Come Prepared

Hiking in the Northwoods of Minnesota can be tons of fun, but it also can be very uncomfortable if you are unprepared – so come prepared. The weather can range from 80°F during the day to 30°F at night and everything between depending on the day. If the temperatures are on the colder side and it’s raining, that can be some pretty tough weather, so make sure to bring waterproof rain gear and warm layers. Hiking all day with a 40-50 pound pack can be a lot of work, especially during hilly sections. We strongly recommend that you break in your boots and if possible hike with a loaded pack before arriving on campus. Any physical activity you can do to get in shape is going to help you enjoy the experience and make those hills a bit less arduous.

What will you be carrying in your pack?

In addition to all of your personal equipment listed below, you will be carrying some of your group’s equipment and food. Make sure to leave at least 1/3 of your pack space available for group items. Things that you and your teammates will divvy up between your packs include: food for the entire backpacking trip, camping stoves, fuel, cooking pots, tarps, and rope.

Buying vs Renting: Think Long Term

Buy gear that you like and that you think you will use in the future. Rain gear, hiking boots, and long underwear will be useful during the Chicago winters and sleeping bags and sleeping pads can be useful on road trips, too. PWild has backpacks ($40), sleeping bags ($35), and sleeping pads ($10) for rent in your payment form that is due on June 23. Sleeping bags are 20° synthetic mummy-style bags, backpacks are internal frame packs, and sleeping pads are simple ensolite/closed cell foam pads. PWild will have Nalgene water bottles and bandanas for sale on arrival day.

Shopping: Get what works and be creative

You don’t need to spend a ton of money on clothing and equipment to have a good time on a backpacking trip and you don’t need all the fanciest new gear on the market. Backpacking and camping gear can be expensive. We recommend that you utilize resources such as borrowing, renting, purchasing second-hand, and using things you already own in order to reduce the cost of the trip if possible.
Mail order and retail stores

These are just a few places that may be helpful if you need to look around for equipment and clothing.

- Recreation Equipment Inc. (REI): rei.com, rei-outlet.com
- Sierra Trading Post: seirratradingpost.com
- Campor: campmor.com
- Eastern Mountain Sports: ems.com
- Backcountry.com: Backcountry.com
- Erehwon Mountain Outfitters: erehwon.com (Chicago area)
- Uncle Dan’s Outdoor Store: udans.com (Chicago area & Evanston, IL)

Pack for Success – Bring the Right Stuff and Keep Your Load Light

The goal of the provided packing list is to make sure you are prepared to be comfortable in the elements (it can be quite cold and wet in northern Minnesota) and so that your pack doesn’t weigh you down with unneeded items. You must bring all the required items. If you show up without any of the required items, you will be asked to buy them in Evanston before leaving campus for the trip. Outside of rentals (backpacks, sleeping bags, and sleeping pads) there may also be a few loaner items available to fill in any holes. It’s best to arrive fully outfitted.

Avoid Cotton! (Backpacking 101: Cotton=Cold and Uncomfortable)

When cotton fibers get wet, they pull heat away from your body faster than if you weren’t wearing any clothes at all. Plus, cotton takes a long time to dry. This is a recipe for making you cold, clammy, and miserable out in the backcountry. Check the tags of your long underwear, socks, shorts, pants, and shirts. Aim for either (1) synthetic fabrics like polypropylene, nylon (for pants and shorts), capeline, rayon, fleece, and cool-max style fabrics, or (2) wool. Wool can take a longer time to dry out than synthetic fabrics, but even when wool is damp or wet it will still keep you warm (so will synthetics). A big plus for wool is that it tends to take longer to accumulate smells than synthetics. Stay away from cotton blends if you can.

Happy Feet Make Happy Hikers – Get Your Boots Soon and Break ‘Em In!

Take care of your feet and you are taking a big step toward ensuring a comfortable and fun time on trail. Hiking boots can take several days of walking to break in fully. We strongly recommend that you acquire your boots as soon as possible and start wearing them around. Take some walks with friends and even carry a heavy backpack while wearing your boots. These efforts will allow your boots to soften up and shape to your feet. Meanwhile, your feet will get used to the boots. Play around with different sock layers, some people like wearing a lightweight liner sock under their thicker hiking socks and some people don’t.
Boot Guidelines

- Height: 3/4 or high top style, with an upper that extends over the ankle
- Fabric: leather or durable synthetic upper fabric that is waterproof or is easily made waterproof by applying silicon or wax based boot waterproof treatments.
- Sole: typical vibram-style sole that must be stiff and supportive and have hiking lugs (rubber tread that grips the trail).
- No boots with insulation, no snow boots, no basketball shoes, no low-top hiking shoes, no steel toe boots, no work boots

Medications

The Medical Form contains all the necessary information regarding medications to bring. All participants who have a prescription for epinephrine must bring 2 epi pens. All participants who have a prescription for inhalers must bring 2 full inhalers for each type prescribed. PWild counselors carry an extensive medical kit for first aid, so you don’t need to bring your own first aid kit.

Raingear: Waterproof, Not Water Resistant!

It could rain a lot on your trip and it could be quite chilly too, so your rain gear needs to be up to the task of keeping you dry. Your rain gear must be waterproof, not water-resistant...there’s a big difference! The water resistant stuff will only keep the water out for a short time or not at all. Make sure your rain gear says waterproof. It doesn’t have to be expensive, fancy Gore-Tex. The good old rubber raincoats work really well and often better than the waterproof-breathable options. Your rain gear should include (1) a jacket/coat and (2) a pair of pants. No ponchos. Test out your rain gear in the shower (no joke, besides an actual downpour that’s as good a test as you are going to get).

Contacts and Eyeglasses

Managing contact lenses can be simple and straightforward in the backcountry if you follow a few guidelines or it can be downright painful if you don’t follow those guidelines. The most important thing is to keep your hands clean when working with your contact lenses. Do not clean your hands with instant hand sanitizer right before handling your contacts, instead rinse your hands with water and make sure there is no dirt on them. Only use saline solution or whatever solution you use at home, don’t substitute with water or switch solution types! Bring a travel size of the solution that you use at home and you will be good to go. Also bring a few extra pairs of contact lenses just in case, as well as clean lens cases. If you wear contacts, you must bring a pair of glasses as well. If you wear glasses bring a hard case and an extra pair of glasses if you have one.
**Tips**

- When packing your backpack for a plane trip, be sure to cinch down all the straps, clip all buckles, and tuck away any loose straps. Loose straps can get caught on luggage belts.
- Make sure to try on your clothing layers together, so that if you need to wear all your layers at the same time, you know they won’t be too tight.

**Female Hygiene**

Dealing with your period in the backcountry may sound daunting, but it doesn’t have to be. Make sure to bring adequate supplies and arrive on campus well prepared – even if you don’t expect to get your period on the trip. The strenuous physical activity, change in diet, and spending a lot of time with other women can all affect your cycle. This is true even if you are taking birth control. Your counselors will not have extra supplies and you won’t have access to a store once you leave campus, so come equipped.

---Backcountry Period Kit---

You will need:

- 1 small, dark colored, opaque bag or stuff sack (or a gallon-sized ziplock covered in duct tape)
- 3 small ziplock bags
- 1 travel pack of baby wipes (for cleaning purposes)
- A generous supply of tampons (tampons are much easier to deal with than pads but if you have to use pads, go ahead). Tampons without an applicator (like OB) are ideal because they produce the least waste and take up less space in your pack.
- Diva cups are also a great alternative to tampons and pads. Extremely environmentally friendly. Check them out at divacup.com.

You may also want to consider bringing a ‘pee rag.’ Many female PWild campers and counselors choose to bring a bandana to use as a pee rag as opposed to ‘drip drying’. Typically, we don’t use toilet paper out there unless we are in a campsite that has a latrine. It’s up to you. If you are well hydrated, then the pee rag will have little or no odor. Many female participants appreciate having the option.
Packing List

Note: all listed items are required to bring, unless otherwise noted

Footwear

- 1 pair of sturdy leather or partial leather hiking boots – NO WINTER BOOTS, NO WORK BOOTS
- 3-4 pairs of heavy wool or synthetic hiking socks (make sure your boots fit well with these socks)
- 1 pair of light, comfortable, closed-toed shoes for camp (no crocs, no sandals); these will be used for in camp – old running shoes work well
- Optional: 2 pairs of thin polypropylene or silk liner socks

Upper Body

Temperatures can reach freezing at night, so warm clothing is very important. You must have a minimum of 4 long sleeve layers that can be worn at the same time.

- 2 t-shirts (cotton is OK, but many prefer quick-drying or other synthetics fabrics)
- 1-2 mid-weight polypropylene, capilene, or wool long underwear tops (no cotton)
- 2 heavy wool or fleece sweaters or jackets (should be able to wear both at the same time)
- 1 waterproof raincoat (must be large enough to cover all of your layers; NO PONCHOS)
- 1 pair of wool, synthetic, or fleece mittens or globes or extra pair of wool socks
- 1 thick winter wool or fleece hat that covers your ears (you will use this while sleeping)
- 1 hat with brim for sun protection (baseball cap)
- 2-3 non-cotton sports bras, if applicable
- 1 pair of sunglasses
- Optional: 1 fleece or wool neck gaiter or scarf

Lower body

- 1 pair of comfortable, quick-drying shorts
- 1 pair of mid-weight polypropylene, capilene, or wool long underwear bottoms (no cotton)
- 1 pair of long hiking pants (non-cotton, zip offs with detachable lower legs are great)
- 1 pair of waterproof rain pants
- 3-6 pairs of underwear (OK to bring more if they don’t take up much space)
- Bathing suit
You are able to rent a sleeping bag, a sleeping pad, and a backpack from PWild, but must be added to your cart when you submit your trip fee by June 26.

- Backpack (internal frame packs should be at least 65-70 liters/4000 cubic inches, external frame packs should be at least 55 liters/3400 cubic inches with room to latch on a sleeping bag and pad)
- Sleeping bag (bag must be rated to 20°F or colder, must be a synthetic bag, and mummy style is recommended, NO DOWN BAGS)
- Sleeping pad (must be at least 2/3 of your body length, doesn’t need to be inflatable)
- 4 1-liter unbreakable water bottles, leak-proof (such as a Nalgene bottle or 32 oz sports drink bottle)
- 2 bandanas
- 1 small flashlight or headlamp with extra batters
- Gallon size Ziplock bags to waterproof clothing and other items

**Hygiene**

- Toothbrush and toothpaste (travel size)
- Washcloth or pack towel
- Sunscreen and chapstick with SPF protection
- Hand sanitizer (travel size)
- Insect repellent – non-DEET or low DEET type
- If you take prescription medications, bring enough for the entire 8 day trip
- 2 epi pens, if needed
- 2 inhalers of each type prescribed, if needed
- Glasses with protective cases, contacts (several pairs), contact solution- if you wear contacts you must bring a pair of glasses as well, if you wear glasses, bring an extra pair if you have one
- Female hygiene products, if applicable
- Towel, soap, shampoo, etc...so you can shower upon program completion (this is to be left in storage)
Identification, Money, Journal

- Driver’s license, passport, or other official identification
- Health Insurance Card
- 1 credit or debit card
- Small journal and a pen

Optional extras:

- Camera
- Crazy Creek style camp chair
- Stuff sacks
- Trekking poles (if you have or need them)
- Snacks if you have dietary restrictions
- Mosquito head net

Do Not Bring on Trail

- Tents
- Pocket knives or other knives
- Hatchets
- Alcohol, tobacco or other drugs
- Gum
- Deodorant
- Cologne/perfume
- Beauty products/make-up
- Shampoo, conditioner, soap
- Extra items (the more you bring the more your backpack will weigh; if you bring extra items, you will likely leave them behind on campus anyway)
- Food, unless you have dietary restrictions (email us with questions)