

Each of us develops a personal attachment to a pack. In time it becomes a good friend, never complaining and is with us through many adventures. If you are looking to buy a first pack or replace an old friend, here are some things to think about.

Traditional pack versus Fanny pack

For day use you have two choices, the traditional pack with shoulder straps or the waist pack, sometimes called a fanny pack. Each has its own merits, the biggest advantage of the traditional pack is size, and you can get a lot more in it. However, if you have shoulder or back problems or want a cooler back, especially in summer, you should at least consider a fanny pack. The newer fanny packs are larger and you will need all the room you can get in this style. Make sure it has external straps so you can lash extra stuff to the outside. For me, the key to comfort in packs is what holds the weight of all my stuff. Both packs should have a good, substantial waist belt (wider and padded at the back and sides). These are not always easy to find in stores as they tend to cost a bit more. Both my Kelty packs feature a great belt and I have



little weight on my shoulders because it is being put on my hips which can handle it better than my shoulders. If the pack you are looking at doesn't have a good waist belt at least look for well padded straps. Many of the better packs now come with a sternum strap which also helps. It is a buckled and horizontal strap near the top of the breast bone (sternum).



[The packs, and their specifications, shown above may be viewed if you browse the Kelty Pack Inc. website at <http://www.kelty.com>. *These are just a few of many packs on the market.*]

Women's Pack Frames

Women's frames are generally smaller and now some manufactures are making more comfortable packs for women; they are usually narrower.

Packs and Rain

One thing that all packs have in common is that they are not waterproof. Again you have two choices. A pack cover which is waterproof (and hard to find for day packs) or do what the English do, put everything into a substantial plastic bag that can be sealed with a twist tie, the easier solution.

Water Bottle Access

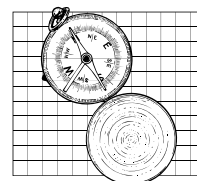
You will want your water handy and not have to rummage through your pack every time you want a drink so consider a pack with external pockets for your water bottle(s) or get a water bottle holder that will attach to your waist belt.

What to Put In the Pack

Do what professional pilots do, use a check list and it should live in you pack. Here is mine.

- Water, 2 litres (Nalgene bottles don't leak)
- Lunch and snacks
- Raincoat
- Rain pants
- Hat (suitable for the season)
- Extra layer/layers (e.g. extra fleece)
- "Situpon"
- First aid kit
- Camera (in its own padded case that fastens to my hip belt)
- Sunscreen

- Insect repellent (seasonal)
- Trail guide/map (in a waterproof sleeve)
- Compass
- Cell phone (battery charged)
- Pen and paper (in with the trail guide)
- Space blanket (small metallic plastic sheet for emergency shelter)
- Whistle (hang it securely to the front of your pack so it is easy to get at)
- Moleskin/mole foam



- Swiss Army knife (one that has scissors for cutting moleskin)
- Flashlight or headlamp (especially in the Fall and Winter)
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- Wallet and car keys in a zip lock bag
- Spare socks
- someone added black liquorice to my list and that has been a great idea

Enjoy the trails safely,
Greg

About Greg

Greg is an experienced and certified hike leader and instructor. He has been a long time member of the Bruce Trail Association (www.bruce-trail.org), the Grand Valley Trails Association (www.gvta.on.ca) and other hiking organizations. Greg has an extensive background in aviation and air traffic control. Greg has taught introduction to hiking courses and map and compass courses for several years. Currently his website, Greg Vincent's Hiking Site, resides at <http://home.golden.net/%7Egvincent/>



Other The Right Stuff articles are:

- “On the Up and Up” or Icy Walking
- Footwear - Boots & Socks (how to care for your feet & how to choose boots & socks)
- Clothing (how to keep warm & dry)
- Bugs (how to avoid them & prevent their bothering you)
- Trail Safety (how to ensure you hike without incident)
- Trekking Poles (modern ones - what are they & why use them)
- Winter Walking (all the peculiarities of hiking in cold climes)
- Medical Emergencies (how to prepare for & respond to a medical emergency while hiking)
- Warm Weather Walking (the scoop on hiking in warm weather)
- Snowshoeing (If you can walk, you can snowshoe – no ifs, ands or buts.)
- Global Positioning System or GPS (What is it and how it works.)