

Gear You'll Need

A list of advice and packing checklist

We've put together our gear advice (based on many years of experience), so that you can be prepared and cut down on your expenses. You can tailor this information to match your specific needs, based on your outdoor experience and resources.

Acquiring equipment can be expensive, but you can limit your costs by checking around for sales on quality products. When you are shopping, realize that your equipment will be used for eight weeks straight and must stand up to field conditions for the duration. You don't need top-of-the-line gear, but don't buy the cheapest available either.

Borrowing equipment is a good way to keep costs down. **The IFP has tents, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, and chairs available to borrow for the summer**, if you don't want to acquire these yourself. Just make sure to let us know what you need in advance.

Regarding clothing, **pack enough to go 1-2 weeks without doing laundry**. You need to be prepared for a wide range of weather possibilities. Some summers we experience very little rain, while others we have rain for days on end. We can experience temperatures ranging from 25 to 125°F (those would be the extremes). **The key to being prepared for temperature/weather changes during the day is layering**. Most mornings you will need to dress warmly, and you'll want to strip off layers as the day warms up.

Please take our clothing advice seriously when packing. Unless you've previously been to the Southwest in summer, on IFP you're going to experience heat like you never have before. And on some nights you'll be camping in weather a lot like a Georgia winter, even though it's July.

We ask you to **pack everything in two large duffel style bags**. Generally you can fit your clothing in one bag and your camping gear into the other. Your hiking day pack can be separate from the duffel bags. You do not need to bring a full size overnight backpack.

We're not telling you *exactly* what to buy or bring, but before you start getting your gear together, read through our guidelines below. The items listed are highly recommended, but you may add or subtract as you feel necessary.

Some final pointers:

- Print our basic [Packing Checklist](#) to keep track while you're packing.
- **Do not wait** until the night before the trip to find and pack everything!
- **Label your stuff!** Many other campers will have similar items.
- **Set up your tent**, even if you have used it before. Make sure you can do it quickly and you have all the pieces.
- And do not hesitate to **ask us questions!**

Provided by the program

- iPad Mini tablet computer plus keyboard
- All required reading and reference material
- Field notebooks
- Clipboard
- 10X magnifying lens and lanyard
- Rock hammer
- All additional field project equipment
- Mess kit
- 3L water reservoir for hikes

Required Camping Gear Checklist

- ❑ **Duffel bags** – You’ll need two large duffel bags (around 100L in volume), one for your clothing and one for your camping gear. Get bags large enough so there is room for you to find things inside without removing everything first. You can spend a lot on fancy waterproof bags, or you can spend a little on canvas bags from the Army surplus store. Make sure you get bags with **side zippers** rather than the top-loading kind (to make it easier to find things inside). Bags must be soft on all sides, with **no wheels** (they make loading/unloading awkward).
- ❑ **Sturdy tent with rainfly and stuff sack*** – We recommend that you have a medium quality **2-person tent** with a sturdy, waterproof rain fly. Cheap tents are the first ones shredded in the occasional windy storms we experience. With proper care, decent quality tents will last a long, long time past this trip. However, realize that we aren’t backpacking or winter camping – you don’t need the lightest-weight most weather-proof tent on the market! Practice setting up your tent quickly (as if expecting a big storm) before we leave.
- ❑ **Tent footprint*** – This protects the floor of your tent and will help keep you dry. Some tents come with this as an optional accessory to purchase. You can also make one cheaply and easily with a thin plastic sheet, such as a paint drop cloth. Cut it slightly smaller than the floor dimensions of your tent. You do not want it sticking out beyond the tent edges, because it will allow water to pool beneath your tent.
- ❑ **Sleeping bag and stuff sack*** – Most people are happy with 20°F bags. If yours doesn’t have a rating, be sure that it seems heavy enough to withstand the colder nights. Unless you plan to do some lightweight backpacking on another trip, we recommend synthetic over down filler. Synthetic bags can keep you warm even if wet and are easier to machine wash. A sheet or a sleeping bag liner is great for warm nights when you want to sleep outside of your bag *and* for cold nights when you want some extra insulation inside the bag.
- ❑ **Sleeping pad*** – Foam or inflatable pads work. Hybrid self-inflating, foam core pads are probably the most comfortable.
- ❑ **Headlamp (and/or flashlight)** – Very important for the midnight dashes to the bathroom and early morning wake-up calls. Headlamps are hands free and convenient. Consider bringing two, one in your day pack and one in your duffel. We love headlamps that have a red light setting, since they save your night vision and don’t attract bugs as much as white light. Don’t forget to bring extra batteries.

- ❑ **Day pack** – High volume book bags are fine, but have a good one as they will take a beating pretty much every day. Packs with waist/hip belts help take the load off your back on long hikes. For longer hikes you will need the capacity to carry 4 liters of water, lunch, a rain jacket, extra clothing layers, and a small first aid kit.
- ❑ **Folding camp chair*** – These are necessary for lectures, sitting at study tables, dinner, and relaxing in camp. (Note your chair does not need to fit in the duffels with your other camping gear.)

*** Items with an asterisk can be borrowed at no cost from the program for the summer upon request.**

Required School Equipment Checklist

- ❑ **Folder/file organizer** – Something to keep loose papers organized.
- ❑ **Notebook paper** – 1 spiral-bound notebook should be sufficient
- ❑ **Pencils and Pens**
- ❑ **Colored pencils** – A small set will do
- ❑ **Pair of earbuds/headphones**

Required Clothing Checklist

- ❑ **Hiking shoes/boots** – Supportive hiking shoes or boots are required. Ankle-covering boots offer the most support, but low-profile trail shoes are quite versatile. We recommend ankle-supporting boots for some of the longer, rockier hikes. However lighter hiking shoes with lug soles actually work best for many of our hikes. **Pack at least one pair of either hiking shoes or boots for the trip, and consider packing both shoes and boots if you own them. Whatever you bring, make sure they are comfortable!** You will be walking many miles in them. Also, consider bringing a pair of short gaiters to keep dust and rocks out of your shoes (especially on the Mount St. Helens hike).
- ❑ **Sandals** – Most students spend most days wearing sport sandals (Chacos, Tevas, Keens, etc). Make sure they can fit while wearing socks! Your sandals must have a heel strap. Flip-flops are not allowed in the field.
- ❑ **Other Footwear** – An additional pair of closed-toes shoes (such as running shoes or tennis shoes) will be useful. If you're bringing both hiking boots and hiking shoes, as suggested above, then you're covered. You may want to bring an additional old pair to throw away after our marsh walk during the first week on Sapelo Island (marsh shoes must have laces so you can tie them tightly).
- ❑ **Socks** – Pack 6-8 pair of different thicknesses. Don't take your sock selections lightly! They are responsible for keeping your feet comfortable and hopefully free of blisters. And they can help keep you warm at night. Cotton is not a good fabric for hiking. Choose synthetic and/or wool hiking socks of varying thickness and height, depending on the fit of your shoes/boots. Merino wool is the favorite choice of IFP staff (but also the most expensive). For maximum blister protection, consider having one or two pair of polyester liner socks.
- ❑ **Shorts** – 3 to 4 pair should do it.

- ❑ **Pants** – Bring 2-3 pair of varying thickness. Lightweight quick-dry pants with zip-off legs can serve as both shorts and pants. Heavier pants will be more comfortable in cooler climates. Consider bringing along some sweatpants or similar for lounging in camp.
- ❑ **Regular underwear** – Bring enough to last one-two weeks without doing laundry.
- ❑ **Long underwear** – A pair of light to mid-weight synthetic long underwear will help keep you warm during cold nights and early mornings. You don't need a high performance, high-tech base layer, just some extra insulation. Natural fibers (wool and silk) are good too, but more expensive. We don't recommend cotton, as it retains moisture.
- ❑ **T-shirts** – Bring enough to last at least a week without doing laundry, but don't be afraid to wear a shirt for more than one day without washing. It's a good idea to bring some shirts made of quick-dry fabric in addition to cotton shirts.
- ❑ **Long sleeved shirts** – Pack at least one for protection from the sun and one for warmth. We highly recommend a lightweight, light-colored, long sleeve shirt with a **collar** for keeping the sun off your arms and neck during our desert hikes.
- ❑ **Sweatshirt/Sweater/Jacket/Vest** – We recommend fleece – it's lightweight and warm. Consider bringing one lightweight and one heavier weight sweater plus a vest, for layering purposes. Remember, you must be prepared for cold – sometimes actually freezing – weather.
- ❑ **Rain jacket** – You will need a waterproof yet breathable rain jacket with a hood. Rain jackets also double as wind-breakers, so you may want it even if it's not raining. Consider a jacket that packs small enough to fit in your day pack easily. There are many options in a wide price range, but keep in mind a cheap plastic jacket won't allow your sweat to escape, and a regular nylon windbreaker won't keep you dry. Rain pants are probably overkill, but if you already own a pair, bring them along.
- ❑ **Wide brimmed hat** – Great shade for your face, neck, and shoulders. You will make a mistake by not bringing some kind of hat! A hat is required equipment for the hot desert sun.
- ❑ **Warm hat** – There will be some cold nights and mornings on this trip. Preventing heat loss through your head is key to staying warm.
- ❑ **Gloves** – You don't need anything heavy duty, but a pair of light to medium weight gloves will help take the bite out of a cold morning. You can also use them to protect your hands while scrambling over boulders on Mount St. Helens.
- ❑ **Wrist watch** – We have to be strict on meeting times. Don't rely on your phone, since it might not be charged all the time. Consider getting a watch with an alarm.

Required Miscellaneous Gear Checklist

- ❑ **Two one-liter bottles** (minimum) – Wide brimmed bottles are the easiest to fill and to keep clean. You will find that the more water and/or Gatorade you carry on hikes and during field work, the better you'll feel and the happier you'll be. Hiking with a hydration pack (like a Camelbak) is great, since you don't have to stop to pull your water bottle out. **The IFP will provide 3-liter hydration reservoirs for students, and we will be encouraging you to use it!**
- ❑ **Sunglasses** – Protect your eyesight with lenses that block 99-100% UVA and UVB radiation.

- ❑ **Sunscreen** – Choose a broad spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF 15. Make it stronger, depending on your skin’s sensitivity to the sun. You need to take sun protection seriously, especially at higher elevation.
- ❑ **Toiletries** – Pack all your usual essentials. You might add skin lotion, lip balm, and wet wipes. Do not use glass containers. Screw-on caps work much better than flip-top lids (i.e., bottles are less likely to explode in your bag as we change elevation). We will be stopping to shop every so often, so travel-size works well (and makes less mess if it breaks). Putting liquid items in a Tupperware container helps protect them, and the other gear in your duffel bag.
- ❑ **First aid kit** – We keep a large stock of first aid supplies. You should pack a small basic kit to carry with you including: band-aids, antibiotic ointment, mole skin, aspirin, non-aspirin pain reliever, antihistamine (benedryl), any other medication you know you need.
- ❑ **Regular medications** – Bring what you need to take regularly. We also keep a camp supply of basic OTC medicines for colds, indigestion, etc. on hand.
- ❑ **Emergency medications** – If you have a strong allergic reaction to insect bites/stings, food items, or other triggers, we strongly encourage you to obtain an epinephrine injector (with a doctor prescription) and learn how to use it. Likewise, if you are at all prone to asthma attacks, please come prepared with rescue inhaler.
- ❑ **Emergency whistle** – Wear it around your neck when we’re out in the field.
- ❑ **Alarm clock** (or wristwatch with alarm) – Don’t rely on your phone to wake you up. Even smart phones get confused when we’re near time zone boundaries, plus you can’t count on keeping them charged overnight.
- ❑ **Towel** – Microfiber camp towels are great. They dry quickly and pack small.
- ❑ **Laundry detergent** – Bring powder or pods, not liquid.
- ❑ **Quarters** for laundry and showers – Yes, there are many coin-operated showers. You’ll probably need at least \$20 in quarters.
- ❑ **Spare eyewear** – glasses and/or contacts. Just in case.
- ❑ **Health insurance card**
- ❑ **Drivers license** or passport for identification.
- ❑ **Mobile phone** and charger – You will be able to charge electronics in the van.

Recommended Items for Trip

We compiled a list of recommended gear from past students

Recommended Camping Gear

- **Pillow**
- **Sheet, light blanket, or sleeping bag liner** – You will appreciate having something for warm nights when you want to sleep outside of your bag *and* for cold nights when you want something extra inside the bag.
- **Laundry Bag**
- **Plastic Bags** – Use various sizes of zip-lock type bags for keeping items dry and clean in your duffel bag.
- **Extra stuff sacks** – You can use these to compartmentalize your duffel bag. Keep all your socks in one, for example, then you can find them easily.
- **Rip stop tape** (duct tape) – Great for repairs. Wrap some around an old credit card.

- **Pocket knife**
- **Ear plugs** – Most campgrounds are quiet at night, but we occasionally have loud neighbors.

Recommended Clothing

- **Bandanas** – Great all-purpose headband, keeping the sun off your neck, etc.
- **Swim suit** – There are lots of opportunities for relaxing in the pool/river/lake/ocean.
- **Shower shoes** (e.g. cheap flip-flops)
- **Clothes for town** – Some students like to wear nicer clothing for their days off in town.

Recommended Miscellaneous Gear

- **Insect repellent** – Mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers, gnats, and other bugs can be a problem in some areas we go. DEET is an effective repellent, but it is also a harsh chemical. Products containing 15% DEET work well. Don't use anything over 30% DEET. Consider covering your skin with clothing and then spraying on the repellent. There are also various plant-based sprays you can try.
- **Camera** – Some students are happy with their phone camera, but you may be inspired to do some more serious photography. If you bring an expensive SLR camera, be prepared to protect it from water, dust, and being bumped around in the van.
- **Extra batteries** – Especially for your headlamp/flashlight.
- **Postcard stamps** – You'll definitely want to mail postcards to friends and family. Bring envelopes and letter stamps if you like to write more.
- **Vitamins** – Good to have: you may want to discuss this with your physician. Some extra iron may help with altitude acclimatization; some vitamin C may help fend off colds.
- **Insulated mug** – for coffee/tea
- **Journal** – This is a great way to remember your trip.
- **Recreational stuff** – Plan on bringing something like a soccer ball, frisbee, etc... Musical instruments are ok, but please let us know if you are going bring a guitar. Things get banged around, so don't bring your finest. Sorry no bikes, as much as we love them, we won't have room.
- **Binoculars** – If you enjoy looking at wildlife, consider bringing a small pair for your daypack. We also carry some in the vans for the group to use.
- **Extras** – General extras of anything you might need, like shoe laces!

This is not necessarily a comprehensive list, and some of the optional items may not be useful to you. You should carefully think about what you might need and plan accordingly.

Dont forget, you can print our basic [Packing Checklist](#) to keep track while you're packing.

Once you have packed your bags, take them outside and carry them around the house two times. Upon your return, think.... "do I really need all the things I'm taking?"