

**Prepared JD Densmore (ASM BT-58), based on a document by Dylan Cannon (ASM BT-58)**

## **Individual Backpacking Gear for BT-58 Scouts**

### **Commentary for Parents and Scouts:**

Below is a basic 1-3 night backpacking gear list. It is based on the “official” BSA packing list for the 7 and 12 day treks at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico (so that we train as we will execute when we attend Philmont), but also includes comments and additional gear we have found helpful, and some of the quantities have been reduced for a shorter weekend trip. We’ve noted the items that we think are essential for a comfortable/successful trip. The clothing items can be adjusted to the season.

One thing we see often is that a lot of Scouts bring way more clothing than they use on the trip. When backpacking, this is unnecessary weight and bulk. Backpack weights should be ~25 lbs (or less) without crew gear, food, or water, and definitely should not exceed 25% of the Scout’s body weight as a rule. So, extra “stuff” is a problem. BT-58 does not practice “ultra-light” backpacking, but sharing crew equipment, and leaving unessential things at home goes a long way to making for an enjoyable trip.

Also, a word about cotton...you will hear the boys refer to it as “death cloth”. That is because they heard that from the high adventure youth and adults that have come before them. Cotton in the back country, once it gets wet, takes FOREVER to dry, and is a leading contributor to hypothermia...even in the summer. Personally, the only cotton I carry is my sleeping shorts and t-shirt (cotton IS comfortable to sleep in), and the two bandanas I carry are ALWAYS cotton. Otherwise, my clothing is synthetic or merino wool. Synthetic wicks moisture and dries quickly. Wool keeps me warm, even when it gets wet, and merino wool is also more naturally hygienic (doesn’t stink after days on the trail).

There are several essential items of equipment that can be expensive, but quality and durability does matter for these. If your Scout will be backpacking frequently, making the investment is worthwhile. If your Scout will only do this infrequently, or he’s new to it and you just don’t know, we recommend borrowing or renting gear, instead:

- **Backpack:** A well-fitting, good supporting backpack is going to cost at least \$150+ (external frame)-\$200+ (internal frame)... Of all the gear on the list, this and hiking boots/shoes are the ones you should NOT buy on-line, as fit is essential. REI really does the best job around of fitting packs. We recommend an internal frame pack (which is the most common) no smaller than 65 Liters, and no larger than 75 Liters.
- **Tent:** This is another high dollar item (especially the light ones)... since the Scouts pair up, it is possible to just share instead of buying their own. If you do purchase one, get a two-person backpacking tent with a rain fly, tent stakes, and a ground cloth/footprint. The good news is, if you buy a good tent, it should last for years.
- **Hiking Boots/Shoes:** Good footwear is essential for a fun and safe backpacking trip. Lace-up hiking boots, or sturdy hiking shoes that can provide solid arch support and ankle support (if your Scout is prone to ankle injury). Sneakers are NOT appropriate backpacking footwear. They do not provide appropriate arch or ankle support when hiking across rugged, rocky terrain, and are not made to carry a person’s body weight plus 30-45lbs of gear, through all types of weather and conditions. Again, I highly recommend going to a physical store to try boots/shoes on AND

make sure you wear liner socks and your heavier wool/synthetic sock when you are fitting your boots/shoes.

- Sleeping Bag: A good synthetic mummy-style sleeping bag, rated to at least 30 degrees F, is essential. Even in July, in New Mexico, at 12,000 feet of elevation it can get down into the 30's at night. Yes, really! Down is great, but once it gets wet, it is tough to dry and won't keep you warm until it is dry again.

The problem is the light gear (keeping their pack weight down) is expensive and the less expensive gear is usually heavier. A lot of the ultra-light gear isn't durable enough to give to kids (and usually very expensive). Look for stuff on sale, and research on-line. If anyone has any questions about gear, before you commit, reach out to JD Densmore or Brian Pilgrim. We'd be happy to answer questions.

As far as purchasing options,

Campmor (<http://www.campmor.com/>) has some of the best prices around and good customer service. I often research what I want, then see if Campmor has it.

REI (<http://www.rei.com/>) is more expensive, but with their quality (they have excellent name brands AND their REI brand is excellent too!), customer service, no questions asked return policy, gear gurus, and dividend program for members (10% of non-sale purchases returned at the end of the year), they are always one of my favorites... & I have found some truly great deals at their annual garage sale, and through their REI Outlet. AND they now sell lightly worn Used Gear (although used gear doesn't come with the one year warranty). I have gear from REI that has survived hundreds of miles in the backcountry and continues to go out with me every time.

Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com>) is always an option. I will usually go to a gear specific store/site FIRST, and determine what it is that I want. Then I'll see if it's available on Amazon and if so, if it is less expensive...sometimes it is, AND if you are a Prime member already, then shipping is already free (or a sunk cost). It's worth comparison shopping!

There are a few other sites I look at, but REI, Campmor, and Amazon are my trusted go-to sites. Another option is the gear rental through Davidson College. I have not used their gear, but I have heard from several people that it is good stuff and reasonable. We have some contacts at the College we can put you in touch with if this is something you want to look into. One word of caution: I would be wary of using Wal-Mart, Dick's Sporting Goods, or Academy Sports for your critical equipment (tents, sleeping bags, boots/shoes, backpacks). I have not had positive experience with quality or returns at these locations, and you don't want your Scout to have one of those items fail when we are 10 miles into the back country, with two more days to hike.

Hope this helps!

Please let me know if you have questions.

JD Densmore

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# BT-58 Spring/Summer/Fall Backpacking Gear List

## Lower Body Layers:

- 1 midweight synthetic/merino wool long underwear bottoms (aka Base Layer)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 waterproof/breathable pants (aka Rain Pants)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 synthetic long/hiking pants<sup>#,1</sup>
- 2-3 synthetic/merino wool boxer/briefs<sup>#</sup>
- 1 synthetic hiking shorts<sup>#,2</sup>

## Upper Body Layers:

- 1 midweight synthetic/merino wool long underwear top (aka Base Layer)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 fleece/synthetic pullover or wool sweater (aka Middle Layer)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 light wool or fleece or synthetic jacket (aka Top Layer)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 waterproof/breathable jacket (aka Rain Jacket)<sup>#,3</sup>
- 1 synthetic long sleeve T-shirt
- 2-3 synthetic short sleeve T-shirts<sup>#</sup>

## Head/Neck/Hands:

- 1 wool or fleece watch cap/beanie<sup>#</sup>
- 1 pair mid/light weight wool or fleece glove liners or mittens<sup>#</sup>
- 1 wide brimmed sun hat<sup>#</sup>

## Footwear:

- 1 pair camp footwear (optional)<sup>4</sup>
- 1 waterproof hiking boots or hiking shoes<sup>#,5</sup>
- 3 pairs of wool or synthetic socks<sup>#</sup>
- 2-3 pairs of synthetic or light weight wool liner socks<sup>#,6</sup>

## Sleeping Gear:

- 1 three-season down or synthetic sleeping bag (15° to 30°F)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 waterproof stuff sack for your sleep system<sup>#</sup>
- 1 sleeping pad (inflatable style or rigid foam style)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 set of sleep clothes (worn ONLY for sleeping – t-shirt, gym shorts)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 small pillow (optional)

## Packs and Bags:

- 1 Backpack (Internal Frame 65L-75L or External Frame 60L-65L)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 waterproof Backpack Cover (or a heavy duty trash bag to line the inside of the backpack)
- 1 pair lashing straps (3-4 feet long each, with buckles)
- 6-12 one-gallon Ziploc freezer bags (for keeping your clothes/gear dry and organized)
- 2-3 small stuff sacks (for personal items/organization)
- 2-3 medium stuff/ditty bags (one for all your personal smell-ables for the bear bag)
- 1 or 2 large trash bags<sup>#</sup>

## Miscellaneous Items:

- 1 spoon/spork, 1 bowl, and a 12-20 oz mug<sup>#</sup>
- 3+ 32 oz. water bottles (Nalgene style)<sup>#,7</sup>
- 1 small pocket knife
- 1 small lighter and waterproof matches, & dryer lint in a small Ziploc bag<sup>#</sup>
- 1 headlamp/flashlight & extra batteries<sup>#</sup>
- 1 pair trekking poles w/ rubber tips (optional, also carry a spare pair of rubber tips)
- 1 compass<sup>8</sup>
- 2 bandanas (cotton, large, and colorful)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 Buff/neck gator (optional)
- Personal hygiene gear: small bar of soap, toothbrush, small toothpaste, small camp towel
- 1 pair prescription glasses and/or contact lenses and supplies for duration of trip
- 1 pair sunglasses
- Small first-aid kit with personal medications<sup>#</sup>
- duct tape wrapped around pencil or small stick<sup>#</sup>
- 1 small sunscreen (SPF 30+)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 small 30%+ DEET bug repellent
- 1 lip balm (SPF 15+)<sup>#</sup>
- 1 emergency whistle
- Small note pad and pen
- Inexpensive wrist watch
- Camera<sup>9</sup>
- Tent, w/ ground cloth and stakes – Highly encourage a scout to either purchase OR share a 2-person backpacking tent<sup>10</sup>
- 1 three-inch metal climbing style carabiner (optional)

# BT-58 Spring/Summer/Fall Backpacking Gear List

## Notes:

- Footnotes:
  - # = Must have item
  - 1. Highly recommend style that legs can zip off and become shorts
  - 2. A second pair of long/hiking pants can be substituted for these, depending on weather, terrain, and season
  - 3. No Ponchos! They are not durable enough, nor do they provide adequate water and wind protection on a high adventure trek
  - 4. Sneakers or crocs or other light-weight comfortable shoes that can be worn after a long day hiking. Must cover toes and heels.
  - 5. No Sneakers! Sneakers are NOT appropriate backpacking footwear...they will not bear the weight or stand up to the terrain.
  - 6. Thin merino wool, poly propylene, or silk liner socks are critical to wear under heavier wool/synthetic socks to avoid hotspots/blisters.
  - 7. A 64+oz water bladder with drinking straw/hose MAY be substituted for two of the 32oz water bottles, however the Scout MUST also carry two 32oz water bottles in case the water bladder leaks.
  - 8. A compass with a rotating bezel and a clear base plate is preferred. A GPS is an unnecessary expense and can get damaged, lost, or lose power. Scouts will be trained on how to use a map and compass.
  - 9. Scouts may bring a phone to use as a camera, but there will be little phone service in the backcountry and they can run out of battery power quickly if they don't place their phone in airplane mode.
  - 10. At Philmont, Scouts will be issued a tent and will tent with another Scout in their crew. We do not encourage Scouts getting 1 person tents and Philmont does not permit them, unless there is an odd number of Scouts or Adults.
- Legibly label EVERYTHING, using a Sharpie, with your full name and "BT-58" and "Davidson, NC"
- As on ALL BT-58 Trips, radios/MP3 players/Video Game devices are prohibited
- Hammocks are not permitted on backpacking trips
- Scouts Do Not Need to Purchase/Bring (The Troop will provide these items as part of the Crew gear):
  - Stove and fuel
  - Cooking set (pots and pans)
  - Water purification: filter, steri-pen, tablets, or drops
  - Multi-tool
  - Personal locator beacon – if needed, Troop will supply
  - Bear-bag rope and bags (or canister)
  - Toilet paper and trowel
  - Maps