

## BACKPACK WEIGHTS by Jim Blanchard

Modern equipment allows us to pack a lot of comfort and safety into a small and relatively light bundle, at least compared to the possibilities of just a few years ago. However, our packs always seem to end up weighing more than we would like. Most of us have mild cases of Winnebago fever, and can't seem to resist adding all sorts of nifty little items. Every new outdoor gear catalog contains ads for new and clever ways of taking more of the safety and comfort of home into the outdoors.

Some items, such as rainwear, may be essential for safety, while other items such as a portable stove can help minimize environmental impacts. To keep pack weights at a minimum, think very carefully about every item: is it truly important to safety or comfort? Once you've decided what types of items are truly necessary, try to select the lightest reasonably durable version of each. Sometimes that extra little piece of civilization is better left at home than carried into the wilderness; if it isn't truly necessary it may actually detract from your wilderness experience. Extra items adding to your burden, add complexity to your kit, and can lessen or detract from the wilderness experience by reinforcing the "bubble of civilization" that surrounds you. If part of what you're seeking is an escape from the complexity of our modern world, or if you're seeking some relief from our culture's obsession with material wealth, perhaps this would be a good time to seek simplicity in your array of equipment. Be careful though, and be smart; don't leave out anything that could be essential to your survival.

The maximum weight of a pack depends upon too many factors to allow precise specification of what constitutes a reasonable, safe load. Generally, however, an individual in good physical condition and using a pack that fits well will seldom be bothered by a pack totaling 20% of body weight. Above 25% of body weight the likelihood of damage to the carrier begins to increase significantly, and at 30%, even the masochistic sorts will suffer. There are few circumstances that justify the very real risk of injury that comes with carrying packs that exceed 40% of body weight.

The following lists illustrate the advantages of choosing the lightest gear that will meet your needs. The lower weight assumes that the lightest readily available alternatives are used, while the heavier weights assume that the "standard" versions of each item are used. For example, the lightweight estimate might assume a lightweight compressed gas stove (e.g. an MSR "Pocket Rocket"), while the heavier option might assume a common multi-fuel gasoline burning stove (e.g. an MSR "Whisperlite"). The lists include only basic essentials, and are in addition to a light set of clothing. A smaller person may save a few ounces due to smaller clothing and slightly smaller food needs. The lists are only an examples; actual gear needs for any specific outing may vary considerably depending upon the location, season, and weather, and the skill and experience of the person. The weights are approximate, and total weights are rounded up to the nearest pound.

Note that the lists include food and fuel for three days, with a small reserve. Additional food can be estimated at approximately two pounds per day, and fuel at approximately 1/4 pound (for summer trips) to 1/2 pound (for winter trips) per day. Also note that the totals for climbing and for snow camping each include the summer backpacking and "longer trips" weights.

**A. SUMMER BACKPACKING - THREE DAY TRIP**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Pack	2.5 to 6
Tent or tarp	1.5 to 8
Sleeping bag	1.5 to 5
Sleeping pad	.25 to 2
Small stove	.25 to .5
Fuel	.5 to 1.5
Food	4 to 6
Utensils (pot,cup,spoon)	1.5 to 1
Extra socks	.25
Wool or synthetic pants	1 to 2
Wool or synthetic shirt or sweater	1 to 2
Parka (down or synthetic)	1.5 to 2
Gloves or mitts (wool or synthetic)	.25
Hat (wool or synthetic)	.25
Rainsuit (hood, top, pants)	2 to 3
Tools and "10 essentials"	2
Toilet kit	.25 to .5
Maps	.25 to .5
First aid kit	.5 to 1.5
Water bottle, full, 1-2 liter	2.5 to 4.5
Wallet, glasses, misc.	<u>.25 to 1</u>
Total A : <b>23 to 45</b>	

**B. Add for longer trips, higher elevations or cooler conditions:**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Additional shirt or sweater	.5 to 1
Additional mittens or gloves	.25 to .5
Turtleneck (wool)	.5 to 1
Long johns (wool)	.5 to 1
Standard size stove	1.5 to 2.5
Headlamp	.5 to 2
Gaiters	.5
Subtotal: 4 to 13	
Total A + B: <b>27 to 58</b>	

**C. Add for snowcamping**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Skis or snowshoes	2.5 to 9
Poles	1.5 to 2
Waxes and skins, etc.	.5 to 1.5
Repair kit	.5 to 1
Goggles, etc.	.5
Snow shovel	<u>1.5 to 3</u>
Subtotal 7 to 17	
Total A + C: <b>30 to 62</b>	

**D. Add for mountaineering**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Rope	4 to 8
Ice Axe	2.5 to 3.5
Crampons	1.5 to 2.5
Slings and harness	1.5 to 3.5
Helmet	1.5 to 2
Hardware	<u>1 to 6</u>
Subtotal 12 to 26	
Total A + B + D: <b>39 to 84</b>	