

GEAR GUIDE (v1 24/8/18)

Introduction

Each WMT course dossier has a kit list and we've augmented these lists with this technical advice note. Outdoor gear - equipment, footwear and clothing - is a huge subject. Go with your personal experience and if less experienced, follow our advice, that of retail staff and ask questions early before coming on a course. It is in everyone's interests, especially in Morocco where there are no gear shops, that delegates are properly equipped, both from a safety and comfort point of view.

There is a lot of online advice available and below there are references to trusted links. The price range for an item – such as a waterproof jacket – can be very wide. We're not aiming to recommend specific products (or brands); the aim is to help you make the best choice whatever your budget. You'll still need to do some leg work to read the info on the links we've suggested and ask the right questions to a knowledgeable salesperson and compare products and brands. Please appreciate that if you ask us should you buy a particular product, normally we will decline to comment. Sorry! It's too risky if it's not what you need or like and we've said it'll be ok!

Finally, this note is written from a personal perspective. I may be wrong. Feedback is welcomed.

Barry Roberts
WMT Commercial Director

A word about "lightweight" gear

It is very easy to spend many hundreds of £££ on a super lightweight insulated jacket (especially if down filled) or a Gore-Tex shell BUT these are never going to stand up to very hard use. Weight is shaved by using less robust and lighter fabric and zippers (and by eliminating pockets and hoods in some garments). You may end up paying "twice" for a light weight jacket; first to purchase it and second, to buy another one when you wear out the first one prematurely. If you are a gear trasher (I'm one), then choose more robust kit and shave the overall weight of your pack in other ways (for example, carry less water). There is a place for lightweight kit for go light and fast adventures but in my experience, this is limited to items where the weight savings are significant and measured in a kilo or two (not in a few grams), such as with carbon ski touring boots, skis and touring bindings, ski touring harnesses and crampons.

So, here's our advice from the feet up!

Footwear

Unsuitable footwear (walking boots, approach shoes, trekking shoes – whatever you want to call them) makes you more prone to ankle injuries, slips/trips and sometimes blisters. Showing up in **Morocco** with the wrong boots is a sure way to reduce your enjoyment.

Here's good online advice from UK retailer Ellis Brigham. <https://www.ellis-brigham.com/advice-inspiration/guides-and-advice/buying-guides/walking-shoes-walking-boots-buying-guide>

To this advice we add: For more support, and especially if you are less fit, less sure-footed or nervous on steep, rocky ground, choose a high cut boot.

Never show up on a course or go on a trip/trek with new footwear that you haven't worn for a week already.

Some ultra-trail runners swear by NOK, an anti-chafe cream

<http://www.myracekit.com/product/sports-akileine-nok-anti-chafe>. There are many runner's blogs that discuss dealing with sore feet, blisters etc.

Carefully trim your toe nails before shopping for new boots and prior to trekking.

Socks are important – one layer of wool should do (even in ski boots). Take your own socks if going shopping for boots.

Lightweight trainers/sneakers/running shoes are NOT suitable for ascending Mt. Toubkal in **Morocco** or ideal for the ice axe training session on snow that is normally part of the **Chamonix summer** course.

You will not need boots that can accommodate crampons for any WMT course, however, if you plan on doing some winter walking with crampons, you might want to buy boots that will be suitable for trekking and taking a crampon but seek specialist advice from a retailer before buying boots and or crampons for this purpose and this page re: crampons <https://www.ellis-brigham.com/advice-inspiration/guides-and-advice/buying-guides/crampon-buying-guide>

Clothing

Think **layers** and remember that “cotton kills” so don't even wear cotton t-shirts; choose a technical fabric that “wicks” moisture (sweat) and dries quickly.

Here's good online advice from UK retailer Ellis Brigham. <https://www.ellis-brigham.com/advice-inspiration/guides-and-advice/buying-guides/layering-system-buying-guide>

To this advice we add:

Waterproof trousers, whilst less important than a suitable waterproof jacket, can be essential in wet, windy conditions which we sometimes experience on summit day in Morocco and on weekend Lake District courses (Mountain Medicine & Expedition Medic). Ideally choose a pair with full length side zips which make them easy to pull on over boots. Physically check this before you buy. Don't buy insulated waterproof trousers (too hot). Insulated ski pants (except for skiing on **winter Chamonix** courses) are not suitable. Waterproof trousers are usually needed at least once on the Morocco expedition.

For chilly “base camp” settings, it's nice to have a **duvet / puffer jacket** (not what a **Morocco** delegate thought was a duvet bed blanket!) for cooler climates, especially when up Toubkal in Morocco and sedentary or moving slowly. It's vital to appreciate the differences and pros/cons between **down insulation** and **synthetic insulation**. Consider down for dry cold conditions and synthetic insulation for wet, cold conditions. Down packs down smaller than most synthetic insulation. Always pack the jacket in the shop to see how small it can go as it will be the bulkiest item in your daypack and ask yourself if your pack is big enough? More advice: <https://www.ellis-brigham.com/advice-inspiration/guides-and-advice/buying-guides/insulated-clothing-buying-guide>

Ever wondered what the numbers on down filled jackets mean – like 550 fill power? In simple terms this relates to how “lofty” the down is for a given weight of down (higher loft means higher quality down that traps more insulating air). In practice this means that a higher loft jacket (800 fill power for example) will be warmer than a 550-fill jacket with the same weight of down fill. The higher the

fill power number the more expensive the garment will be. Read more: <https://www.ellis-brigham.com/advice-inspiration/guides-and-advice/buying-guides/insulated-clothing-buying-guide#what-does-down-fill-mean>

<https://www.ellis-brigham.com/advice-inspiration/guides-and-advice/buying-guides/insulated-clothing-buying-guide>

Daypacks re: Morocco expedition

Common mistakes; bringing a pack that is too small or far too big. Bigger people have bigger clothes so it's not possible to stipulate a certain size. It needs to be big enough to carry what you need, without having kit dangling on the outside.

Mountain Medicine on Skis courses in Chamonix

Ski packs

Personally, I'm REALLY fussy about my ski packs (yes – plural). The main difference will be pack volume.

For off piste skiing my pack is big enough to carry a shovel, probe, goggles, first aid kit, navigation kit, food, water, multi-tool, sunscreen, spare gloves and possibly a harness, rope, some hardware, an ice screw and an ice axe if glacier skiing, plus crampons if skiing the Vallee Blanche.

Day touring (skinning up and skiing down) – as above and add; skins, ski crampons, survival shelter, repair kit (mainly for skin maintenance) and a compact emergency puffer jacket.

For multi-day, hut to hut touring I can usually get away with a day touring pack, as group safety kit can be shared with my ski partners.

What I carry will vary depending on if I'm private skiing, leading friends, skiing with WMT groups, skiing with my children, the time in the season (daylight hours) and the day's weather.

A good ski pack is wide and flat, has a strong hip belt and sternum strap, straps for attaching skis to the pack and strong zippers (so I can really stuff in my gear without fear of blowing a zipper).

ABS airbag backpacks – too specialised a subject for this document!

Ski boots & skis

This is a big topic and too specialised to give specific advice except to advise that if you aspire to ski well, you should invest in boots first. Buy them in the ski resort at the beginning of a trip so you can get them tweaked by the shop technician and get a great fit.

Other items

Water purification bottles

We recommend the Katadyn BeFree water bottle with an integral filter. Available in different sizes – see here for the 1 litre product https://www.katadyn.com/en/ch/43243-8018007-katadyn-befree-1.0L_eu

Head torches

Head torches come in different lumen strengths (brightness) and “burn” time – how long the battery lasts. Some models only have rechargeable batteries so you'll need a mains power source, portable

battery charger and appropriate cable or solar panel. Use lithium batteries in cold conditions. Medics – who may need to accompany a patient being rescued through the night – should consider a more powerful model. <https://www.petzl.com/GB/en/Sport/Lighting>

Trekking poles

This advice summary is taken directly from the UIAA webpage <https://www.theuiaa.org/uiiaa/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-using-hiking-sticks-in-the-mountains/>

“Use of adjustable sticks as a hiking aid, especially for downhill walking, is advantageous and recommended in the following situations:

- advanced age, excess body weight
- when suffering from diseases of the joints or the spine
- when carrying heavy backpacks

Hiking sticks are not necessary for other hiking situations and should not – mainly for reason of safety – be used all the time. The advantages and disadvantages must be weighed up in each individual case.

As the sticks can become cumbersome if you need your hands free on difficult terrain, it is important to have the possibility of fixing them onto the backpack, and it is better to fix them with the tips down, to avoid striking the hiker behind in the face/eyes.”

The full paper – including links to appendices and footnotes – can be downloaded here https://www.theuiaa.org/documents/mountainmedicine/UIAA_MedCom_Rec_No_11_Hiking_sticks_2008_V1-2.pdf

Be aware that poles have to go in hold luggage and are likely to be confiscated if found in cabin hand luggage.

Disclaimer & discounts

WMT has no commercial affiliation with Ellis Brigham and whilst we endorse and trust their generic advice, it's best to speak to a knowledgeable retail sales person who is an experienced outdoor enthusiast who understands your specific needs when making a major gear purchase.

Some UK gear shops offer a standard 10% discount (or more) to outdoor club members, such as the British Mountaineering Council. The cost of membership might be offset by such savings.

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/get-discounts-in-shops-nationwide>

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/membership> - £33.95 (August '18)

© Wilderness Medical Training

