well or Sea to Summit bags
- 1 Bathing suit, there are public swimming pools and other opportunities to swim along the way.
- Stationary (don’t bring US postage; you will need to purchase stamps abroad) Again think small sizes!!

### Optional Items

- Pack cover (highly recommended, however)
- Ear plugs for use in the refuges/hotels!!
- Journal, pens and pencils
- Book, paperback
- Hiking poles (recommended)
- Camera with lots of memory

### Items needed for camp

- 1 pair blue camp shorts
- 1 pair white camp shorts
- 1 blue camp t-shirt
- 1 white camp t-shirt
- 1 camp sweatshirt
- Sleeping Bag

\*\*Boys, we will loan you shorts and t-shirts ☺

## About packing for ALPS III

The following are explanations of the different types of clothing that are included on this list! Please don't be overwhelmed and if you have questions, call us here in the ALC office.

**Lighten Up!** Many outdoor gear companies now are making a move toward lightweight and ultra-lightweight equipment and clothing. Now more than ever, it's possible to keep the weight of your pack and its contents down. New synthetics provide for lighter weights in clothing and the need for fewer items.

An ultra-light pack can cut your overall pack weight down by as much as 4 lbs. And a lighter pack means lighter-weight hiking boots. Upgrading your gear may be an investment, but it is well worth spending a little more for gear that functions well and for gear that you like. If you like it, you'll use it, and if it functions well, you'll like using it!

Though we encourage you to pack *as lightly as possible*, don't skimp on the essentials. To be prepared for cold and/or inclement weather ***we cannot emphasize enough*** the need for warm clothes, good rain gear and comfortable hiking boots. Having the appropriate clothing and gear will add to your enjoyment, comfort and safety. We are happy to answer questions or put you in touch with past participants.

The beauty of the European style of hiking is that it is not necessary to carry camping gear and provisions. Essentially, all you need to carry are your clothes and lunch items.

**Important:** Don't wait until the last minute to pack your pack. Make sure you have a pack that will easily accommodate everything on the packing list, but no more. If your pack is larger than what you need the tendency is to fill it with unnecessary items and you will not be happy with the extra weight. Practice packing your pack, **before** you get to camp. ***Everything should fit inside your pack*** with the exception of your hiking poles, if you are bringing them, and water bottles.

**Weather Conditions:** The days can be warm and sunny and the nights cool and clear. It can also rain and possibly snow! Until mid-July it is not uncommon for there to be snow on some of the passes. These conditions can be somewhat more challenging, as we may find ourselves walking in snow for several hundred yards at a time. It is also possible to experience snowfall above 6,000' at any time!

For all our trips you can expect to be outdoors for most of the day and not always within quick reach of shelter. This being the case, we are more at the whim of Mother Nature than your average traveler. Naturally, we hope the weather will cooperate, but as often is the case in the mountains it can change quickly and without much notice. Though we will be checking forecasts daily, you should be prepared for some hiking in wet or adverse conditions, or for a change in itinerary.

## Equipment and Special Items

**Hiking Boots:** We recommend that you choose your boots carefully keeping in mind that *each day* we hike 5-7 hours and about half that time going down hill. Your boots should fit well and be broken in. Take time to break in your boots prior to your trip even though they may feel fine. If you have an old pair that have "been around for years," you may want to consider investing in a new pair as old boots can cause problems, too. Good, comfortable boots are probably the *most* important part of this list.

Merrell, Asolo, Lowa, Salomon and Raichle are companies that make quality hiking boots in both leather and fabric. There are several companies that make "designer" hiking boots that are not suitable for extended hiking, but may be advertised as such. Any outdoor store including L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, should be able to help you.

### **Rain Gear: This is really important!!**

You must have good rain gear. Both tops and bottoms are essential. Your rain gear should be made *specifically* for hiking, meaning it should be waterproof, breathable and lightweight. Gore-Tex is the leading waterproof/breathable treatment for rain gear. Coated nylon, "oil-skins", or sailing-type rain gear is not intended for heavy or prolonged exertion and can make you extremely wet and hot on the inside. Lightweight running suits are not durable enough for bad weather. *About Rain Ponchos: Please do not bring these as your only rain item,* Yes, there are some top-of-the-line rain ponchos that work well in most conditions to keep both you and your pack dry, however, in the high mountains, in windy conditions they are **not** adequate and should not serve as a substitute for tops and bottoms. *Good, dependable rain gear is equally as important as your hiking boots. We cannot over emphasize the importance or good rain gear!*

**Backpacks:** You can have problems if your pack is not an appropriate size. If your pack is too big, the tendency can be to over pack simply because you have the room. Even if you don't over pack, sometimes a pack that is too large can be awkward and unstable. If your pack is too small, you risk packing it beyond the weight it was intended to carry by cramming it full, adding additional side pouches and tying things onto the outside. The waist strap and back suspension may not be adequate enough, and you may end up in unnecessary discomfort. We recommended a pack size that comfortably accommodates those items you intend to bring.

A **pack size of 38 - 54 liters or 2,300 - 3,500 cubic inches** should be adequate. A comfortable, well-fitting and well-designed pack with a good hip belt is essential. When selecting a pack, be sure it allows easy access to a camera, water bottle and lunch. There are many good packs. Kelty, Dana Designs, Osprey, Mountainsmith, REI, EMS and LL Bean all make great mid-sized packs.

**Ultra light packs, which we strongly recommend;** Go Lite, Gregory, and Granite Gear. They all make packs that weigh around 2 lbs. that will comfortably carry all the things you will need. This is probably the easiest way to save on weight.

If you plan on buying a new pack, borrowing a pack or using an old one that has been out of commission for a while, we recommended you take it for a test drive. Pack it with everything you intend to carry with you on the trip and go for a substantial hike(s).

- **Do not bring** travel luggage which converts to packs as they are generally too large, are awkward, easy to over pack, and not intend for extended use as a pack.
- **Packs are *not* waterproof.** You should have a pack cover *and* pack in plastic inside your pack. Some folks line their pack with a large plastic bag (trash compacter bags are good because they are very durable) and then put like items in smaller zip lock bags.

**Blisters:** Nothing can make a hiker more uncomfortable than a blister. Even properly fitting boots can cause "hot spots," which can lead to blisters. With your small first aid kit we recommend that you carry a supply of moleskin and Compeed (this is great stuff, readily available in Europe in pharmacies, and now in the US market sold under Band-Aid brand in blue-green containers.) "Second Skin" is also good.

**Hiking Poles / Walking Sticks:** Hiking poles are very useful. They add a third point of contact helping with balance and take some of the strain off your knees on descents. Many past participants have told us that hiking sticks are **invaluable**. Found in many stores; Leki is a popular brand name.

## Wicking and Insulating Layers

For Your Upper Body: These 4 items are essential regardless of the trip or time of year!!!

- **1. Bottom layer:** 1 lightweight or medium weight long sleeved long underwear top for wear next to your skin. This is the wicking layer. Zipper turtleneck or crew necks.
- **2. Middle layer:** 1 lightweight fleece sweater or "expedition" weight long underwear top to wear over the bottom wicking layer. This is the warming layer. It's the weight and thickness that matters, not the brand name. A high neck is a nice feature.
- **3. Top layer:** 1 fleece jacket, which is large enough to wear over both the bottom and middle layer (with or without the wind block). This is an insulation layer. You would not normally hike in this, but wear it when you stop for an extended period of time like picnic lunch breaks and/or in the evenings. It may be that your middle and top layer are the same weight, but the top layer is cut larger and roomier.
- **4. Warm Hat and Warm Gloves or Mittens:** These are important for all trips. We recommend fleece. A baseball hat or headband *cannot* serve as a substitute. Even if it is baking hot when you pack, *please* pack a warm hat.

## **Lower Body: Items 1 & 2 are essential!**

- **1. Light or mid-weight long underwear:** 1 pair of long underwear bottoms.
- **2. 1 pair of pants, lightweight or nylon:** for use over long underwear or by themselves.