



# WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING

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# ALASKA PACKING LIST

## WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING



**Never set off without rain gear, extra clothing, gloves and a hat when hiking in Alaska.**

### THE BASIC GEAR

The rule of layering applies to hiking too, but there are some extra gear considerations before you take off down the trail. Even on a bluebird-sunny day, we never set off without rain gear, extra clothing, gloves and a hat—because temps can drop fast. Here's the complete rundown of what you need for a day hike in Alaska:

#### HIKING BOOTS

- Don't buy the classic, hard leather boots. They're too heavy for most day hikers, and hard to break in.
- Your best bet is a pair of lightweight boots with good ankle support.
- Trail running shoes are fine, too, if you're used to them on uneven terrain.

#### CHANGE OF CLOTHES

**In case your clothes get wet, be sure to have:**

- Extra pair of socks
- Extra long undershirt or upper body inside layer

### ADVANCED GEAR

Thinking about a more extended hike? Or going off-trail or across tundra? Here are some tricks of the trade we've learned through experience.

#### ZIP-OFF LEG PANTS

- These are a huge convenience. If you get hot or cold, zip the lower pant legs on or off in a snap—no need to find a place to sit down and remove your whole pants.
- Pant legs also protect your calves when walking through brush.



#### HIKING POLES

**First off, don't think of them as canes. Here's how any hiker will benefit from them:**

- **Elevation.** When heading down hills, shifting weight to the poles will protect your knees.
- **Uneven terrain.** Using them on side hills—sloping terrain—can protect your ankles.
- **Whacking.** Poles are great for helping whack brush aside.
- **Water crossings.** Probe the depth of a stream before you plant your foot (or whole leg) into it.
- **An extra pair of feet.** They offer stability so you can look up and watch scenery, rather than look at your feet for every step.
- **Shopping for Poles.** Aluminum is cheaper and heavier, but carbon might not be as durable. Shock-absorbing tips are great if you're carrying a heavy load, but overkill for most day hikers. Look for something that can collapse and attach well to your pack. Cost: anywhere from \$70 to \$150.

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### EXTRAS



#### GAITERS (more for the hard-core, off-trail hiker)

- These nylon coverings fit over your lower pant leg and strap around the bottom of your shoe or boot.
- Extra protection from water, scrapes and debris that can get into your boots.
- Great if it rains—ground brush and twigs can get mushy and messy fast.
- About \$25 a pair.



#### BEAR PROTECTION

- **Don't bother with bells:** your voice is just as much of a deterrent.
- **Bear spray** (pepper spray) has limited range, but is good to carry. Just remember to shoot downwind.
- **Your best bet?** Hike with a friend and keep the conversation, and moderate noise, going. Most bear attacks are on people going solo.



### WATER

If you're heading out for a long hike, you're probably going to need more water than you want to carry with you. The good news: there are streams everywhere. We Alaskans tend to take a bottle for water when hiking, and then just refill it in a stream or river. **If you don't want to, here are your options:**



**SteriPen.** These UV lights kill bacteria like giardia, but don't get rid of silt or grittiness from stream water. About \$90.



**Filter Pump.** They're low-tech, but they're your best bet for removing bacteria and bulk. \$40 and up for portable models.

**Purifying tablets.** Iodine or Chloride tablets are cheap and lightweight, and make a great back-up plan. The downsides: They're slow (half an hour to four hours), and iodine makes the water taste funny, too. They cost just a few dollars.

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