Gear List: Multi-Day Backcountry Trips

A note on quantities for overnight packrafting trips…

When traveling into the backcountry, weight is a factor, as we carry all of our gear. As packrafters, we really need a lightweight mentality, bringing both river essentials in addition to standard backpacking gear. Where it might seem nice to have a new shirt, underwear, socks, etc everyday, we like to practice the "less is more" philosophy. It's standard to use a set of clothing for hiking & a separate set for under your drysuit.

A note on weather & temperatures...

Even in the summer, Alaska be cold, more like fall/winter in other parts of America. There is a possibility of snow during any month of the summer, esp in alpine environments. Evening temps can range from the high 30's-40's while daytime temps btwn mid 40's to high 80's. Be prepared for the possibility of a large temperature range with the likelihood of precipitation.

A note on cotton...

As a rule, do not bring cotton clothing of any sort into the backcountry- socks, underwear, long underwear, gloves, hats, or warmer layers. Cotton absorbs water from sweat and/or rain, & won't dry out properly. This can lead to potentially dangerous situations, as it's a struggle to stay warm & dry.

Footwear

Most packrafters double hiking footwear as river footwear- a practical way to save weight. Lightweight, lower profile hiking shoes that can drain water are ideal, (heavier weight shoes are difficult to swim with, in the event you're out of your boat. If you must have ankle support, consider bringing a separate closed toe river shoe. Whatever you use, be sure it's comfortable, broken in & fits over your drysuit booties.

When hiking in Alaska, it's only a matter of time before your feet get wet. Guides & seasoned AK packrafters usually use the same footwear for hiking & the river, & bring crocs as camp shoes. (it can be nice to dry out your feet at night)

The amount of socks depends on trip length. 3 pairs of midweight wool or synthetic socks is pretty standard: 1 for hiking, 1 for drysuit & 1 for sleeping.

Upper Body Layer System

- 1 base layer hiking T shirt- merino wool/synthetic material
- 1 base layer long sleeve shirt- preferably w/hood, merino wool/synthetic material
- Medium weight/fleece layer-preferably w/hood
- Mid weight down or synthetic vest (optional)
- Mid weight down or synthetic jacket (preferably w/hood) *This may be the most important layer!*

Lower Body Layer System

- 1-2 underwear
- 1-2 base layer long underwear (merino wool or athletic style synthetic material) o

- 1 pair hiking pants (fast dry, zip-off convertible to shorts optional)

Rain Gear

Quality rain gear is an Alaskan essential!

Jacket

- Taped seams and a durable shell
- Full side leg zippers recommended but not required. At least ankle zippers required to get on and off over hiking boots.
- NO nylon “windbreaker” style pants, NO pants with cotton or nylon liners
- Gore-Tex recommended but not required

Pants

- Taped seams and a durable shell
- NO nylon “windbreaker” style pants
- NO pants with cotton or nylon liners
- Gore-Tex recommended

Head & Hands

- Warm hat (beanie/ski hat style) OR layers w/hood
- Baseball cap, visor, or other packable sun hat
- Buff brand thin neck gaiter (not required, but **STRONGLY** recommended)
- Head Net for bug protection (not required, but **STRONGLY** recommended for June-July trips)
- 1 pair light weight fleece gloves

Sleeping Bag & Pad

- Sleeping bag: rated to 15 or 20 deg F. Must be packable into a compression stuff sack (Mummy style, synthetic or down is fine, must be designed for backpacking/not car-style camping)
- Sleeping Pad: inflatable Therm-a-Rest style, must pack down small & compact.

Backpack

Be familiar with- confident it properly fits your body, holds your gear, and is comfortable

- Internal frame pack with at least 65-liter capacity.

Tent/Shelter

Don’t carry a bigger tent than you need- this weight adds up. Many packrafters use a lightweight floorless tent (using paddles or trekking poles to set it up)

Choose a lightweight tent that withstands wind & packs down well. More importantly, be familiar & efficient w/it’s set up.

River Gear

- Drysuit w/booties (no hood, preferably w/relief zipper)
- Packraft & accessories (self-bailing or with spray skirt & rim kit)
- 4 piece breakdown whitewater paddle (< 200 shaft cm)
- PFD (Type III or V) w/river rescue knife & whistle securely attached
- Whitewater helmet
- Drybag/bow bag for day items & a method to attach to boat (only bring locking carabiners)
- Gloves or Pogies (optional)
- Lightweight throw Rope
- Patch kit

Miscellaneous Gear

- 1 L plastic or stainless steel water bottle
- Lightweight camp stove & cook set
- Lightweight cup/mug, bowl, spoon/fork
- Sunglasses, small sunscreen & lip balm
- Personal meds, first aid kit & toiletries
- 1-2 quality trekking poles (at least 1 pole per person is recommended- even if you don't usually it on other trips. Much of our hiking is off trail; a pole makes a HUGE difference)
- Make sure trekking pole(s) collapse down, so they can fit inside of packraft.
- Headlamp