



THINGS TO KNOW:

BACKPACKING IN ALASKA BEAR COUNTRY

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Traveling in the backcountry of Alaska is no joke. While we do everything to make your journey safe, beyond amazing, and transformative, there are strict protocols that everyone must abide by, and adhere to, at all times.

In an effort to streamline your trip preparations, here are some things to know, and be prepared for prior to your backcountry trip in BEAR COUNTRY. We will cover these items, plus many more during your pre-trip safety briefings. Please, note these are rules for participating on our trips, not recommendations.

CLOTHING

Any and all clothes, boots, raingear, etc. that were used for fishing at any time before your trip are **STRICTLY PROHIBITED**, no exceptions. Washing fish slime and guts off clothes, boots, raingear, or whatever, will not keep a bear from smelling it - this creates a danger for everyone on the trip.

If you have clothes, or a sleeping bag, or anything you intend to have with you in your tent, that has strong odors, whether it be from food odors or being dirty (human odors), it will need to either be washed prior to your trip, or left behind. If you have anything that is questionable ask us about it before you show up for your trip.

If you have clothes, or a sleeping bag, or anything you intend to have with you in your tent, that has had food, beverages, or other odorous things spilled on it, and/or still has stains on it, you must leave it behind, unless you are able to successfully wash the items achieving no residual smell/odor.

The morning of, or day of your trip, please keep certain cosmetic-type items to a minimum, especially those with strong odors, such as makeup, cologne/perfume, hair gels, body/hand lotions, etc.. These odors will essentially glue themselves to you and your outdoor clothing, gear, sleeping bag, and pillow for the duration of your trip. This is not a good thing in the backcountry of Alaska.

TOILETRIES

Any toiletry items you intend on using during your trip should be unscented, or as odorless as possible. Some common examples of these items are body/hand lotions, but especially sunblock lotions. Please, please, please make sure your sunblock lotion is unscented - if it is not unscented you will have to leave it behind, no exceptions. Save the fruity, coconut lotions for Cabo. You would not believe how far the odor of scented products like this carries in the wild. We have personally witnessed bears catching these odors from several miles away.

Due to space restrictions by way of having to use bear resistant canisters, the amount of toiletries need to be limited. Literally, only bring what you absolutely need, not additional items that would be “nice to have.” Additionally, do not bring a toiletry bag, these things are heavy, take up a lot of space, and simply



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do not fit well in bear canisters. For reference, your toiletries can be packed in a small dry sack, or quart-size Ziploc bag.

BACKPACKS

Your backpack must be large enough to carry your personal items, in addition to assigned group gear consisting of a tent, a full bear canister, and other items. Bears trips are very gear and equipment intensive, on most trips our guides are carrying 90-100 pounds or more; we really don't have extra room to carry items that are supposed to be carried by guests. It's a team effort!

Notes for backpacks: **Minimum size is 75-95+ Liters.** A pack size of 65 liters may be okay, if it is shaped to fit a BRC, but we find most 65L or smaller packs don't handle BRCs very well. A larger pack is okay as long as it's not super heavy. Most modern-day backpacks have little difference in weight from a 75 liter pack to a 95 liter pack. It's better to have ample room in your pack, than to stuff it beyond capacity as backpacks typically will not carry that well when overstuffed.

You must allow up to 20-30 liters of extra space in your backpack for group gear and food in a BRC.

***REQUIRED: Make sure the inner dimensions of your pack will accommodate the provided Bear Resistant Canister (dimensions 13" H x 9" W round/cylindrical).** Sometimes the BRC will go sideways, or stand straight up, it just needs to fit.

Everything that comes with you on the trip must fit in (or on) your backpack. There is not room for extra bags, plus do you really want to carry another bag in addition to your backpack... Any leftover items, bags, extra luggage, etc. may be stored at our flight office.

This probably goes without saying, but make sure your backpack is a real backpack suited for backpacking long distances. Roller duffles with backpack straps, or dry bags with backpack straps seem cool at first, but after a mile they feel like dragons on your back. Invest in a good, legitimate backpack, your entire being will thank you, and so will your mates!

BEAR RESISTANT CANISTERS (BRC)

Each guest will be required to carry a BRC in their backpack. If you want to see what it looks like, we supply Bear Vault BV-500 units. These are clear, cylindrical-shaped canisters, with spin-off lids. Each guest will receive a canister that is completely full, or with about a ¼ left of open space. ¼ of open space is equivalent to the amount of space you will have for your items that must live in the BRC "at night," such as, snacks, drinks, and toiletries. As a side note, during the day while we are on the move, these items do not need to remain in the BRC that way you may have access to them during the day. However, at the end of the day, when everyone is turning in, your snacks, drinks, and toiletries will be stored in the BRC.

As the trip progresses, we will be "eating" more space into each BRC, and while this happens we put more items in the BRC at night such as food bowls, utensils, cooking equipment, etc. The less we have to



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leave out in the open at night, the better. However, ALL food, drink, and toiletries MUST go into the BRC at night - no exceptions.

Therefore, it comes down to space and necessity, if what you want to bring does not fit into the ¼ of BRC, you must leave it behind. We will make every effort to bring additional items if space allows, but please, take this into consideration when choosing your items. Also, we NEVER keep items that will be kept or worn in your sleeping tent in the BRCs at any time. As convenient as it would be to fill some of that empty space with your sleeping pad, or puffy, this is simply not feasible in the long term safety perspective.

SNACKS & DRINKS

As a general rule of thumb, each guest has about a 1-quart Ziploc size worth of space available for snacks (this is in addition to your 1-quart Ziploc for toiletries). The empty space in between can be used to store drinks that you may choose to bring.

Beer is almost impossible to bring, whiskey is manageable, wine is sometimes doable if in a bag (remove the box!). Glass bottles are STRICTLY PROHIBITED! Make sure any libations you choose to bring come in a plastic bottle, or pour your 12-year scotch into a flask bladder (yes, they make these especially for whiskey and wine).

We provide hot drinks, such as coffee (instant), hot cocoa, tea, and apple cider. If you have a particular taste preference for any of these items, please bring them with you, enough to supply you for the entire trip. There are no baristas and espresso machines on these trips, but the coffee we bring has caffeine in it, and it will get you moving :)

DOING YOUR BUSINESS

In the backcountry we do as the animals do, we do our business “au natural.” Our guides designate areas relatively close to camp for this, as some areas are safer than others. We provide “TP Kits” that contain TP and hand sanitizer. As of current regulations for the areas we operate in, we are not required to haul out human waste. The protocol for situations that require the use of toilet paper is to dig a “cat hole” about 8 inches deep - do your business in the hole - and bury everything back up.

If a trowel (small shovel) is provided, use the trowel only for digging the hole, not for the burying process. Use your foot to shove the material you dug out back into the hole, this helps to keep the trowel from becoming contaminated. If possible leave a couple of sticks in the form of an “X” over your hole as a signal to those of us that may stumble upon your cat hole to stay clear. In the backcountry, an “X” means “no go!”

GEAR CHECK



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Upon arrival, we will conduct a gear check prior to heading out into the backcountry. This process is several fold, but the main objectives are to make sure you have the proper gear for your trip, and assist with pairing down items (if needed).

Side note: It's a habit of most people to bring a bunch of things they "might want." All those things all add up in weight, and after several miles you may wonder why you're exerting all that extra energy. After tens of thousands of miles of backpacking and mountaineering experience in Alaska, most people would laugh if they saw how few personal things (even clothes) our guides bring with them. It's pretty amazing how little you actually need.

Following the gear check, we will distribute group gear, and help you pack your backpacks. Additionally, we will have everyone put on their backpack fully loaded to make sure they are adjusted and fitted properly.

OTHER

We get asked if it's okay for guests to bring their own bear spray, firearms, or other related items on our trips. Our policy is pretty simple, and is listed below.

Guests are PROHIBITED from bringing the following items on our trips:

- **Bear spray**
- **Firearms of any type**
- **Flares, or any incendiary devices (this includes fireworks)**
- **Tasers**
- **Lasers**
- **Bear bells, cow bells, or anything that makes racket while you're hiking**

Rest assured, our guides will have the appropriate, and necessary items for wildlife encounters, and wildlife mitigation, that are to only be used, and handled by our guides.