

American Alpine Institute^{Ltd.}

ACONCAGUA EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT LIST

© Copyright 2004, American Alpine Institute

During your expedition in Argentina you will encounter a very wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. At one end of this range is the pleasantly warm and beautiful town of Mendoza, while at the other end of the spectrum is found the cold and often windy weather on the summit of the Western Hemisphere's highest peak. The equipment you bring must function well in a wide variety of conditions. Your clothing should be warm, lightweight, dry quickly, and allow good freedom of movement. The layering principle, based on several thin layers of insulation (rather than one thick one), covered with an outer weather-proof shell, meets these needs well.

On the Aconcagua expedition the night time temperatures at high camp typically range from -5F to 5F. Day time highs on summit day usually are between 5F and 15F, normally accompanied by a strong wind. During our three day approach hike to base camp, days are usually very warm with nights becoming increasingly chilly as we gain elevation. The sun can be very intense both on the approach and on the upper parts of the mountain. On this expedition mules carry the bulk of our equipment up to base camp at about 13,500 feet. Above this height we will make double carries, allowing time for team members to acclimate to the higher elevations.

Please take time to choose your clothing and equipment carefully; it may make the difference between a comfortable and successful trip and one which could have been more enjoyable. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call the Institute office.

CLOTHING

Boots - Plastic climbing boots are required, mostly for their warmth and drying speed. Models such as the Koflach Arctis Expe, Degre, Lowa Civetta, and Scarpa Inverno perform well. Expedition members should be sure their boots can comfortably handle sustained temperatures as low as 0F.

Be particularly conservative with regard to your feet, for a literal, not a figurative case of cold feet is the most common cause of people missing summits while on expeditions. If in the past you have had trouble keeping your feet warm in cold conditions, you should have double plastic boots and overboots or supergaiters. If you are going to use just plastic boots with a regular gaiter or a non-insulated supergaiter, you should be using one of the warmer models of double boots - not all double plastic boots are created equal.

Supergaiters or gaiters - We especially recommend using supergaiters if you tend to have cold feet or if you are not sure your boots can comfortably handle an extended stay in temperatures down to 0F. Gaiters should be knee high. Supergaiters should be fit, attached, and tested well in advance of your trip. Getting them on your boots is a rather involved process and if they come off while on the mountain it will be extremely difficult to get them back on. Look for models that have some insulation, particularly on the lower boot rather than just heavy fabric. Models like the Wildline, La Sportiva Eiger insulated, and Climb High Buzzard work well.

Approach Shoes: High-top, lightweight, padded trekking boots are required. A leather/nylon

combination will work as long as they offer good ankle support. The approach into base camp is a very rough and rocky trail.

Old Tennis or Running Shoes - For use during river crossings.

Socks - Wool or synthetic, (no cotton). Bring three complete changes. It is recommended one wear a thin liner sock, and one or two pair of thick socks depending on boot fit. Also bring three changes of socks for your approach shoes.

Long Underwear Bottoms and Tops - This will be your base layer and should be lightweight polyester, polypropylene or similar synthetic.

2nd Layer (Top) - Expedition weight long underwear top, 100 weight powerstretch, very light weight fleece, Schoeller, or a lightweight windshirt (i.e. Marmot DriClima) are good examples of this multi-use layer.

2nd Layer (Bottom) - Schoeller or nylon fabrics preferred. This will be your action layer for your legs and the layer that you will spend the most time in. This layer should be light, comfortable, durable, quick drying, and provide some protection from wind and water. Black Diamond Alpine Pants, Arcteryx Gamma pants, and Marmot Champ pants are good examples of this layer.

3rd Layer (Top) - This will be your action layer and the layer that you spend the most time in. Schoeller or nylon fabrics preferred. Seek out soft jackets that are light, comfortable, durable, quick drying, and provide some protection from wind and water. Lightly insulated is ok but not required. Arcteryx, Moonstone, Marmot, Mammut, and many other companies make soft shell jackets that work well for this layer.

Insulated Jacket with hood - Lightweight down or synthetic in addition to the warm jacket described above. Some good examples of insulating materials are Primaloft, Polarguard 3D or any down jacket/parka. This is different than your outer most waterproof shell jacket.

Shell Layer (Upper) - This will be your outermost layer and it needs to be waterproof, breathable, and durable. Two or three-ply Gore-tex or other waterproof breathable materials are required. Your parka needs to have a hood and should be sized to fit over your clothes. Lightweight and compressible layers are ideal but don't sacrifice too much weight for durability. Models like the Arcteryx Beta and Gamma jackets, Marmot Alpinist and Precip, and Patagonia Stretch Armstrong are top of the line.

Shell Layer (Lower): Full side zips recommended for easy on and off over boots and crampons, Make sure they fit over all of your layers when fully dressed. Pants or bibs are acceptable and each have their advantages and disadvantages. Materials should be Gore-tex or other similar water-proof and breathable fabrics. Examples include Marmot Cirrus and Minima pants, Arcteryx Alpha SV bibs and Beta AR Pants, Patagonia Stretch Element and Microburst pants work well.

Liner Gloves - Polypropylene / polyester. Consider bringing more than one pair of varying thicknesses.

Gloves: Gloves for mountaineering should be waterproof, dexterous, durable, and appropriately insulated for the temperatures expected while in the mountains. Leather palms are preferred and increase the durability of the glove. Most of your climbing time will be spent in either your poly-pro gloves or these, heavier gloves. There are many modular systems for gloves out there

that allow liners to be inter-changed. Models like the Black Diamond Ice and Verglas glove, Patagonia Stretch-Element and Work gloves, and models by Outdoor Research are recommended. Expedition mittens or an extra pair of very warm gloves are required for higher altitudes and colder temperatures. Black Diamond Mercury Mitts and Marmot Expedition Mitts are recommended models.

Shorts - Lightweight runners shorts are best. Often worn over your lightweight long underwear.

Long Sleeve Shirt - Very lightweight synthetic material and light in color for sun protection. The hot sun on the approach trek is very intense.

Warm Hat - Synthetic is less itchy than wool and dries faster.

Lightweight Balaclava - A balaclava is a hat that can be pulled all the way down over the head to the shoulders. It completely covers the head except for an opening for the face. It provides excellent wind protection for the chin, ears and neck. Thin polypropylene or similar synthetic recommended.

Sun Hat - A baseball cap serves well.

Travel and Town Clothes - We occasionally like to go out to good restaurants and you may want something other than your woolies or jeans. It's quite warm in Mendoza.

- Light cotton or other pants (either slacks or a skirt are fine for women).
- Light cotton or other shirt.
- Footwear other than sneakers or hiking boots.

CLIMBING GEAR

Ice Axe - 50 to 70 cm (55 cm to 65 cm preferred) length with standard pick and wrist loop. If your axe doesn't have a wrist loop, pre-sewn ones are available commercially or you can bring about 6 feet of 9/16 inch tubular webbing and we'll tie it on the trip.

Crampons: Flexible or semi-flexible. Step in crampons are easier to put on with cold fingers but they are not compatible with all boots. Only modern strap on, step-in, or pneumatic crampons are acceptable. Older Scottish style strap-on crampons are not adequate. The Black Diamond Sabretooth and Contact, Grivel 2F, and Charlet Moser Black Ice are examples of acceptable crampons. Anti-balling plates are highly recommended.

Climbing Harness - Should fit over bulky clothing. Adjustable leg loops help in this regard. Consider purchasing a lighter weight harness but one with gear loops.

Carabiners - Bring four, two of which should be large, locking, pear shaped (or MÜNTER) biners.

Climbing Helmet - Kayak, bicycle or construction helmets are not acceptable.

Prusiks - Prusiks are specially tied loops of 6mm cord used for crevasse rescue. If you don't have a set of prusiks from a previous AAI course then bring three lengths of 6 mm perlon, 13 feet, 6 feet, and 5 feet. (Precut lengths are available for sale at AAI.)

Trekking Poles: Two are required. Even if you don't normally use trekking poles, they will be necessary to help with balance while carrying heavy packs on mountainous terrain and crossing streams.

MISCELLANEOUS

Passport

Passport/Money Pouch

Duffel Bag - Large and sturdy. Durable coated nylon is best. This will be tied on the back of a mule during the approach to base camp. This duffel bag should be 7000 -9,000 cu. in.

Small Padlock - To fit through the zip sliders of the duffel to secure its contents.

Large Pack: Large internal frame pack, minimum 5000 cubic inches required. External frame packs make movements necessary for climbing difficult and are not acceptable. Models such as the Dana Designs Terraplane, Arcteryx Bora 80-90, and Gregory Robson work well.

Summit Pack - Large, 1500 to 2000 cubic inches. Required only for those whose large pack (above) has an external frame. Large internal frame packs make acceptable approach and summit packs.

Sleeping Bag - Down or synthetic, rated to about 0 F.

Sleeping Pad - Full length closed cell or Thermarest recommended. 3/4 length can be used if you already own one. Thermarest users should bring a repair kit.

Glacier Glasses - With side shields make sure they are 100% UVA/UVB to protect from snow blindness.

Ski Goggles - (Optional) Useful in very windy and snowy conditions.

Utensils - Large thermal mug or cup (pint size best) and spoon minimum. Most people also bring a bowl.

Favorite Snack Foods - Please don't bring more than about a pound or two.

Lighters - Bring two.

Hydration: 3 liters of water capacity are the minimum. Hydration packs or bladders like the Camelback or Platypus with appropriate accessories are recommended. Two water bottles, usually one-quart Nalgene type, are required. Other plastic bottles, similar in nature can work as well. Special care will have to be taken at higher altitudes and colder temperatures, if using the bladder and tube system, to avoid freezing your drink. There are several types of insulators are available and might be a good idea to have.

Water Bottle Parkas (optional) - Made by Outdoor Research, They are insulating jackets for water bottles. These can be nice for extremely cold days climbing.

Pee Bottle(and funnel)- For use in the tent at night in storms. Label it well. Women will also want to bring a pee funnel, which are available at most REI stores.

Water Purification - Bring tablets such as Potable Aqua, at least 80 tablets. These are lightest and most efficient. You can also use a pump purifier but bring iodine as a back up for the pump.

Headlamp - Bring an extra bulb and batteries. Flashlights are not acceptable.

Pocket Knife - Multipurpose tools like the Leatherman Tool are great, Swiss army knives work well also.

Repair Kit - Needle and thread, a small amount of adhesive tape, Thermarest repair kit, 20 to 40 feet of light cord, crampon adjustment tools if your crampons need them.

Personal Medical Kit -

personal medications

10 to 20 assorted Band-aids

one 1 1/2 inch roll of cloth athletic adhesive tape

minimum 1/2 square foot moleskin, or bring Spenco Second Skin

4 safety pins

3 inch Ace bandage

medicated cough drops such as Halls

The following drugs require a physician's prescription (except Immodium). Be sure to discuss the use and precautions for each drug with your doctor.

Loperamide (Immodium)- For diarrhea.

Acetazolamide (Diamox) - For prevention or treatment of Acute Mountain Sickness.

Choose one of the two antibiotics below depending on personal allergies.

Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole (Bactrim or Septra)

Ciprofloxacin (Cipro)

(We strongly recommend against the use of codeine or the use of sleeping pills at altitude.)

Insect Repellent: If bringing bug repellent, look for more concentrated repellent in smaller containers. Make sure the container is backpack worthy. If you use a repellent containing Deet be sure to store it away from any climbing gear and clothing. Deet destroys products made of nylon and will break down webbing, cordage, and rope.

Sunscreen - With a protection factor of at least 16. For the fair an SPF of 20 is better.

Lip Protection - With a protection factor of at least 16. For the fair an SPF of 20 is better.

Hand/Foot Warmers: Recommended for cold weather courses and for people that are susceptible to cold hands and toes. These should be small, disposable type products like the ones made by Grabber Mycoal.

Foot Powder: Foot powder is very useful especially on longer trips or for people with sweaty feet. Foot powder can help dry your feet, and promote warmth on cold weather trips. Be mindful of the storage container and make sure it will stand up to the abuse it will be subjected too.

Personal Toiletries - Bring half a roll of toilet paper. We provide TP in the mountains. Also bring a small towel, soap and washcloth.

Garbage Bags - Bring two or three large ones. They serve a large variety of uses.

Plastic Zip-Lock Bags - To keep a few clothing items dry and for miscellaneous use.

Stuff Bags - Bring three or four of varying sizes and colors to help keep your gear or food organized.

Camera - With lots of film and an extra battery.

Books, Diary, Games, or Walkman - For storms or rest day entertainment. Sony Mini-disc players and MP3 players are popular because both the unit and the media are small and they use batteries very efficiently.

Favorite Snack Foods - We can get a lot of candy bars, granola bars, dried fruit for hiking and climbing days; however, you may have personal favorites or things that work well for you such as Power Bars, beef jerky, or Guu packets. You will not be able to purchase these specialty items in South America, so please feel free to bring some with you. Around one pound.