



## MOUNTAIN TRIP

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## West Buttress Equipment List

The following is a list of required gear for climbing the West Buttress with Mountain Trip. Many of the items on the list need to fit you well in order for you to fully enjoy your experience on the mountain. Please plan ahead with equipment purchased for your trip so you can be certain that your gear fits you well. The Kahiltna Glacier is not the place to discover that your pack is too small for your torso, or that your boots give you blisters. Recommended items reflect the opinions of our guides, but they may not necessarily fit you. They are also weighted toward a couple companies that are industry leaders in exhibiting environmental and social consciousness.

Call or email us with any gear questions. We want you to be as prepared as possible for your expedition. Items with \*\* are optional, but recommended.

### FOOTWEAR

- **MOUNTAINEERING DOUBLE BOOTS:** Your boots are literally the foundation of your equipment for mountaineering. Acceptable boots for Denali fall into two categories: Double Boots and Triple Boot systems with insulated, integrated gaiters. Either variety works well, however the latter versions are lighter and arguably simpler. If you have another big, cold mountain objective in your future, seriously consider the triple boot variety, as they will be worth the investment. Try on a variety of boots as they all fit differently and getting the one that fits the best should be your goal.

**Recommended Triple Boots:** La Sportiva *OLYMPUS MONS EVO*, Lowa *8000 GTX*, Scarpa *PHANTOM 8000*, or the Boreal *G1 EXPEDITION*

**Recommended Double Boots:** La Sportiva *BARUNTSE* or *SPANTI*K, Boreal *G1 LITE*, Scarpa *INVERNO* or *PHANTOM 6000*, or the Koflach *ARCTIS EXPEDITION*. A great upgrade to most plastic boots is the *Denali Liner* by Intuition. These are lighter and warmer than almost any stock liners. They are heat-molded to fit your feet and are worth every penny.

**Guides' Tip:** You should really consider whether or not you will upgrade your boot liners when you purchase your boots, as you might need to go up a half size in order to accommodate the thicker liners.

\*\*\* All double boots need Overboots and Gaiters, including the Spantiks

- **OVERBOOTS:** We are fans of neoprene overboots such as the 40 Below Purple Haze. Fabric, insulated versions such as those from O.R. and Wild Country work fine if they fit your boots snugly and accommodate your crampons. Supergaiters alone are not warm enough for Denali. *THESE ARE ONLY NECESSARY IF YOU USE DOUBLE BOOTS.*
- **GAITERS:** Full height gaiters, such as Black Diamond GTX Frontpoint or Outdoor Research "Crocodiles" are good choices. Full coverage "Supergaiters" work great as well, but are heavier. **Guides' Tip:** Do you really need gaiters? Many soft shell pants fit snugly around the ankle

**or can be slightly modified so that you don't need to bring gaiters. Contact us for more about this weight-saving option.**

- **BOOTIES\*\*:** Synthetic or down fill booties with good tread on the soles are pretty nice on the West Buttress. These are great for camp and tent comfort and allow you extra opportunity to dry out your mountain boots. Add a layer of foam underfoot for additional warmth. (Optional, but **highly recommended**)

## **GLACIER TRAVEL**

- **SNOWSHOES:** Atlas Summit Series, the basic MSR Denali or the MSR Denali EVO Ascent all work well, although a nice "upgrade" feature to consider is a heel riser, which really helps make the steeper hills a bit more manageable. 22-25 inch snowshoes will generally work fine.  
*Guides' Pick:* MSR EVO Ascent
- **SKI POLES:** Adjustable poles work best and are easier to travel with, as they fit better in your duffle bag. Black Diamond Flick Lock poles are recommended, as they are less prone to spontaneously collapsing. 2 section poles are somewhat sturdier than are 3 section versions. The small, "trekking" baskets on some poles are not large enough for use on soft snow, so make certain your poles have bigger, "snowflake" style baskets.

## **CLOTHING**

*In general, you will need a total of five (5) layers for your torso and four (4) for your legs. Please keep in mind that early season trips can be colder and late season trips can be downright hot. A perfect clothing system would have you wearing all of your clothes (except your extra socks, etc) on the coldest day of the trip.*

### **TORSO LAYERS**

- **BASE LAYER TOP:** (1 or 2 sets) Synthetic layers work well, such as Capilene 2 or 3 from Patagonia. There are also some really nice Merino wool options on the market as well. Patagonia, Icebreaker, Smartwool and Io-Bio all make nice Merino options. Zip t-neck tops are better for ventilating than crew-neck versions.
- **LIGHT FLEECE TOP:** This layer should be made from 100 weight, Powerstretch fleece or similar material. Again, a zip t-neck is important for ventilating. This layer is really important layer that works much better than having a couple light layers.  
*Guides' Pick:* Patagonia R1 Flash Hoody
- **PRIMALOFT "PUFFY" JACKET:** Size this to fit over your shell so that you can pull it on at rest breaks as it is a windproof layer. A thick fleece (300 wt) will also work for this layer, but we are fans of the puffy, Primaloft jackets because they are lighter and warmer than fleece and compress down much smaller.  
*Guides' Pick:* Patagonia Micro Puff Hooded Jacket or the Outdoor Research Chaos Jacket
- **SHELL JACKET:** This should be large enough to go over your two base layers. You do not want or need the burliest Gore-Tex jacket on the market. Many people are climbing Denali using lightweight, windproof, water-resistant shells.

**Guides' Tips:** Trips commencing in June need a lightweight Gore-tex shell, because the lower glacier can be wet as we get later into the climbing season. If you bring a light Gore shell and a lighter weight wind shell, you can cache the Gore-tex at one of the lower camps, so that you don't have to carry it up high. Water resistant shells, such as our Guides' Pick the Houdini, are more appropriate for earlier season trips, as you just don't get that wet in April or May.

**Guides' Pick:** Patagonia Houdini Jacket- it weighs less than a couple of candy bars. Our waterproof pick is the Patagonia Torrentshell Jacket or Pullover (lighter!).

- **EXPEDITION PARKA (WITH HOOD):** Marmot, Mountain Hardwear and The North Face all make good, baffled constructed, parkas these days. There are some synthetic options such as the Patagonia D.A.S. Parka and the Wild Things Belay Jacket, however; down is recommended, because it is lighter and less bulky.

**Guides' Pick:** Mountain Hardwear Sub Zero Parka or Feathered Friends Frontpoint Jacket

- **VEST\*\*:** Fleece, puffy or down vest adds warmth to a light Expedition Parka. (OPTIONAL except for early season climbs)
- **T-SHIRT or SUN SHIRT\*\*:** Synthetic long sleeve shirt for the lower glacier. Synthetics dry faster than cotton! (OPTIONAL)

**Guides' CLOTHING Tips:** All trips are not created equal! You might well encounter very cold temperatures in late June, and might find yourself wishing for an extra layer at some point. You will encounter such temperatures in early May, so if you join an April or early May trip, you should add a vest or an additional insulating layer, such as a Patagonia Nano Puff Jacket. Similarly, if you tend to be cold, add a layer. If you run hot, maybe you don't need that extra vest...

## **LEG LAYERS**

*In general, you should have three or four layers for your legs. Early season trips need to have the fourth layer, in the form of a heavyweight base layer or even a light fleece pant. Again, on the coldest day of your trip, you will be wearing all of your layers.*

- **BASE LAYER BOTTOMS (2 weights):** Merino wool or synthetic bottoms in a light and medium weight (or a medium and heavy weight for climbs in early season) will work well for this layer. Synthetics often dry faster than wool, when used on your legs. Early season climbers might bring a light fleece layer for one of these.
- **STRETCH WOVEN (SOFT SHELL) PANTS:** This is a very important layer that you will put on in Talkeetna and not take off until you fly off the glacier. Pants made of Schoeller Dynamic or similar fabrics can often be worn all the way to High Camp in lieu of less breathable "hard-shell" pants. Early season trips can use soft shell instead of Gore-tex, but we'd bring both on a June climb.

**Guides' Pick:** Patagonia Alpine Guide Pants

**Guides' Tip:** Choose this layer well, as a good quality pair of soft shell pants can allow you to leave your Gore-tex pants and gaiters at home. If they fit snugly around your boot cuff, or if they have tabs sewn into the inside of the pant cuff, through which you can lace a short length of bungee cord to keep them down snug over your boots, you won't need gaiters, saving you weight. Feel free to contact us about how you might make such a system work for you.

- **SHELL PANTS:** While many climbers are no longer bringing Gore-tex pants on Denali, we still require them for June trips, when you could get wet on the lower glacier. These should have fully separating side-zips and should be the lightest version you can find. You can cache these at a lower camp so that you don't have to carry them up high.  
*Guides' Pick:* Marmot PreCip Full Zip Pants
- **INSULATED PANTS:** The best options for this layer are thick, "puffy" synthetic or down pants like the Patagonia Micro Puff Pants or Feathered Friends Volant Pants. These can be layered over your shell pants for easier and quicker layer changes. You do not need 8000m down pants for Denali unless you are on an early season climb, because we will not be climbing at night, when such pants are really necessary. Even for an early season ascent, 8000m pants are not really necessary.
- **REGULAR UNDERWEAR:** Three to five changes. Look for synthetics such as Patagonia Capilene. Ladies might consider additional changes and be sure to ask us for a copy of our "Women's Considerations" article.

## **HANDS, FEET AND HEAD**

- **SOCKS:** 2 - 5 sets of wool or synthetic medium/heavy weight socks. Make certain your socks fit with your boots! The new "compression socks" seem like they might work great for Denali.
- **LIGHT GLOVES:** (1 - 2 pair) The best choices for this layer are soft shell gloves made from Shoeller Dynamic or similar fabrics. A leather palm is nice, but make certain it is pre-treated or treat it yourself with a waterproofing material.

*Guides' Tip:* Consider adding a very light liner glove as well. Sometimes called "60 Second Gloves," these can really help with clipping carabiners or fiddling with cameras in the extreme cold. They are also nice for reading at night when it is very cold!

*Guides' Pick:* Outdoor Research Vert Gloves

- **INSULATED GLOVES:** Warm, insulated gloves are the workhorse on Denali. It's hard to stress how much you'll be wearing these, so do not skimp on this item.  
*Guides' Pick:* Black Diamond Guide Gloves, which have removable liners for ease of drying, also have durable palms and have kept our fingers warm for years.
- **SUMMIT MITTENS:** This is a very important layer. Select thick, warm, non-constricting mittens made of pile, Primaloft or down. If they can fit over a "60-second glove" (see above), this could be advantageous on the upper mountain to ease clipping carabiners in the extreme cold.  
*Guides' Pick:* Outdoor Research Alti Mitts. They aren't cheap, but are extremely warm. Divide the cost by 10 digits and they're a bargain!
- **WARM HAT:** One medium weight, warm hat or perhaps two hats of different weights. Wool or fleece is fine. We generally bring medium weight hats, as our puffy jackets have hoods, and a lighter hat can help mitigate some of the incessant fogging that plague goggles in the big mountains.

- **BUFF:** This is the brand name of a lightweight, synthetic neck gaiter that can also double as a hat, headband, facemask, or even TP if you get desperate. The choice of virtually ALL of our guides, you will love this handy piece of kit.
- **FACE MASK:** Neoprene or Windstopper work equally well.  
*Guides' Pick:* Seirus Face Mask with light fleece lining
- **SUN HAT:** A baseball type or (better!) a wide-brimmed sun hat will help keep the intense sunshine of the lower mountain from frying your brain. You can combine a baseball hat with a bandana for good sun protection as well.
- **HAND WARMERS:** Bring 6+ sets of these disposable insurance policies so you can use them liberally. Early season climbs might bring a couple more, and late season could probably bring a couple less. On a cold summit morning, we might drop a pair of hand warmers (2 pairs total) in each mitten before departing high camp, and replace them with another couple pair for the descent. Yes, this could be seen as excessive, but it has proven to work over the years.
- **GLACIER GLASSES:** They must have good side protection and filter 100% UVA and UVB rays. Glacier Glasses are the standard, but some sport glasses provide sufficient protection as well. Most climbers will want to bring what are called "Category 3 or 4" lenses for the upper mountain, meaning they block 85% or more of the visible light.  
*Guides' Pick:* Julbo Montebianco glasses provide great protection and are stylish enough for the high-fashion streets of Talkeetna or the Kahiltna Glacier.
- **SKI GOGGLES:** Nothing protects like goggles while traveling during storms or during really cold spells. These must have double lenses and provide 100% UV protection. If you wear prescription glasses or sweat a lot, you should consider goggles with a built-in fan to help mitigate fogging.

## BACKPACK AND DUFFEL BAG

- **EXPEDITION PACK:** Denali *requires* a 6000+ cu in. or 85+ liter pack with the emphasis on the "+". A "75+10" liter pack is not large enough for Denali. Not many places or expeditions require such large packs, but Denali most certainly does, as you'll need it to carry not only your gear, but also your share of the group food and equipment.  
*Guides' Pick:* The Mountain Hardwear BMG and Osprey's Aether 85 are our current favorites.
- **LARGE ZIPPERED DUFFEL:** An extra-large (36-48" long or 100+ liters in volume) duffel makes life on the glacier much easier when used as a sled bag. Lightweight and inexpensive bags work fine; although there are some very nice, almost water proof, bags available. Two such to consider are the Gregory Long Haul Duffel in an XL size and the Patagonia Black Hole Duffel 120L. Do not bring any wheeled luggage or any over-built, super-heavyweight duffels.

## SLEEPING GEAR

- **EXPEDITION SLEEPING BAG:** Denali *requires* a warm bag, rated to at least -20 Fahrenheit (-29 C). The Marmot Cwm, Col and Mt Hardwear Ghost are all great bags. Down bags are lighter and compress more than do synthetics, so we feel that anyone electing to bring a synthetic bag

should really have a compelling reason to do so.

**Guides' Pick:** Weighing in at just 4 pounds, the Valandre Odin is a -40 degree bag that is also suitable for Antarctica. It's lighter companion, the Freja, is a -22 degree bag that only weighs 3 lbs 6 oz!

- **COMPRESSION STUFF SACK:** Granite Gear and Outdoor Research are both making nice, lightweight compression sacks. These are essential for sleeping bags and recommended for your summit clothes, such as your parka, mitts and warmest pants, so you might consider bringing two.
- **TWO (2) SLEEPING PADS:** You need two pads, with one being a closed cell pad such as a Ridge Rest or a Karrimat just in case you poke a crampon through your air mattress. Therm-a-Rest inflatable pads have historically been among the warmest and most comfortable, but the new down filled pads from Exped are really, really nice. Be considerate of your tent mates and do not bring "Deluxe," extra-wide sleeping pads that will take up more than your fair share of the tent. You might consider a  $\frac{3}{4}$  length foam pad to reduce some bulk and weight.  
**Guides' Pick:** Exped 7 paired with a Ridge Rest Solar

## TECHNICAL CLIMBING EQUIPMENT

- **ICE AXE (with leash):** A 70-80 cm length works well for the West Buttress and you might go 10-20 cm shorter for technical climbs. The leash can be a wrist leash or a length of cord that functions as a tether from your harness. Both systems have their caveats, which we are happy to discuss with you.  
**Guides' Pick:** Black Diamond Raven Pro
- **CRAMPONS:** Select a pair of 10 or 12-point mountaineering crampons that fit your boots well. Mountaineering crampons will have horizontally oriented front points, rather than the vertically oriented ones used for ice climbing. Step-in or strap versions work equally well; just make sure they fit your mountain boots and overboots. Often, you will need to lengthen your crampons to accommodate your overboots. Please make sure you can make this adjustment in the field. Aluminum crampons are generally not acceptable for this expedition.  
**Guides' Pick:** Black Diamond Sabretooth Clip or Pro. The new stainless steel version is a lot lighter than its predecessor.
- **HARNESS:** Your harness should have adjustable leg loops. Also, look for a version that has gear loops attached to the bottom of the swami belt, as these are more comfortable while wearing a pack.  
**Guides' Pick:** Black Diamond Momentum SA or its very light cousin the Couloir. The Couloir is a bit trickier to use, but is very light.
- **ASCENDER and PRUSSIK CORD:** You need one full-sized ascender such as the Petzl Ascension for use on the fixed lines. Glacier travel requires another form of ascender and a 6mm prussik loop will suffice, so bring 4 meters of 6mm cord to tie a foot prussik. We can help with this in Anchorage, but ask us for advice on how to rig yours ahead of time so you can practice at home.
- **CARABINERS:** Bring three large locking carabiners and eight regular carabiners. Please do not bring "bent-gate" carabiners. These have certain limitations that do not make them appropriate for

how we will use them. Mark them with colored tape for identification.

**Guides' Pick:** Black Diamond OZ carabiners are very lightweight yet almost full-sized.

- **PERLON CORD:** Bring 2 lengths of 30 feet (9m) for a total of 60 feet (18m) of 5 or 6 mm for sled and pack tie offs. Choose two different colors, as this will simplify some systems on the glacier. Also consider bringing a length of 3mm “parachute cord” to aid in rigging sleds, etc.
- **CLIMBING HELMET:** Unfortunately, even Alaska is not beyond the reach of Global Warming and there is now a stretch of the West Buttress route that necessitates the wearing of a climbing helmet. Get the lightest one you can find and make certain it fits over your warmest hat and under the hood of your shell. **Guides' Pick:** Black Diamond Tracer, but our veteran guide Dave Staeheli really likes the Edelrid Madillo helmet, as it folds down to roughly half its original volume. It’s more expensive, but worth considering.

## ESSENTIAL PERSONAL ITEMS

- **NOSE GUARD:** Beko makes nice nose protectors that keep the wind and sun from wreaking havoc on your skin. You can also fabricate your own from duct tape once you’re on the glacier, which arguably work even better, besides, duct tape is the new black!
- **STUFF BAGS:** (for your own items plus one large one for a cache bag)
- **(2) ONE-LITER, WIDE MOUTH WATER BOTTLES:** Please do not bring metal bottles or small mouth bottles, which are difficult to fill and freeze shut more quickly.
- **\*\*CAMELBACK HYDRATION SYSTEM:** Optional, but a hydration system can be very nice, especially for late-May and June expeditions. They are a bit challenging to keep from freezing, and if you bring one, you definitely need an insulated tube and mouthpiece. This DOES NOT replace your water bottles, but can make it easier to stay hydrated, especially on the warmer, lower mountain.
- **INSULATED COVERS:** Also known as water bottle “cozies,” these are often made of foam or neoprene and help insulate your two bottles.
- **INSULATED CUP and LARGE PLASTIC CUP OR BOWL:** You’ll only need one bowl for eating out of. A 2-4 cup measuring bowl or Rubbermaid storage bowl work fine, but the Sea To Summit mug without a handle fits nicely inside the “Fair Share” mug, greatly reducing volume inside your pack.
- **LARGE PLASTIC (LEXAN) SPOON:** Mark your spoon with colored marker or tie a cord from it to your bowl to prevent it from being lost in the snow. No, you don’t need a fork... or a spork...
- **2 SMALL LIP BALMS (WITH 30+SPF):** Two small tubes provide redundancy in case you drop one in a crevasse. Also consider a tube of Labiosan or similar zinc oxide-based sun block.
- **SUN SCREEN (3-4 OUNCES):** Three to four small, 1-ounce tubes work better than one large tube, which will undoubtedly freeze solid. You can carry one in your pocket while traveling.
- **TOILET PAPER:** 1 or 2 rolls, depending on your technique
- **TOILET KIT:** Tooth brush & paste, floss, 10-20 individually Handi-wipes... keep it small
- **HAND SANITIZER:** Add a small bottle (2 ounces or less) of alcohol-based hand sanitizer to your toiletry kit for use before meals and after using the toilet. Keeping healthy on an expedition is always a challenge, and this will help.
- **P-BOTTLE:** Wide-mouth, collapsible Nalgene Canteens work great- they make a 96 ounce version (**Todd's Pick!**) Ladies, consider trying an adapter (available at your local outdoors store), although some of our female guides prefer a hard sided 1-liter bottle without an adapter. These items can both be tough to find in Anchorage so plan ahead.

- **THREE GOOD JOKES:** “A moose walks into a bar...”
- **PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT:** (Blister kit, aspirin, antacids, lozenges, Ibuprofen).  
PLEASE CONTACT YOUR PERSONAL PHYSICIAN FOR A LIST OF APPROPRIATE PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS. THERE ARE SOME VERY USEFUL PRESCRIPTION DRUGS THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE AT ALTITUDE. CONTACT US FOR RECOMENDATIONS.

## **OPTIONAL ITEMS**

- SMALL DIGITAL CAMERA, with lots memory. Extra batteries are also a great idea.
- BOOK(s) for storm day reading or an e-Reader with a thousand books to choose from.
- JOURNAL & PENCIL
- ALTIMETER WATCH
- FOOT POWDER OR BABY POWDER
- SIT PAD A small piece of foam is nice to sit on in the kitchen tent and having one saves needing to bring sleeping pads into and out of the kitchen. This is available in Anchorage.
- MAPS
- BANDANAS
- SPARE SUN GLASSES
- LIGHTER
- SWISS ARMY KNIFE
- PERSONAL MUSIC PLAYER Be warned that hard-drive based MP3 players will stop working at altitude, so look for a Flash Drive version like the newer iPod Nano.
- SPOT GPS -This personal tracking and locator device tracks your location online, allowing friends and family to keep track of your progress on one of several maps. For some reason these tend to get lost on the lower glacier more than any other item, so rig yours with a bit of cord.

## **WHAT NOT TO BRING! These items are automatically left in Anchorage.**

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Belay/rappel device | • Excessive personal first aid/toiletry items |
| • Headlamp            | • A bad attitude                              |
| • Ice Screws          |   |
| • Summit pack         |   |

## **MOST OF THE EQUIPMENT ON THIS LIST IS AVAILABLE AT AMH IN ANCHORAGE -**

You may want to call ahead to be sure that the item(s) you need are in stock at the store.

Mountain Trip clients receive a 10% discount.

Check out their web site: [www.alaskamountaineering.com](http://www.alaskamountaineering.com) or call 907-272-1811

**FEATHERED FRIENDS** in Seattle will also give you a 10% discount if you tell them you are joining one of our expeditions [www.featheredfriends.com](http://www.featheredfriends.com)

**Contact our office for a coupon code for 25% off Patagonia products!**

*Please call or email us with any and all equipment questions.*