
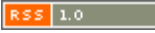
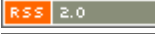




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- [Links](#)
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Day Hiking in Colorado

Written by Paul "Mags" Magnanti
Thursday, 02 February 2006

Another pimer I wrote, this time about day hiking in Colorado . Wrote it for my friends' Marni and Josh when they had friends coming from out of town. Should be useful for anyone interested in day hiking -- be it Colorado or in general



So you wanna hike in Colorado?

An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day. –Thoreau

Welcome to Colorado! During your visit you will have an opportunity to explore the mountains of Colorado. Hiking in Colorado is a wonderful experience; much beauty, rugged mountains, sublime views. But, it also involves some basic equipment and knowledge to have a pleasant hike. This document will hopefully answer some questions you may have and let your hike be an enjoyable one.

DAY PACK

The easiest item! Sure you all have a school bag of some sort. Does not to be too elaborate. Just big enough to store water, snacks and extra clothing. As you hike more you will want something with a hip belt, but for an introductory hike, the bag that hauled your Chemistry 101 book from freshman year of college will work fine.

FOOTWEAR

When hiking in Colorado you will want to wear "sturdy footwear". What is sturdy footwear? Sturdy footwear is simply a shoe that will provide adequate support for your foot as you amble along on the trail. For most people, a light-medium weight boot fits this bill. A heavy boot is great for mountaineering but overkill for most day hikes. Some people are very comfortable hiking in trail shoes or even sneakers, but most novices prefer a bit more support. A light or medium weight boot seems to offer the best compromise between protection and support with a lighter weight.

CLOTHING

Generally speaking you will want to avoid cotton clothing while hiking. Cotton clothing when wet will actually take away heat from your body and can cause hypothermia in adverse conditions. Because cotton will soak up much sweat it can easily causing chafing when wearing cotton underwear or t-shirts and can cause blisters when wearing cotton socks. No fun! On a day hike, you can easily get away with wearing a cotton t-shirt or shorts, but you may want to wear synthetic underwear and you WILL want to wear synthetic or wool socks.

Nylon running shorts are great for hiking and come with a built in brief. Swim suits also function well for this purpose. Outfitting or sports stores will also sell "hiking shorts" that are essentially swim suits made with a bit sturdier material. You can also wear synthetic long pants as well. Synthetic long pants have the added benefit of protecting your legs from the sun. Under no circumstances should you wear blue jeans. Blue jeans soak up water like a sponge, can cause chafing and will literally suck the heat out of your body if they get wet.

Most sport stores will have wool or synthetic socks. Synthetic socks are made with such material as Coolmax. In general, a pair of socks for hiking costs about \$6-\$9 /pr.

If wish to hike in a shirt that will keep you a bit drier than a cotton t-shirt, you can pick up a synthetic t-shirt (made with such material as Coolmax or Duofold) for \$12-\$15.

Now that we have the basic clothing for hiking you will want to carry some additional clothing to keep warm. A fleece jacket or a

wool sweater works great. You probably have one of these two items in your closet. Please do not bring a cotton sweatshirt. A wet cotton sweatshirt will take forever to dry, has no insulating value and will rob you of body heat. Though chattering up in the mountains may be romantic in a "braving the elements kinda way", it is much easier to enjoy the trail when you are not shivering. J

You should also bring some kind of a rain jacket. A simple nylon jacket will work great and does not cost too much money. Naturally, if you have a Goretex jacket you can bring that. It may be too heavy and overkill for a simple day-hike, but it will definitely work. A poncho is discouraged for most Colorado hiking for the simple fact that it can get windy above tree line, causing the poncho to become a big sail!

The exception to the no cotton rule is a bandanna. A bandanna has many uses and will actually help cool you down due to cotton's properties of taking heat away from your body. On a hot day, a wet bandanna is heaven. You may also want to wear a ball cap or some sort of hat for sun protection.

Optional clothing items to bring are a synthetic long sleeve top (a running jersey or long underwear top) and long underwear bottoms.

If you are reading this document you are probably new to the outdoors and will not be going on too long or arduous a hike. It will be easy to turn around if the weather gets really bad. But, these items are good to keep in mind. You may also want to pack windpants as a lightweight clothing item that can protect you if the weather does take a turn for the worse and are susceptible to getting cold on your legs.

Finally, two **MUST BRING** items are a wool or fleece hat and gloves/mittens. The weather can turn quickly up in the Colorado mountains so it is good to have something to keep you warm in an emergency.

Besides your local outdoor store or sporting goods dealer, a nice "one stop shopping place" is Campmor. They generally have the best prices and have EVERYTHING. They have a retail store in northern New Jersey. Most of us order from their catalog at www.campmor.com. You will find hats, shirts, shorts, gloves, etc. on this site. If getting to an outdoor store is not convenient for you, Campmor is an option that will work well.

SUN EXPOSURE, ALTITUDE AND HYDRATION

These three topics are all intertwined. The sun and elevation will make you more dehydrated than normal, if you are dehydrated you not do as well at altitude. If you get sun burned you will feel the effects of dehydration even more.

Keeping hydrated is very important. If you are dehydrated you will feel sluggish, get cold at night, and not enjoy yourself. Being hydrated is also important to help adjust to the higher altitude. A dehydrate body does not work efficiently and will have to work that much harder to carry oxygen throughout the body. Not good! Drink plenty of water and drink often. You can carry water in something as simple as a Gatorade bottle or you can use a Camelback type of hydration system that is popular with runners, bikers and increasingly more hikers. Whatever you choose to bring your water in, be sure to bring enough water to drink. For most people, a liter every five miles works well. Carrying two liters at a time is standard. On a short day hike water treatment is not as critical.

Sun exposure is also a big concern. The UV radiation in Colorado, esp. at higher elevations, can be fierce. Slap on that sunscreen! You should wear at least SPF 15 sunscreen. A sun hat is also suggested for similar reasons. Long shirt and pants can substitute for sunscreen on your arms and legs. For similar reasons be sure to wear sunglasses. Do not need anything fancy. As long as they have 100% UVA and UVB protection. Even the \$15 drug store glasses seem to offer this type of protection now.

A last word about altitude; besides drinking often be sure to take it slow and steady. No need to get to the top first. Just take it slow, enjoy the hike and not tire yourself out. Much more fun that way! J

FOOD

On a day hike, bring food that will give a good caloric punch and will keep you going all day. Hiking is not the time to diet. And if you are on a low-carb diet, I strongly suggest you get off it for the hike. How do you do the Atkins diet and hike, run, or any other type of aerobic activity? You don't! You need the energy! You will also want to eat all day. Rather than stop for a long lunch, it is better to "graze" all day. Munch on your trail mix. Eat some cheese. Nosh on that bagel with peanut butter. This fact is more important on long hiking days, but it is still a good rule to keep in mind. Your body is a furnace. And it needs fuel to run. While backpacking, you will be burning a lot of fuel. Stoke that furnace! As my Grandma Magnanti would say: "**Mangia! Mangia!**"

MISC. GEAR

On an introductory day hike that is being organized by more experienced people, you can get away with letting others carry certain equipment (map, compass, first aid kit), but you should still take a flashlight or a headlamp "just in case". Nothing fancy, even a keychain light is good enough for an emergency. A pocketknife is also a good item to take as well because it can perform many useful functions. I have a small Swiss Army knife that does all I need, weighs less than an ounce and costs \$10. Trekking poles, ski poles or a hiking stick is also good to use. You can find a good hiking stick near the trail and they help quite a bit on uphill and esp. on the downhills. You may also want to take your camera of choice to take pictures of all the gorgeous scenery!

SUGGESTED GEAR LIST

A little confused on what to bring? Here's a list of suggested items. Following this list will leave you equipped to go on introductory day hikes. Also noted are on the list are optional equipment that becomes a must have if you are on longer and/or more arduous day hikes.

Clothing – Worn

- _Boots
- _Synthetic T-shirt or long sleeve shirt (cotton t-shirt is OK, but a synthetic shirt is better)
- _Synthetic Shorts or long pants (**NO BLUE JEANS!!!**)
- _Wool or synthetic socks
- _Sunglasses
- _OPTIONAL: Sun hat, bandanna
- _Hiking stick or Trekking poles (not absolutely needed, but does help on the uphill and the downhill. Can pick up a stick near trail)

*****WEAR SUNSCREEN!!!*****

Clothing – Packed

- _Rain Jacket
- _Wool Sweater or Fleece Jacket
- _Wool or fleece hat
- _Wool or fleece gloves/mittens
- _Synthetic long underwear top and bottom (*optional; needed on long hikes*)
- _Rain or Wind Pants (*optional; good if your legs get cold easily*)

Food – Water

- _water in Gatorade bottles Nalgene bottles or Camelbak
- _snacks enough for a day of hiking
- _...and a **DAY PACK** to haul it all in!!!

Other Equipment to Bring

******The following equipment is not super critical on an introductory day hike, but you will want them on longer and more difficult hikes***

- _Pocket Knife
- _Flashlight/headlamp
- _Map
- _Compass
- _First aid kit

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me.

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Last Updated (Saturday, 20 September 2008)

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