



Backpacking and Camping for Women

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Liz “Rest Step” Fallin

- + Solo Pacific Crest Trail section hiker. Completed Washington and Oregon (1000 miles).
- + Two-time Philmont Crew Advisor (2011 and 2013)
- + Scout and Venturing leader for several years (Troop/Crew 67)
- + Many years of day hikes and local backpacks
- + Advocate for getting girls and women into the backcountry!
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- + Feel free to contact me with questions or comments!



Course Outline

- + Being a Woman Backpacker
- + Gear Considerations
- + Lightweight Hiking
- + The Three Ps: Pee, Poop, Periods!
- + Staying Clean
- + Emergency Preparedness
- + Personal Safety

Being a Woman Backpacker

- + **Confidence** comes from being **prepared**: you have the mental bandwidth to deal with surprises
 - + Know your gear
 - + Have hiking and backpacking skills...never stop learning!
 - + Know your terrain and have a plan
 - + Be appropriately physically fit
 - + Know how to handle emergencies
- + Mistakes vs Accidents
- + **You can do this!**



Gear Considerations



- + Aim for **Lightweight** (more on this later)
- + Always carry the **Ten Essentials**
- + **Women's models** are available, and may work for you
 - + Try unisex and men's models as well
 - + Sleeping bags/quilts
 - + Narrower at shoulders, wider at hips, more insulation in footbox
 - + Packs
 - + Shorter torso range, narrower shoulder straps, canted hipbelts
 - + Trekking poles
 - + Shorter. No real need unless you're quite short
 - + Shoes
 - + Narrower heels, narrower width in general
 - + Clothing
 - + Usually up to roughly size 16
 - + Plus Sizes are finally more available!
 - + Columbia, Minus33, Kuhl, REI, and more

A Tale of Two Hikes

- + 2010: Middle of a 3-day hike in the North Cascades, with 2 days of heavier-weight food and 1 L water. **40+ pounds.**
- + 2016: Starting a 5-day stretch in Oregon, with 5.5 days of lighter-weight food and 1 L water. **33 pounds.**
- + How? By changing out my gear, a little at a time, over six years.
- + But why do this?
 - + Easier on the body
 - + Less physical and emotional energy required
 - + Helps you keep up with teenagers!



Lighter Weight = Easier Hiking = Easier Leadership = More Fun!

- + **Cutting weight is proportionally more valuable for women.**
- + Cutting weight is a **process** over time
- + Use a **kitchen scale** and a **spreadsheet**
 - + Ounces add up in a hurry
- + **Base weight** = everything except food, water, fuel
- + Aim to get your **Big Three systems** under 10 pounds total
 - + Shelter System: tent/tarp/hammock, lines, stakes
 - + Sleep System: sleeping bag/quilt, sleeping pad, pillow
 - + Pack System: pack, pack cover, trash compactor bag, small items attached to pack (whistle, carabiners, etc.)
- + **Food: 100+ calories per ounce**
 - + Aim for roughly 1.75 pounds per person per day.
 - + I start with 2000-2200 calories per day, because I don't get really hungry until I'm out for a week or more
 - + Consider getting a dehydrator
 - + Excellent resource: trailcooking.com



Learning Your Gear to Build Confidence



Practice, practice, practice!

Try everything out at **home** and **take notes**
Camp in the **backyard** and **take notes**
Do a **weekend shakedown** and **take notes**
Use notes to **refine your gear**

Except for emergency, repair, or weather-specific gear, if you don't use it on a weekend shakedown, you don't need to take it



Take a Map & Compass class and practice afterwards



Take a First Aid class (Wilderness First Aid is even better)



Practice using your inReach or other satellite communicator





Basic Packing List

- + Included with class notes
- + Developed for my solo PCT hikes
- + Includes links to my specific gear, and commentary on choices
- + My gear choices are not the be-all end-all!
 - + New gear is coming out all the time
 - + Other choices may be better for you

The Three Ps: Pee, Poop, and Periods! A Conversation

- + Once you know how, it's **easy peasy!**
- + Especially for **Teens and Leaders**
 - + Present this material before hiking, preferably with a parent/guardian. Make sure they'll have time to practice before the actual trip
 - + Practice everything at home
 - + Consider using period underwear (Thinx BTWN, or similar)
 - + Teens! Tell your female leader if you get your period. She can support you if necessary



Peeing and Pooping in the Woods!

- + Go 50-70 paces away from water, trail, and campsites. Look back frequently so that you know how to return to the trail/camp
- + Peeing in the Woods!
 - + Squatting vs an FUD (Female Urinary Device)
 - + TP vs Pee Rag or Kula Cloth: No, It Doesn't Stink
- + Pooping in the Woods!
 - + Poop Kit: **Trowel for dirt only** (Deuce of Spades), Wipes or TP, Hand Sanitizer, Waste Bag (quart Ziploc)
 - + **Trowel only touches dirt**
 - + Dig a Cat Hole: 6-8 inches, for poop only.
 - + Squat and do the needful
 - + Used TP and wipes into waste bag (not cathole)
 - + Fill cat hole with dirt
 - + Wash hands or use hand sanitizer



Periods! Being Prepared

+ Basics!

- + Bears are *not* attracted to menstrual blood
- + Strenuous activity can mess with your cycle, so be prepared
- + Wash hands before/after changing products. Use nitrile gloves if desired
- + Menstrual cups vs Tampons/Pads
- + Pack out all waste: products, wrappers, TP, wipes, gloves.

+ Period Kit: a small stuff sack

- + Unused quart size Ziploc bags (2 for unused products, 4 for waste)
- + Hand sanitizer
- + Pre-moistened wipes (2-3 per day)
- + Biodegradable soap (1-2 ounces, in a tiny bottle)
- + Nitrile gloves, if desired
- + Waste Bag: a gallon size Ziploc or OPSAK, covered with duct tape for modesty if desired. Optional: tea bag, aspirin tablets, or coffee grounds to cut odor, in gallon bag.



Periods! What to Do

- + **Wash hands or use hand sanitizer, first**
- + Take your period kit and poop kit (trowel)
- + Dig a cat hole if you need to poop, or empty/rinse a menstrual cup
- + Put on nitrile gloves if desired
- + Do the needful, change products, clean up, and put waste in waste bag (quart Ziploc). This bag goes in gallon sized waste bag.
- + Fill cat hole if used: **trowel should only touch dirt, not waste**
- + **Wash hands or use hand sanitizer**

- + **Return to the trail, knowing you're a self-sufficient bada** woman!**



A collection of various toiletries and personal care items, including bottles of lotion, body glide, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, and containers of pills, all labeled with handwritten text. The items are arranged on a grey surface. The labels include "G.B.", "Deodorant", "LOTION", "BODY GLIDE", "WASH", "LIGHTLOAD TOWELS", "DEGATOR MEDICATED", "BUL SPRAY", "SUNSCREEN", and "D.O.". There are also several bags of pills, some labeled "PILL BOX" and "PILL BOX".

- + **Wash hands/use hand sanitizer** whenever you visit the bushes, and before you eat
- + Don't touch other people's food. Stomach flu sucks.
- + Remember to brush your teeth (away from camp)
- + Unscented baby wipes are your friend.
 - + Keep 2-3 per day in your toiletries kit (separate from your period kit)
 - + Hiker bath at night in tent: face, tits, pits, and lady bits
- + Everyone is dirty and smelly, and that's just fine!
 - + No deodorant, hair products, shampoo, makeup, etc., unless medically required.
 - + These are smellables, and they're very heavy.
- + Rinse socks and underwear if out for several days
 - + (Fill a Ziploc and carry it away from water source)
- + **Biodegradable soap is not actually biodegradable. Use as little as possible, and do not use near water sources.**

Emergency Preparedness

- + Satellite Communicator
 - + **Garmin inReach** (or inReach Mini) vs SPOT vs PLB
- + Navigation
 - + Take a **Map & Compass** class and practice at home
 - + Apps: **GaiaGPS**, **Guthook** (PCT, Wonderland, other long trails)
 - + **TAKE PAPER MAPS AND A SIMPLE DECLINATION COMPASS! KNOW HOW TO USE THEM!**
- + First Aid
 - + Take a First Aid class. Better, take a **Wilderness First Aid** class
 - + Make a kit and put it in a gallon Ziploc. Use your own supplies. Only put stuff in there that you know how to use.
 - + Solo kit vs Group Kit



Personal Safety

- + I'm a female solo backpacker, and I feel safer in the backcountry than on a city street at night
- + Bears
 - + Make noise and give them space. No need for bells or spray unless you're in grizzly country
 - + Keep a clean camp: don't leave food or wrappers around unattended
 - + Proper food storage: Ursack/OPSAK instead of hanging a bear bag. Secure away from camp
- + Mini Bears and Other Critters
 - + Food storage, just like with bears
 - + Salty pack and trekking pole straps can be tempting...hide them in/under your tent
- + Humans
 - + Avoid camping near roads or trailheads, or near game trails
 - + If someone is sketch, you don't have to be polite or tell the truth. Lie. Tell them your boyfriend is waiting up ahead. Tell them you're getting Giardia or COVID and are contagious.
 - + Trust your gut. Being rude is okay. You have the power!



And finally...

There's a beautiful world out there for you to explore.

You can do this!