

## Preparing for Adirondacks Hiking

1. Good waterproof hiking boots are critical. Sneakers are not acceptable for hiking in the Adirondacks in October.
2. Good wool or synthetic hiking socks are almost as important as the boots. Wicking sock liners are optional (they are a personal preference of mine). No cotton socks!
3. Staying hydrated is extremely important. Each scout should bring at least 2x 1 liter water bottles or a 2 liter hydration system.
4. A key to hiking in cooler temperatures is to dress in layers. The boys will likely start out the day with all layers on and as the day heats up and they begin to exert themselves, they will gradually peel off the layers. When they approach the summit they will likely need to put the layers back on. On the descent they repeat the process. I'll give more specifics on the layers below, but the most important point is that the layers allow you to fine tune your temperature throughout the hike so that you stay comfortable. None of the layers should be cotton.
5. The scouts will need a day pack. The pack will be used to carry his lunch (troop will provide the lunch), water, trail snacks, and will hold the layers as they are peeled off throughout the hike. You should not get a full pack for the Loj hike – that is far too heavy and is overkill for a day hike. When we do our first overnight hike we'll discuss full packs, but for this Loj trip, only a day pack is required. Since a key function of the day pack is to hold the layers when they come off, and since the morning will be cold and the boys will likely be wearing all of their layers, the day pack will probably be half empty at the start of the hike.
6. The Adirondack weather in October is extremely unpredictable and can be quite harsh. Last year it started snowing and by the time we reached the summit there were several feet of snow on the ground. The previous year we had freezing rain, sleet, and extremely high winds. To be prepared for this, scouts should bring long underwear (synthetic), winter hats, mittens or gloves (mittens are strongly preferred), winter coats, and if they have them, face masks and ski goggles. The hope is that the weather will be great and we can leave most of that stuff in the Loj, but we won't really know if we need it until we get there.

Now, some more specific gear information.

### **Boots**

With rapidly growing feet, it doesn't make much sense to invest in the top-of-the-line boots for the boys. But it is important that the boots be waterproof. Merrill and Hi Tec are two of the more affordable brands, with waterproof boots at around \$50-\$100. I have had good luck with the [Hi Tec Bandera Mid WP \(waterproof\)](#) and the [Hi Tec Total Terrain Mid WP](#). It would be great if the boys could get their boots prior to the October 5 Breakneck Ridge hike. That will provide a good opportunity to break the boots in and make sure the fit is right before going up to the Adirondacks.

### **Water**

A lot of the scouts have the [Platypus 2 liter hydration system](#) and it works well. Camelback is another big brand name for hydration systems. Both can be found at REI or EMS or online at Campmor or Amazon. [Water bottles](#) run about \$10 each and can be purchased in any of these places as well. If you go the water bottle route, make sure that the day pack that you purchase has external mesh pockets to carry the water bottles for easy access during the hike.

### **Day packs**

If you can afford to spend a little extra on the day packs, it might make sense to go upmarket a bit. The boys don't really outgrow the day packs, and they can be quite useful as a school pack or for non-scouting trips as well. Some features that are useful are external mesh pockets for

holding water bottles, at least 2 compartments to help with gear organization, and a waist belt for securing the pack to you so that it doesn't move around while scrambling up rocks. A nice-to-have feature is a sternum strap – it provides a little more stability. Another nice to have is some elastic cording / flex mechanism in back that you can tuck a wet coat into. After a rain storm, you don't want to have to stuff your wet coat into your pack, getting all of your other gear wet. From a size perspective, something around 1700 cu in would be good. There are many, many to pick from, but a good example to look at would be the [Northface Slingshot](#) (Campmor currently has this for ~\$60)

### **Base Layer**

Any wicking type of shirt will work – long sleeve or short sleeve. There are some very affordable ones at Target. The main point is NO COTTON. Cotton absorbs the perspiration and keeps it close to your body. This is uncomfortable during the summer and a good recipe for hypothermia during the fall and winter.

### **Middle Layer**

A medium to heavy weight fleece is best. A wool sweater is acceptable. Again, stay away from anything cotton.

### **Top Layer**

This is where serious hikers drop the big bucks, but I wouldn't recommend that with growing boys. Ideally you want a breathable, waterproof shell. The really expensive shells (Patagonia, Arcteryx,...) do a very good job delivering both. But a less expensive shell that isn't as waterproof will do the job for the boys as long as they also carry a [cheap fold up poncho](#) in their pack in case it starts raining hard. Also, keep in mind that if the temperatures are really cold, as they were last year, the boys will likely be hiking in their winter jackets so it doesn't make a lot of sense to invest in an expensive shell (unless that also serves as their winter jacket).

### **Hiking Pants**

Sorry to sound like a broken record, but just make sure they aren't cotton (e.g., jeans). Synthetic zip-off pants are best. Both [EMS](#) and REI have good ones.

### **Other Gear**

Emergency whistle (many day packs now have these built into the sternum strap), compass, and headlight (e.g., [Black Diamond Spot](#)). Also, useful but not required is a small plastic container to hold the scout's sandwich to keep it from getting smashed in the day pack during the hike. If the scout has a mess kit like the ['Light my Fire'](#) kit (many of our scouts use this and it is a good one), the outer shell of the mess kit works pretty well as a sandwich holder.

If the boys happen to own [micro spikes](#), they should bring them but there is no need to go out and buy them. The troop plans to invest in a few pair, we can borrow a few more pairs from Troop 116, and we can rent others from the Loj if we need them. Micro spikes stretch over your hiking boots and allow you to climb in snow and icy conditions. We needed them last year but we did not need them the previous year.

All of this talk of challenging weather probably seems a bit daunting, but the boys find it exciting and fun. And, the best part of this trip is that, no matter how bad the weather is on the hike, we have a nice, warm comfortable Loj to come back to where the dinner is being cooked for us!

I hope that you find this information useful.

ASM Johnston