



COSLEY & HOUSTON ALPINE GUIDES

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SUMMER WALKER'S HAUTE ROUTE TREK Personal Equipment List

The Alps are noted for incredible mountain trekking in a very civilized setting. The high towns and villages, frequent mechanical lifts and well-maintained trails all make the mountains relatively easy of access. In addition the extensive network of huts and high refuges permit hikers and climbers to travel for days on end with little more than a small daypack.

Our route will take advantage of these amenities and more. We will stay mostly in comfortable hotels in villages and towns, and we will spend one night in a climbers' hut. This hut has bunks with comfortable mattresses, blankets, and nutritious meals cooked by a professional staff. The difference between this hut and our other lodgings, is that in the hut the sleeping rooms are dormitory style, the meals served family style, and there are no hot showers available.

On this trek we will have a van and driver at our disposal, allowing us to be re-united with a change of clothes and some luxuries—battery re-chargers and/or power adaptors, reading material or entertainment devices, toiletries etc.—without having to carry them on our backs. The one night we will not have these things with us is the mountain hut night. This vehicle is also available if participants need to "sit out" a day.

The trekking on this program is strenuous and occasionally somewhat exposed. Every day involves thousands of feet of ascent or descent. To enjoy the trip to the utmost we will want to travel light. In the mountains, weight is our enemy.

CLOTHING

Hiking boots - Boots have gotten lighter, warmer and more comfortable in recent years. The degree of torsional rigidity and support needed for this trek is a matter of great individual variation; some people's ankles are stronger and more stable than others. The lightest and most comfortable boots will have less support, be less waterproof and less durable, but are adequate for this trek if you have normally strong ankles—keeping in mind that we will cover rocky and very uneven terrain at times. Below is a system of boot ratings used by boot manufacturers, chiefly in Europe, for your information. B0 or B1 boots described here will do nicely for this program. B2 boots might work if they are well broken in and you know you can wear them comfortably for many miles on trails. B3 boots are not appropriate, being too stiff and heavy for trail walking. Crampon compatibility information is included here for your information only; it is not really relevant to this trek as any snow we encounter should not amount to any great distance, and we will not be using crampons on this trip.

- B0: Light-weight and flexible, a minimum of stability and support. Not really suitable for crampons.
- B1: Flexible boots that are suitable for all-season trekking and hill walking, these boots are generally more supportive and waterproof than B0 boots, as well as being heavier. These boots are compatible with C1 crampons only—that is, flexible crampons that attach to the boot only with straps.
- B2: Semi-rigid boots designed for mountaineering and easier grade snow and mixed climbing, but not for steep ice and harder mixed climbs. Compatible with C1 or C2 crampons—C2 crampons are more rigid and attach to the boot via a lever that snaps onto a deep groove or "shelf" in the back of the boot.
- B3: Fully rigid boots for mountaineering, ice and mixed climbing at all grades - but not the most comfortable boots to walk in. C1, C2 or C3 crampons—C3 crampons use the back lever, and also have a wire "bail" that fits neatly into a groove on the toe of the boot.

Gaiters (optional) - A trail-runner's ankle gaiter may be nice for keeping out pebbles and dust, keeping socks clean. The O.R. Salamander or Rocky Mountain Low gaiters, or REI's Trail Running or Desert Gaiters are good examples of what is meant here.

Socks - For fitting your boots use a single medium thick sock, with an additional and optional thin liner sock.

Pants - Light nylon hiking pants or "zip-off" pants are probably the most cool and versatile for this trek, as well as being quick to dry in case we're caught out in the rain. Another option, though warmer, is some kind of light and stretchy synthetic pant with a hard finish. In our opinion the best pants of this kind incorporate Schoeller or a similar light soft-shell type nylon fabric. Stretchy and comfortable, this kind of fabric is also somewhat resistant to wind, snow and light rain. Many pants of this kind are made by both U.S. and European manufacturers. Patagonia's Guide Pant series is one such example, and any of this line would work well. AVOID COTTON PANTS as they will make you too vulnerable to hypothermia should we be caught out in wet and windy weather or the temperatures turn cold.

Light long underwear bottoms - In case the forecast calls for very wet or cold weather, we want to have these available to throw in the pack. Again, AVOID COTTON for the reasons cited above; synthetic or light merino wool will do the trick.

Rain/Wind Pants- Normally we do these treks entirely in our synthetic hiking pants described above. If the weather turns foul, however, you will need a pair of waterproof rain pants to keep you dry. Our favorites are extremely light weight two-ply Gore-tex or similar fabric. Our pants weigh 8.5 ounces. Integral Designs eVENT, Marmot PreCip, or Patagonia Torrentshell, Rain Shadow or M10 pants all fill the bill at the lightest possible weight.

Hiking shorts or "skort" (optional) - Often shorts are much more comfortable on hot summer days than even the lightest hiking pants, and being small and lightweight are worth throwing in the pack.

T-shirt, sleeveless blouse or lightweight long-sleeved shirt - For hot days. Keep in mind the need for sun protection.

Rain/Wind Parka - Again, extreme lightweight keeps the hiking more fun. Our two-ply hooded Gore-tex jackets weigh in at 12.5 ounces. The Marmot PreCip, MontBell Rain Trekker or Patagonia's Torrentshell or Rain Shadow jackets all combine the lightest weight with adequate rain protection.

Rain Poncho (optional) - Some people like a poncho as a solution to the waterproof-vs.-breathable conundrum; this is fine but is not a substitute for a proper rain parka as well; a poncho doesn't keep body heat in well enough, and any strong wind renders it less effective as rain protection. If you bring a poncho, keep it light.

Long Underwear Tops - A light synthetic or very light merino wool base layer. You might want to bring both a long and short-sleeved version of this.

Light fleece shirt - Something about the weight of Polartec 100, (very heavy synthetic underwear).

Heavier insulating layer - A light-weight down or synthetic insulated sweater or pull-over. Marmot's Baffin jacket or Patagonia's Nano Puff series or down sweaters are good examples of what we mean. A heavier and bulkier fleece or pile jacket will also work here. This layer is rarely worn while hiking, but is nice to have in reserve in case we have to stop in the wind or rain, or for warming up quickly in the evening after a wet day.

Gloves - Fairly lightweight windstopper gloves are ideal. The Marmot Windstopper Glove is one example. Heavily insulated gloves for winter conditions will be too hot on most days.

Warm Hat or Balaclava

Baseball cap - or other sun-hat with a brim

Buff - The Buff is a Spanish invention. It's a stretchy lightweight neck gaiter, ear warmer, headband, pirate head piece, hair control unit, and Lord knows what else. Google "Buff" to learn more. Indispensable!

Around-town clothes and shoes - For evenings and in town; these will ride around in the van and meet us at our lodgings.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Trekking Poles** - (optional) Some folks, ourselves included, like to use trekking poles for routes such as this. Three-section collapsible trekking poles are best, as they collapse shorter and are less cumbersome when packed.
- Food** - Breakfasts and dinners are provided at our lodgings, and we will also provide picnic lunches prepared by the hotels and huts. Nevertheless you might want to bring some of your own special bars, Gu's or potions from home for handy "pocket food" on the trail. Keep it light!
- Hiking back pack** - A simple and lightweight pack with a capacity of about 30 liters maximum is recommended. The Black Diamond Speed and also the Deuter Guide Lite are some good choices.
- Pack rain cover** - Just in case!
- Water bottle** - Bring bottles or a combination of bottle and thermos to carry 1 to 2 liters of water. Bladder style hydrations systems are becoming increasingly popular as well and can save you time and hassle on the trail.
- Head lamp or flashlight** - These will be used mostly for emergencies and/or getting around in the hut on the night of day 4. We don't plan any pre-dawn starts on the trip. Any small and light hand-held or head-lamp light will work. Petzl makes some very light and compact models such as the Tikkina and the Zipka.
- Pocket knife** - (optional) Keep it simple and light. The Victorinox Spartan model is our favorite.
- Blister kit** - Moleskin, athletic tape. Spenco Second Skin, Compeed or similar products are worth the price.
- Sun Glasses** - Make sure they screen out 100 % UV. Modern wrap-around glasses with Category 3 lenses are appropriate.
- Sunscreen** - Look for as small a container as possible, or decant into a smaller container. There is no point in carrying month's worth of cream on each one-day stage.
- Lip Protection** -
- Toiletries** -
- Ear Plugs** - For noisy lodgings (most particularly our one hut night) or snoring neighbors.
- Camera** - (optional, of course) To get the best photos, your camera will need to be accessible at a moments notice. An easy-to-use camera pouch that can be worn over a shoulder is ideal. Also, learn to use your camera with your gloves on.
- Entertainment (optional)** - We sometimes carry an iPod Nano to listen to books before dropping off at night. Preload it with a couple of good books from iTunes or Audible.com for days of listening pleasure. Snipped-out New York Times crossword puzzles, a journal, small paperbacks, travel-size checker sets or a pack of cards, all could be fun to have along.
- Mobile phone (optional)** - A note on mobile phones: many folks like to carry them on trips like this and in general, this is a good idea from a security perspective. Be aware, however, that battery life is limited, especially when the phone is searching for a service provider as it may often do in this remote setting, so you will probably need to leave it turned off except when making a call. Watching movies or playing games on your phone also consumes a lot of battery power. You can recharge at the hotels; this will require both a recharger and an adapter suitable for Swiss electrical outlets.
- Small duffel** - For our gear in the van, which might at times be left in hotels. You may want to be able to lock it up, though the places we stay are good and very reliable.
- Money** - We usually use ATM cards to supply us with cash. Hotels, shops and restaurants all readily accept credit cards. You will want to have some Swiss Francs cash for extra beverages or treats in the hut and the hotels.