

BUDGE'S WILDERNESS LODGE

PACKING LISTS FOR HUNTING ADVENTURES

CLOTHING

Fall in the Colorado high country is extremely variable. Whether you'll be hunting in September or November, it helps to be prepared for anything.

During September, temperatures can easily dip below freezing. Afternoons can bring out t-shirts and sunburns. And there's even a possibility of snow. During the October rifle hunts, snow and sub-zero temperatures become more of a reality. But even in November, daytime temperatures could be very mild. So a versatile layering system is critical. For example – rather than a heavily insulated parka, pack an un-insulated outer shell, with separate layering jackets. These items can be mixed and matched to meet the conditions.

For base layers, we recommend lightweight merino wool or synthetic materials. Early in the season, a lightweight set of long johns is sufficient. During the rifle hunts, a set of thermal/heavyweight long underwear is recommended. We recommend a mid-weight hunting pant. Consider the First Lite Corrugate Foundry or the Sitka Mountain or Timberline Pants. You can add or remove base layers and insulating layers as needed, depending on conditions. For mountain hunting, we prefer the versatility of multiple layers, rather than heavily insulated items. And don't forget quality rain gear. Waterproof/breathable rain gear (Gore-Tex or equivalent) is essential. Even when there's no moisture, this is your defense against wind and cold temps.

Don't forget the small items like socks, gloves, underwear and hats. Pack high quality merino wool or merino-synthetic blend socks. This goes for your underwear as well. Cotton has no place in the backcountry. Cotton absorbs moisture and loses all of its insulating properties when wet. Bring multiple hats and multiple sets of gloves. It's not uncommon to lose a hat in the dark. And if a pair of gloves gets wet, it's critical to have backup.

RIFLE AND MUZZLELOADER HUNTERS

Colorado law requires you to wear at least 500 square inches of fluorescent orange or pink, including a vest or other garment above the waist, and a hat visible from all sides. Camouflage orange does not qualify.

Clothing Checklist

- Mid-Weight Hunting Pants
- Merino Wool or Synthetic Base Layers & Underwear (mid-weight and heavy weight)
- Vest: Fleece or Puffy
- Fleece Jacket: Full zip or Pull-Over
- Puffy Jacket: Down or Synthetic Fill
- Rain Jacket and Pants: Waterproof and Breathable, Gore-Tex or Equivalent
- Camp Clothes: It's nice to change into your favorite sweatshirt or a comfy pair of jeans after hunting
- Hats: Bring ball caps or brimmed hat, plus warm beanies
- Gloves: Options for Mild Weather and Cold/Snowy Weather
- Buff or Neck Gaiter: Offers warmth and sun protection
- Fluorescent Orange/Pink Hat AND Vest for firearm hunters (solid blaze, NO camo orange)

FOOTWEAR

Bring a very high quality pair of hunting boots. A quality boot must have a waterproof/breathable membrane (Gore-Tex or equivalent). We prefer a boot that comes above the ankle for good stability in uneven terrain. Test your boots before the trip! While you're on the hunt is a bad time to discover that your boots cause blisters or don't fit right. Make a point to wear your boots before the hunt.

During the first half of the season, an un-insulated boot is fine. During the rifle hunts, an insulated option is recommended. If possible, we recommend that hunters pack an un-insulated or lightly insulated boot for mild conditions, plus a fully insulated boot for snow and extreme cold. Besides the variable conditions, it's wise to bring two pairs of boots anyway. If one gets wet or has a problem, it's good to have backup.

Along with your boots, we recommend a pair of waterproof/breathable gaiters (Gore-Tex or equivalent). From wet grass and brush in the early season, to snow later in the season, a pair of gaiters helps keep your feet dry and comfortable.

Under your boots, wear a quality pair of merino wool or merino-synthetic blend socks. The best boots in the world won't function properly if you're wearing bad socks underneath. Do not bring cotton socks under any circumstances. Cotton is worthless in the backcountry.

Back at camp, it's nice to change into a comfortable pair of shoes. Popular options around here include Crocs, muck boots, or old sneakers. You might also consider bringing slippers for wearing inside your cabin.

Footwear Checklist

- Un-Insulated or Lightly Insulated Boots
- Insulated Cold Weather Boots
- Waterproof/Breathable Gaiters
- Merino Wool Socks
- Camp Shoes
- Slippers

HUNTING GEAR

Avoid Redundant Items

On any guided hunting trip, your guide will be carrying critical items in their daypack. Therefore, it's not necessary to duplicate many of these items. For starters, your guide will carry a First Aid kit, water purifier, knives and field-dressing kit. If you're hunting with a friend or partner, also coordinate with them to avoid unnecessary redundancies.

If you're not sure if you should pack it, please ask. Many hunters show up on the first morning of their hunt bright-eyed and bushy-tailed with a pack full of items they'll probably never need. By the second day of the hunt, they'll be looking to see what they can toss out. Read our recommendations carefully. Be judicious. And when in doubt, just ask.

Weapon

Certainly the most important piece of hunting gear you'll bring is your weapon. Whether you will be hunting with a bow, muzzleloader or rifle, it is critical that you spend time practicing throughout the year with the exact weapon and arrows or bullet loads that you intend to use on the hunt. Every single hunting guide can tell you stories of missed opportunities because of unfamiliarity with a weapon. You've invested so much time and resources on this trip – don't waste it because you neglected to practice sufficiently.

Ammo & Accessories

In your backpack, keep a few extra rounds. For rifle hunters, we recommend the Caribou Gear Bullet Wallet. For muzzleloader hunters, always keep a few quick-loaders on hand. And on archery hunts, we recommend keeping a spare release in your backpack as well. In addition to these items, consider packing a lightweight, compact repair kit with allen wrenches, etc. You will not need a hard bow case or rifle case on the hunt. We provide bow and rifle scabbards on your saddle.

Optics

We recommend that all hunters bring a quality set of binoculars in 8x42, 10x42 or something similar. We do not recommend spotting scopes. Spotters are not often needed in this heavily timbered country, and not worth the weight of carrying around. If your guide has a particular need for a spotter, they will bring one.

To carry your binoculars, we recommend a secure bino harness. You'll find great options from FHF Gear and others. Consider a bino harness that has the ability to add a rangefinder pouch. We consider rangefinders to be critical for archery, muzzleloader and rifle hunters. Distances in this big mountain country can be deceiving. There will be times when your guide is not standing with you, so you will need to be able to range your own distances. A pouch on your bino harness keeps the rangefinder quickly accessible.

Hunting Packs

On our guided hunting trips, we recommend a daypack in the 1,800 – 2,500 cubic inch range. This should be enough space for all of your critical items. A daypack with a "load shelf" for hauling meat can be nice, but it's not necessary. We sometimes need to carry meat to a place where the horses or mules can access it. But in most cases, it's not far. Much more important than meat hauling ability on these hunts, is a daypack that is very comfortable and fits you well.

Hunting Accessories

Bring at least one headlamp (having a backup is nice) as well as spare batteries. Keep extra batteries in your cabin, and in your daypack. If we field dress an elk after dark, it's good insurance to have extra batteries in your pack.

Bring at least one re-usable water bottle. In an effort to reduce the amount of waste that we haul out of the backcountry, and in an effort to eliminate single-use plastics, we do not provide bottled water. Tap water at the lodge and in the cabins is purified for drinking. We recommend bringing at least one 1-liter Nalgene style bottle. Most backpacks are compatible with bladder/hose systems, and these work well during the early season. In cold weather however, the hoses tend to freeze. For a water bottle that will not freeze even in sub-zero temps, check out the water bottles from Koyukon Gear.

Our guides all carry a field dressing kit including knives. If you'd like to help with the field dressing, bring your own kill kit as well, but keep it light. A knife with a lightweight sharpener or replaceable blades is really all you need. All of our guides carry game bags. We take meat care seriously and we use Caribou Gear Game Bags. All of our hunters who harvest an animal will go home with a set of these bags.

Our guides also carry first aid kits, but it can be a good idea to bring essentials of your own. We recommend a simple emergency kit. This may include a lighter and firestarter, band-aids and blister pads, quick-clot, ibuprofen and any other medications. Finally, take a roll of electrical tape and make several wraps around your lighter. There's no need to carry a whole roll, but having a little tape is very useful.

When sitting and glassing, it can be nice to have a small pad to sit on. It's not critical, but keeps your rear end warm and dry. A great ultralight option is the ThermoRest Z Seat. It folds up and weighs next to nothing.

IMPORTANT: Don't forget to pack your hunting license and hunter's safety card. Unless your hunter's safety card is verified in the Colorado Parks and Wildlife system, you must carry the card with you while hunting.

Hunting Gear Checklist:

- Weapon
- Ammo/Arrows
- Bow/Rifle Repair Kit
- Binoculars with Harness
- Rangefinder
- Daypack
- Headlamps or flashlights
- Water bottles
- Field Dressing Knife
- First Aid/Emergency Kit
- Sitting Pad
- HUNTING LICENSE
- Hunter's Safety Card

PERSONAL & MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

At high altitudes, sunglasses are essential. This is important both for the intense high-altitude sun and when there's snow on the ground. A sunny day following a snowstorm can be blinding. Sunscreen is also recommended for September hunts.

Pack a travel toiletry kit with toothbrush, toothpaste, medications and any essentials. You might also consider bringing a pack of wet-wipes. Our cabins do have cold running water. And there is a community bathhouse with showers and hot running water. But a quick wet wipe on your face and hands after a day on the trail can sure feel nice.

In addition to the headlamp that you'll carry in your backpack, consider bringing a flashlight to keep in the cabin. Our electricity runs on a gas generator. We typically run the generator in the mornings and again in the evenings until about 10pm. A flashlight is nice for using the bathroom at night.

You may also want to bring a camera, spare batteries, and charging cords for your phone and other devices (outlets in the cabins are powered when the generator is running). Limited WiFi is available in the main lodge for smartphones only (please no laptops). We ask that guests limit their use of the WiFi for two reasons – one, you're here to enjoy the wilderness. Second, our remote satellite system has limited capacity and our staff needs it to get their work done. Feel free to check in with family and friends at home. Otherwise, unplug and enjoy your time away!

Finally, we recommend bringing cash to tip your guide, wrangler, and cook, as gratuities are customary.

Personal Items Checklist

- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Toiletries
- Medications
- Wet Wipes
- Camera
- Spare batteries
- Device charging cords
- Cash to tip the Guide/Wrangler/Cook

PACKING FOR A REMOTE WILDERNESS CAMP

Soft-Sided Bags

If you'll be packing into a wilderness camp, please do your best to limit all personal clothing and gear to 50 pounds per person. We suggest packing your gear in soft-sided water-resistant duffel bags. Our recommendation is to pack two small to medium-sized duffels rather than one large duffel, doing your best to distribute weight equally between the two. This will make it quicker and easy for our team of packers to load it up.

One important thing to note: once it's loaded onto our pack animals, anything that's in your duffel bags will not be accessible until we arrive at the wilderness camp. Therefore, your rain gear, water bottles and anything else that you'll need access to, should not be packed into those duffels. These items will go into the saddlebags on your horse where they will be accessible on the trail. Please bring these items in a separate bag.

Also, remember that any trip to a wilderness camp includes a night at the main lodge on either end of your stay. Other items you'll want to pack in that separate bag include your toiletries, and any clothes you intend to wear that first day on the trail.

Sleeping Bag

All guests heading to a wilderness camp must bring their own sleeping bag. Our guest cabins at the main lodge have linens, so you won't need your sleeping bag that first night. Therefore, your sleeping bag can be packed into one of your duffels going on the trip.

For September archery and muzzleloader hunts, we recommend a sleeping bag with a minimum temperature rating of 20 degrees. On all rifle hunts, we recommend a bag with a minimum temperature rating of 0 degrees.

We also recommend sleeping bags that are compact and packable. Large base camp/car camping bags that are extremely bulky are difficult to pack.

Wilderness Camp Checklist

- Compact Sleeping Bag With an Appropriate Temperature Rating
- Two Small to Medium-Sized Water-Resistant Duffels for All Gear
- Separate bag for the first night: toiletries, clothes for the next day, water bottle, rain gear, sunscreen, etc.

CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS

If you have questions or need help getting ready for your wilderness adventure, please don't hesitate to ask...

The Crew at Budge's Wilderness Lodge

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