

# Backpacking Light - Six Reasons Why

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Backpacking light is the way to go. Here are six reasons why.

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Backpacking light, sometimes called fastpacking or ultralight backpacking, doesn't mean leaving anything important behind, or sacrificing comfort. My seventeen-ounce down sleeping bag keeps me warmer than my previous four-pounder did. I used to use a five-pound backpack, and now have a more comfortable fourteen-ounce one. I still bring all the necessary safety gear and food when I head into the mountains - I just have lighter versions. Why? Here are six reasons.

## 1. More Comfort

{bot\_wrgoogle}It feels much better to have 15 pounds on your back than 50. No asking for help to struggle into that heavy pack. A heavy load leaves you sore at the end of the day, and you sweat a lot. My light backpack can be slung from one shoulder and then the other to let my back cool, and I never feel sore from carrying the weight.

## 2. More Range

A long day with a heavy pack might be 10 miles. With my running shoes and 15-pound load I have often gone more than 20 miles in a day without suffering. That means I have a whole lot more range. Areas of wilderness that were out of reach for a weekend trip are now possible.

## 3. Fewer Injuries

Some will tell you that light backpacking is dangerous because you carry less gear and less durable gear. The latter may be true, so baby that sleeping bag. But it is also true that with less weight on your back you are less likely to twist an ankle, hurt your back or lose your balance. On balance, my experience is that I have less of a chance of an injury when going light.

## 4. More Freedom

I used to carry an extra day pack for climbing to the summits of mountains when I was backpacking. Who wants to scramble up those steep sections with a 45-pound load? Then, I had to return to my big pack - even if I saw a better route down. Now my pack is so light that it goes everywhere with me. I hardly ever notice its weight, and I like that freedom.

## 5. Faster Travel

You may not like to go fast all the time when backpacking, but isn't it nice to have the option? That's what going light gives you. It means you can speed up to reach that waterfall, or speed up to make that campsite after playing in the waterfall too long. If there is a storm coming in, you can move to safety more quickly when you are carrying less weight. Also, if have an emergency and need to hike out to the car or a town, you can do so much quicker with 15 pounds on your back than with 50.

## 6. Simplicity

Have you seen that Corona Beer commercial where the couple brings a load of equipment to the beach and begins laying out towels, opening coolers and setting up umbrellas that are almost blown away by the wind? Then another couple walks to the beach with nothing but an icy bucket of Coronas and they sit down to enjoy the view. That's simplicity.

Some people get a thrill from finding ways to cook the fanciest meals while in the woods, and from having folding furniture and electric socks, but not me. Backpacking light means simplifying things a bit, which is not a sacrifice, but a pleasure. I often go without a stove, for example, relying on foods that don't need cooking. Not cooking? I like that. It also means no dishes to wash, and more time for swimming in that alpine lake.

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