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The following list of equipment is what I take on a typical week-long packrafting trip that primarily involves floating down a river without significant backpacking.

For trips with significant backpacking, much more weight optimization is required, often with some sacrifice of comfort. You will need to think more like an ultra-light backpacker, cut equipment to absolute minimum, use the lightest-weight version of each item you take and trim off every ounce possible. However, always take an appropriate PFD, and always take a helmet if rafting Class II or greater whitewater.

Rafting Equipment

- Packraft: I paddle the [Alpacka Classic](#) with removable whitewater deck. My friends paddle the larger and slightly heavier [Expedition](#) model.
- Packraft Repair Kit: The Alpacka rafts all come with a [basic repair kit](#) and. We add [TiZip Maintenance Kit](#), [Spare Nozzle](#), [Spare Valve Cap](#), [Patch-n-Go Kit](#), [Tenacious Tape](#), [Tyvek Tape](#), [Aquaseal](#) and extra [alcohol wipes](#). Not everyone in a group needs to carry all of these items, but the group should have plenty of repair kit on longer expeditions. Spare dry suit neck and wrist gaskets are also a good idea on a long trip.
- [Bow Bag](#): 24 L of easy access storage for lunch, water, sunscreen, bug repellent, binoculars, map, compass, gloves, hat and more.
- [Cargo Fly Internal Drybags](#): These can pack a surprising amount of camping gear inside your raft, and attach to a clip inside the raft to keep them from shifting around. My friends and I all use the Roll-Top version. If you put anything hard in these (e.g. tent poles, stove), be sure to wrap it in something soft to avoid getting holes in the boat/bag when you bump into a rock on the water.
- Paddle: There are [tons of options](#). A paddle that breaks down into four sections could be important if you will be doing lots of backpacking with your packraft. But a two section paddle works fine too. I use a straight shaft Werner Ikelos paddle, for both packrafting and sea kayaking. A high-angle paddle keeps the blade close to the side of the boat, which minimizes how much the packraft turns with each stroke. I also suggest that one person in your party should carry a [spare paddle](#) if you are paddling in a remote area.
- USCG Type III PFD: I just use my sea kayaking PFD. If you want an extra light-weight version, check out the [Astral V-Eight](#). Always carry a [whistle](#) and [river knife](#) (*) on your PFD.
- [Whitewater Helmet](#): Something designed for white water is preferred.
- [Dry Suit](#): Save some big bucks by buying this during one of those 20% off sales that REI has every year.
- [Throw Bag](#) & Tow Rope: A short tow rope is used for capturing your friend's overturned boat if it gets separated from them. It should attach to your waist and have a quick-release buckle so you can cut it away if it gets hung up on something. You may also need a throw bag (*) on more serious white water. I am using the [Salamander Retriever Kayak Rescue Throw Rope & Tow Tether](#), which serves both purposes. Hyperlite offers a super light-weight [River Rescue Throw Bag](#).
- [Paddling Gloves](#): I have the NRS Maverick, but I find that they wear out pretty fast and the latest version is too stiff.

* I highly recommend taking a swift water rescue course to learn how to safely use this gear.

Clothing

- Socks: 3 pairs of wool socks.
- Boots: I'm a big fan of [Chota wading boots](#) over my dry suit feet. They drain water quickly and dry out in camp with some sun or wind. A killer combination with these [waterproof submersible socks](#) for canoeing.
- Underwear: 3 pair, non-cotton.
- Thermal Underwear Bottom: 1 pair under dry suit for paddling, 1 pair for sleeping.
- Thermal Underwear Tops: 1 pair under dry suit for paddling, 1 pair for sleeping.
- Hiking Pants: Switch between full-length or shorts as temperatures change. Get something tough that will stand up to sitting on rocks. 2 pair. I love Northbound Gear's "Adventure" water resistant pants for colder weather conditions ([\\$20 off](#)).
- Shirts: I typically take 1 short-sleeve and 1 long-sleeve non-cotton shirt.
- Wool Sweater: Wear under dry suit on cold days, or wear in camp in mornings/evenings.
- Light Down Jacket: For cold nights/mornings in camp. Get something packable. For an extra layer of protection, mine goes in a [waterproof compression bag](#) before packing it with the rest of my clothes.
- Light Gloves: For cold nights/mornings in camp.
- Warm Hat: For cold nights/mornings in camp.
- Rain Jacket: For rainy days in camp, if you want to get out of your dry suit.
- Rain Pants: For rainy days in camp, if you want to get out of your dry suit.
- Rain Hat: I've used the [Seattle Sombrero](#) for decades. Lets your neck ventilate way more than a parka hood. I tuck my parka hood inside my jacket to keep it dry, pulling it out only when its rainy AND windy.
- Sun Hat: The Seattle Sombrero can do, but I like a [light-weight folding baseball-style hat](#).
- [Head Net](#): Only necessary when in deep bug country.

Camping

- Backpack: Not only necessary for backpacking with your gear, but also good for portaging all your stuff around rapids beyond your comfort zone. But also great for getting your gear to/from the river, padding hard camping equipment within your packraft and even just keeping stuff organized in the car when you're sharing a ride. We mostly use 4400 cubic inch [Southwest packs from Hyperlight Mountain Gear](#).
- Tent: Get something small and compact. I use a [Big Agnes Copper Spur HV UL1](#). My friends use something from [Hyperlite Mountain Gear](#) or [Zpacks](#).
- Sleeping Bag: For an extra layer of protection, my bag goes in a [waterproof compression bag](#) before packing it with the rest of my camping gear in a larger dry bag.
- Sleeping Pad: The [Neoair](#) is light and packs down small, but inflates to 2.5 inches thick.
- Folding Camp Chair: My chair's legs dig into the sand. I suggest trying something designed for soft ground, like the [Helinox Ground Chair](#), or use [one of](#) their [groundsheets](#).
- Headlamp with extra set of batteries
- Stove, Bowl, Cup, Spoon: I'll take a [Jetboil](#) for solo cooking, or an MSR Whisperlight and larger pot if sharing the stove. For solo use of the Jetboil, I use about 25 g of fuel per day to boil one pot for breakfast and to boil 1.5 pots for dinner with about 15 minute simmer time. However, to avoid burning fuel when a recipe call for simmering, I now put my pot in an insulated cozy for twice the simmer time.
- Dromedary Bag: If it is not safe to drink from the river (e.g. agriculture waste water), I use [10 L MSR Dromedary Bags](#). I plan for 4 liters/day, plus a little extra. See [my video on drying these out inside](#).
- Water Filter: If it is safe to use water from the river, I like [gravity filters](#), so I can do other camp chores while the gravity does its thing filtering my water.
- Water Bottle: I carry a 1/2 quart or 1 quart bottle in the bow bag for use while paddling.

Miscellaneous

- Trekking Poles: Take them if you're going to be doing any backpacking with all your gear, or if your tent requires them for support. Otherwise, I would leave them at home.
- Binoculars: Definitely worth taking a small waterproof pair of binoculars if you're floating through good wildlife habitat. I carry a pair that is probably far too large, but the compact [Nikon Trailblazer ATB Waterproof 10X25](#) looks like a good option.
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen & Lip Balm
- Insect Repellent
- Maps: Keep printed maps in a Ziploc freezer bag. On my smartphone, I also carry topo maps on the Backcountry Navigator app, and other specialty maps in the Avenza Maps app.
- Compass: The [Suunto MC-2G Navigator](#) is my choice for precise navigation, but may be overkill for some.
- [Nature Guides](#): I really like taking these laminated tri-fold nature guides with me for identifying wildlife, birds, wildflowers, plants, etc. I take these on all my outdoor adventures.
- Notebook: [Right in the Rain](#) spiral bound is the way to go.
- Personal Locator Beacon: If I'm going somewhere really remote, I keep an [ACR PLB](#) in my PFD pocket. The battery will need to be served every 5 years. Others might prefer in [inReach](#) or [SPOT](#) for a connection to the outside world. I suggest that at least one person in your party should have one of these devices if padding in a remote area.
- Toiletries
- Smartphone: Handy off-line apps include Clock (alarm clock), Backcountry Navigator (topo maps), Avenza Maps (specialty maps), PeakFinder (mountain identification), Merlin (bird identification), The Photographer's Ephemeris (sun/moon positioning) and of course Music and the Camera.
- Battery Bank and Charging Cables: I use [Anker 10,000 mAh Powercore II battery banks](#).
- Solar Charging System: May only be necessary on trips of 2 or more weeks in length. I have a whole separate article and downloadable calculator on how to size a portable solar charging system [here](#).
- Poo Bags: Many rivers require paddlers to carry out all of their human waste. The [Cleanwaste Go Anywhere](#) bags work well. But the included TP and hand sanitizer is a joke. Carry your own bottle of hand sanitizer. As a guy, I carry 1 roll of TP per week, plus 1 extra roll (women may need more). Vacuum pack extra rolls to minimize bulk. Put all of this stuff in a dedicated dry bag separate from everything else.
- First-Aid Kit: Everyone should carry a small first-aid kit sealed in a Ziploc freezer bag. I suggest the group also carry a more extensive kit, depending on how remote the trip is. And at least some in the party should be trained in Wilderness First Aid.
- Fire Starter: I use flint and steel (works when wet, never runs out of gas), but lighter or matches work.
- Repair Kit: In addition to the packraft-specific repair kit, the group should carry a repair kit with zip-ties, duct tape, spare sleeping pad valve, pliers, knife, etc. A plastic peanut jar keeps my kit waterproof.
- Emergency Shelter: A compact [space blanket](#) could be carried in a PFD pocket if there is any risk of you getting separated from your gear and the rest of the group in a remote location.
- Bear-Resistant Food Container: Many rivers will require use of bear-resistant food containers. I use both an [Ursack](#) and a [BV450 BearVault](#) for a one week trip. Ursacks can be stowed inside the packraft all the way up in the bow. Rigid canisters should be stored in the back to avoid impact with rocks. Keep any canisters far from the river while in camp. I've had raccoons knock them over at night causing the canister to roll towards the water.