

Backpacking Checklist

By Bianca Hendriks

- Preparation**
 - Travel insurance** Medical care is expensive, so be sure to have coverage for the country you are visiting.
 - Experience** If this is your first backpacking vacation, go for long walks with a fully loaded backpack. You will need to get used to the weight on your back.
 - Equipment** A few weeks in advance of your trip, buy and wear the shoes you are planning on using. Walking shoes, like all other shoes, need a break-in period to avoid blistering your feet.
- Gear / Equipment**
 - Backpack.** Pick one with straps that buckle across the chest
 - Tent** Take a small tent in case you don't find lodging for the night.
 - Tarp** This can serve as an extra floor for your tent, or a place to sit and eat.
 - Waterproof sleeping bag / blanket.** Nights can get cold!
 - Walking shoes and extra socks** Protect your feet at all costs, an ordinary pair of sneakers is often not enough; good walking shoes are not a luxury but a necessity.
 - Flashlight.** If it gets dark, a flashlight is your best friend
 - Cooking and eating utensils** You may also want a small stove for cooking.
 - Bandages / Band-aids** Antiseptic and any medications you are on should also be packed.
- Things to Pack**
 - Sunscreen and sunglasses** Protect your eyes.
 - Something warm** Even in summer the evening can be cool.
 - Insect repellent** Certain countries have biting flies or mosquitoes that carry disease.
 - A camera** You'll want a record of your journeys.
 - A lantern and matches.** Save the batteries in your flashlight
 - Clothes / toiletries / grooming items** Being on the road is no excuse for scruffiness.
 - Energy bars/ water** For a power snack in long treks.
- Miscellaneous**
 - Passport and visa** Mandatory for backpacking in a foreign country.
 - Medical insurance cards** Laminate these to keep them safe.
 - Emergency contact info** Name and number of someone authorized to approve medical treatment in case of accident.
 - Your cell phone, blackberry or iPhone** One with GPS is preferable.

- Dictionary** You'll need one in the language of the country you are visiting.
- Safety Tips**
 - Be wary** Even fellow travelers, if strangers, could be a threat. Backpackers have been known to have been robbed of their money or equipment.
 - Stay hydrated, Drink plenty of water on your trips.** Walking can be exhausting
 - Avoid sunburn and heatstroke** Protect yourself against the sun with sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat.