

HIKING GEAR

SELECTION GUIDE

ULTIMATE EDITION



MOWSER



The Hiking Gear Selection Guide

ULTIMATE Edition

Get the essentials on where to spend vs. save for your hiking setup!

By Mowser

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Introduction

Ever feel overwhelmed choosing hiking gear? Not sure where to invest in high-quality gear versus where you can save money? Choosing the wrong item to splurge on is like hiking with a pebble in your boot – a small mistake that can ruin your whole adventure. The good news is you don't need the most expensive equipment for every situation. You just need to know which gear will make or break your trip and which cheaper alternatives will do just fine.

Why Listen to Me?

I'm Mowser. In over 30 years of hiking, I've seen my fair share of gear wins and fails. I've learned (sometimes the hard way!) what gear is truly worth top dollar and where you can safely pinch pennies. This guide will share a simple framework for deciding when to spend more on quality and when to opt for budget options.

We'll break down all the major gear categories – from boots to tents to cooking kits – with specific premium vs. budget recommendations for each. You'll also get tips on finding great deals (including second-hand treasures) so you can build your hiking setup without breaking the bank.

In this guide, you'll learn:

- **The Spend vs. Save Framework:** A step-by-step approach to determine where to invest in high-end gear and where to go budget.
- **Gear Category Breakdowns:** Key gear categories (trekking poles, tents, footwear, clothing, cooking gear, etc.) with **specific recommendations** – premium picks and budget-friendly alternatives for each.

- **Where to Find Deals:** Pro tips on scoring quality gear for less, including second-hand markets, sales, and rental options.

Let's get started optimising your hiking gear setup! Remember, smart gear choices will keep you safe and comfortable on the trail **and** save you money in the long run.

Spend vs. Save: How to Decide Where to Invest

Before we dive into specific gear, it's important to have a framework for making gear decisions. Not all equipment is equal – some pieces are critical to your safety or comfort, while others have diminishing returns beyond a mid-range price. Use these guiding principles to decide when to splurge and when to save:

1. Safety Comes First

If a piece of gear directly affects your safety or survival, don't skimp on it. For example, navigation tools (map, compass, GPS), a personal locator beacon, and a good first aid kit are worth the investment.

These items could save your life in an emergency, so choose reliable, proven products.

2. Comfort & Health Are Critical

Gear that impacts your physical comfort and health on the trail (think footwear and sleeping gear) is usually worth spending more on.

Blistered feet or a sleepless cold night can derail your trip.

High-quality boots/shoes that fit you well, and a warm sleeping bag and pad, will pay dividends in comfort and injury prevention.

3. Frequency & Durability:

Consider how often you'll use an item and how long you need it to last. If you plan to hike regularly or on multi-day expeditions, investing in durable, well-built gear (like a tent or backpack) makes sense – it will withstand years of use. For something you'll use rarely or for casual outings, a budget option (or renting) might suffice.

4. Weight vs. Cost Trade-offs

Are you aiming for lightweight or long-distance hikes?

High-end gear often uses advanced materials to cut weight (ultralight tents, down sleeping bags, carbon fiber poles) – but those come at a premium price. If you need to keep pack weight low for big trips, investing in lighter gear can be worth it. If most of your outings are short or weight isn't a big issue, you can save money with heavier (but cheaper) gear.

5. Diminishing Returns

Recognise when an expensive top-of-the-line model only offers marginal benefits over a mid-range model. For instance, a \$500 rain jacket might be slightly more breathable than a \$150 jacket, but for most hikers doing shorter trips, the mid-range jacket will perform beautifully. Don't pay for prestige or tiny performance gains that you likely won't notice in typical conditions.

6. Try Before You Buy

Whenever possible, borrow or rent gear to test it out before making a big purchase. A lot of outdoor shops and clubs lend or rent gear (tents, packs, sleeping bags). This lets you experiment with different brands and styles to see what you really need.

When I first started hiking, I borrowed a backpack and tent for several years. It was a great way to learn what features I wanted before buying my own gear (thanks Uncle Mark for lending me your pack!). By testing gear, you avoid costly buyer's remorse on items that don't suit you.

Example: you might borrow or rent a tent for your first overnight hike. If you love it and plan more trips, then invest in a tent of your own. This principle ensures you spend money when you're sure it's something that will enhance your adventures.

7. Upgrade Gradually

You don't need to buy a full kit of premium gear all at once. Start with the essential basics, then upgrade or add items as you gain experience and figure out your preferences. Hiking gear is very personal – what one hiker loves, another might find unnecessary. By taking it slow, you'll spend money only on gear that you know will improve your hiking experience.

8. Shop Smart & Second-Hand

Often, you can find quality gear at a fraction of retail cost if you're patient and resourceful. Take advantage of seasonal sales, clearance deals on last year's models, and the thriving second-hand gear market (more on this later in the guide). A used item in good condition can be half the price of new, allowing you to afford higher quality than you could otherwise. For example, buying a used high-end backpack for \$150 instead of \$300 new is a huge win for your budget.

Keep these principles in mind as we look at each gear category. Now, let's break down where to spend vs. save for each major type of hiking gear, with specific recommendations in each category.





Footwear – Splurge on Quality

Your footwear is the foundation of any hike. If your feet give out on you, your whole trip is shot. I've learned this the hard way by suffering through trips with blisters on blisters – not fun! Investing in good hiking boots or shoes is probably the most important gear decision you'll make. When your feet are comfortable and supported, you can handle long miles and rough terrain much more easily.

Cheap, poorly made boots tend to have less support, weaker traction, and might fall apart faster. A high-quality boot or trail shoe, on the other hand, will provide the ankle support, cushioning, and grip you need, and often will last for many seasons of hiking. This is one area where spending a bit more upfront pays off big time in comfort and durability.

That said, the best footwear is also about what fits your feet. So, even with premium brands, take the time to try them on (with hiking socks) and make sure the fit is perfect before you hit the trail. Everyone's feet are different – some hikers prefer burly leather boots, others hike in lightweight trail runners – so find what works for you.

Pro Tip: Many outdoor retailers allow you to take hiking footwear home to wear indoors and test for comfort before committing. This lets you assess the fit and compatibility with your feet without risking wear. If they don't feel right after a day or two, you can typically return or exchange them—just confirm the store's return policy before purchasing.

Some footwear to check out

Note: I generally avoid recommending specific footwear because everyone's feet are unique. What works for one person might be a disaster for another. The best advice? Take your time, try on multiple options, and ensure the fit is perfect before making a decision—your comfort on the trail depends on it.

Boots

[Salomon X Ultra 4 Mid GTX](#) – These are high-quality mid-cut hiking boots known for great support and waterproof protection. They're lightweight yet durable, offering excellent traction on varied terrain. A solid choice for serious hikers who want to protect their feet on long treks. I used these for a couple of years in extremely tough off track terrain in Tasmania. A friend of mine did as well and we each wore them through two extremely arduous trips. They did however start wear after around 400km of hiking. They would be great on regular track walking if you prefer a boot.

[Lowa Ranger GTX](#) - The same friend and I have both been wearing Lowa Ranger GTX boots now for a couple of years and we are both extremely happy with how they have performed in difficult off track terrain. After around 300km of hiking mine still have years in them yet. I love the fact

they have Vibram soles and how comfy they are on the feet. After years in Scarpa boots, Lowas are now my hiking boot of choice.

Other Boot options

[La Sportiva Ultra Raptor Mid](#) – A popular, affordable hiking boot that offers good comfort right out of the box. It's not as long-lasting as some premium boots, but I love this boot for its comfort, cushioning and reasonable price point. A great boot for day hikes and moderate trails. I use this for shorter and less arduous walks on formed tracks. They are lightweight and feel a lot more like a sneaker. The only pitfall, I feel, is the outsole. I love La Sportiva footwear but the soles do wear quickly.

Trail Shoes

Now, while trail shoes are extremely popular these days, I have generally preferred boots over the last 34 years. Having said that I have done A LOT of trail running and racing and do tend to do most day walks in trail runners now. Trail shoes are a VERY personal choice and the shoes I prefer tend to vary greatly amongst my trail running friends, but here are my favourites.

[Nike Zegama 2](#) - These have been my go-to trail runners for over two years. I wear them everywhere - on day hikes and daily commutes. I started with the Zegama 1, moved on to the Zegama 2, and have already worn through one pair of those. My current pair has racked up over 100km in just a couple of weeks. I love that Nike has embraced Vibram soles, and I'm eagerly awaiting the release of the Zegama 3s.

[La Sportiva Akashas](#) - These are super comfy and an old favourite of mine. I do find they run a little small so I had to size up on my regular size with

these. Again, the only downside is that the soles wear down fast and I struggle to get more than 300km out of a pair of these. My wife however has the women's version and loves them. She currently wears through around two pairs per year.

Tip: Whichever boot or shoe you choose, break them in before a big hike. Wear them on smaller walks to ensure they don't cause hot spots or blisters. High-quality footwear + proper fit = happy hiking feet!



Backpack – Invest in Your Carrying Comfort

Your backpack is the **workhorse of your gear setup**, carrying everything you need for the trail. A well-designed pack fits so well that you barely notice it's there. A poorly fitted one? You'll feel every step.

Buy Your Backpack Last

It might sound counterintuitive, but a **backpack should be one of the last pieces of gear you purchase**. Here's why: if you buy too early, you might pick the wrong size, capacity, or feature set for your actual needs. Your pack should match your gear, not the other way around.

In my early days, I borrowed different backpacks before committing to one. Doing so helped me figure out what I liked and didn't like. When you're ready to buy, visit a hiking store (if possible) and **test packs loaded with weight**. Adjust the straps, check the hip belt comfort, and make sure it distributes weight properly.

What to Look for in a Quality Pack

1. **Weight distribution** – A well-fitted pack puts **most of the load on your hips**, not your shoulders.
2. **Proper adjustments** – Shoulder straps, load lifters, and hip belts should be fully adjustable for a custom fit, but note that the lighter pack you go for may not have all of the features heavier packs have.
3. **Durable materials** – A good pack lasts for years, while cheaper alternatives wear out quickly.
4. **Organisation** – External pockets, hydration compatibility, and compression straps make a pack more functional.

If you can't try a pack in-store, visit the manufacturer's website and follow their fitting guide to find the right size. Many brands are happy to help with any questions if you reach out directly.

A well-fitted budget pack can serve you better than an ill-fitted expensive one. Fit is everything. Spend time dialing in the adjustments, and don't be afraid to return a pack if it doesn't work for you.

If you plan to hike regularly, investing in a quality backpack is one of the smartest gear decisions you can make. You'll carry it for hours so make sure it's comfortable.

Expedition Packs for multi day use:

[Whippa Wollemi 90 Ultralight Expedition Pack](#)

A quality backpack makes all the difference on long hikes, and after testing a wide range of options, I've found one that stands out—the Wollemi 90. This pack was provided to me free of charge, but no



money changed hands, and as always, my impressions are my own.

Right away, I noticed features I've missed in other ultralight packs, which I'll talk about below, such as a padded back panel, load lifters, and a sturdy external pocket for quick access to gear. These small but crucial details make carrying a heavier load far more comfortable, which is why I plan to use this pack for all my big expeditions moving forward.

Made for serious hikers, the Wollemi 90 is fully weatherproof, built from waterproof materials with fully taped seams to keep your gear dry in tough conditions. This makes it ideal for expedition hikes and pack rafting trips, where exposure to wet conditions is unavoidable.

Carry Comfort Without the Weight

Ultralight packs often sacrifice comfort for weight savings, but the Wollemi 90 is designed to carry a serious load (20-30kg+) without compromising support.

Key features include:

- **Larger, well-padded hip belt** – Spreads the load more effectively, reducing pressure points on long treks.
- **Hip belt stabilisers** – Prevents sway and keeps the pack stable when moving over uneven terrain.
- **Reinforced frame sheet and back padding** – Adds structure without unnecessary weight, improving comfort over long distances.
- **Load lifters** – Transfers weight from your shoulders to your hips, reducing strain on your upper body.
- **Compression straps** – Four side straps help keep the pack close to your body, improving stability.

For those who need extra capacity, the optional Wollemi Expedition Hood adds an additional 10L of storage, giving even more space for extended trips.

And also, it's **an Australian brand**, meaning you're supporting local innovation while getting a top-tier ultralight pack. If you're after an expedition-ready pack that balances ultralight materials with real load-carrying capability, the Wollemi 90 is a serious contender.

[Hyperlite Porter](#)

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Hyperlite Porter 85. This pack has been my expedition workhorse for over five years, and it's taken an absolute beating in Tasmania's toughest off-track terrain after more than 60 days of brutal conditions that have destroyed canvas packs I've taken on similar trips. And yet, it still shows minimal signs of wear.



The Porter 85 is as minimalist as they come, but that's what makes it so good for serious off track missions. I added the optional front pocket for external storage, but even without traditional pack features like load lifters, I've never felt like I was missing anything. After a few days on the trail, the simple, streamlined design just works, and the lack of extra straps and compartments keeps weight to an absolute minimum.

It's been so reliable that three of my hiking buddies have bought the exact same pack, and it's now a popular choice for off-track hiking in Tasmania. The Dyneema construction makes it ultra-durable, waterproof, and able to

handle heavy loads, while compression straps and daisy chains allow for easy customisation depending on the trip.

This pack isn't for everyone - if you want lots of organisation or extra comfort features, you'll need to look elsewhere. But if you're heading into remote, unforgiving terrain where weight and durability matter more than anything, the Hyperlite Porter 85 is one of the best options out there.

[Whippa Overland 60 Light](#)

For shorter trips, I'm looking at picking up the Overland 60 Light as a more compact alternative. At 1.175kg, it's still pretty light while keeping the features I care about.



Like the Wollemi 90, it's fully weatherproof, with taped seams to keep gear dry when the weather turns.

Plus, it comes in a bunch of colours, which is a nice bonus.

For hikers who don't need a full expedition pack or are working with a tighter budget, the Overland 60 Light looks like a great balance between weight, durability, and affordability.

[Osprey Volt 65](#)

Before switching to ultralight packs, I used Osprey packs for over a decade—and for good reason. They're comfortable, durable, and packed with practical features. While I eventually moved to lighter options to save



weight, I still swear by Osprey for anyone who wants full comfort, a solid suspension system, and all the bells and whistles.

My wife, mum, and many of their friends all use Osprey packs, and for women starting out in hiking, it's usually the first brand I recommend. Osprey's women's-specific designs really do make a difference, with adjustable harnesses, well-padded hip belts, and excellent suspension systems that distribute weight properly, something that makes a huge difference on longer hikes.

I still have my old Volt 65, which my son now carries, and I still love this pack. It's a rugged, no-nonsense workhorse that handles everything from overnight trips to week-long hikes. The AirScape suspension system keeps the pack close to the body while staying breathable, and it has all the thoughtful details Osprey is known for a built-in raincover, easy-access side pockets, hydration sleeve, and plenty of attachment points for carrying extra gear.

If you're after comfort and adjustability over shaving grams, Osprey packs, especially the Volt 65, are a solid choice. They carry weight well, last forever, and do everything you need in a classic backpacking pack.

Note: Fit is everything with packs. Spend time dialing in the adjustments (shoulder straps, load lifters, hip belt) for your body. If buying online, follow sizing guides for torso length and consider a retailer with a good return policy in case the fit isn't right. A well-fitted budget pack can serve you better than an ill-fitted expensive one!

Osprey Ace Series – The Perfect Kids' Hiking Pack

For kids starting out in hiking, the Osprey Ace 50 is one of the best packs out there. I have two variations of the Ace, and they've been fantastic for getting my kids into hiking. They're well-built, adjustable, and designed to last, making them a great investment - especially when you can pick them up on sale.



What makes the Ace 50 stand out is that it's not just a scaled-down adult pack—it's designed specifically for kids, with up to 5 inches of torso adjustability and a 'Fit-on-the-Fly' hipbelt that expands as they grow. This means they can use it for years rather than outgrowing it after a season.

Comfort is key for young hikers, and the suspension system in these packs keeps the pack ventilated while still offering good support and load distribution. It also has all the features you'd expect from an adult pack.

I've found that kids love having their own pack, and the Ace gives them the storage they need for snacks, water, and a few essentials, without being too heavy or bulky.



Tents (Shelter)

Splurge for Serious Treks (Save if Occasional)

Your tent is your home in the wilderness, keeping you dry, warm, and safe from the elements. For hikers doing a lot of multi-day walks or camping in harsh conditions, a reliable tent is worth its weight in gold (figuratively, but in reality you want it to be light in weight!). High-end tents use stronger materials and clever designs to maximise strength while minimising weight and pack size. This is important if you're frequently walking long distances or in bad weather. The last thing you want is your tent failing in a storm.

If you're an avid hiker or plan to camp in tough weather (heavy rain, strong winds, cold temperatures), splurging on a quality tent is a wise move. Premium tents tend to have sturdier poles, better waterproof coatings, and thoughtful features that make them easier to pitch and more livable (like good ventilation and vestibule space). They also often weigh less, which your knees will thank you for on uphill climbs. I've used top-tier tents like those from Hilleberg, MSR, Slingshot and Big Agnes during wild Tasmanian weather. These held up through serious wind and rain where a cheap tent might have collapsed.

On the other hand, if you're mostly a fair-weather camper or only head out a couple of times a year, you can get away with a more budget-friendly tent. There are several lower-cost brands now (such as Naturehike) that offer

decent lightweight tents at a fraction of the price of the big names. They may not last as long or handle extreme abuse, but for occasional trips in mild conditions, they do the job. Just be sure to seam-seal (if not done so by the manufacturer) and test any tent in the backyard before you rely on it in the wild.

What to Look for in a Quality Tent

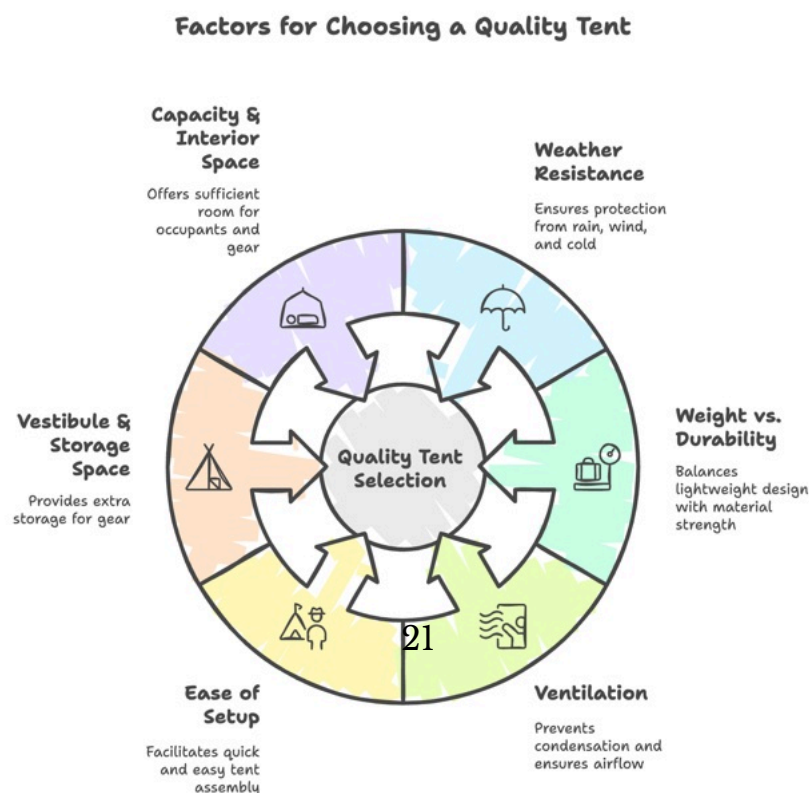
Not all tents are created equal, and choosing the right one comes down to where, when, and how often you plan to use it. A good tent keeps you dry, protects against wind, and provides enough ventilation to prevent condensation buildup—all while being light enough to carry without regret.

Here are the key things to consider when choosing a quality tent:

1. **Weather Resistance** – A solid tent should handle rain, wind, and cold. Look for strong pole structures, reinforced guy-out points, and full-coverage rainflies for maximum protection. If you're camping in wet or exposed areas, go for higher waterproof ratings (PU coatings or Dyneema fabrics) and make sure seams are factory-taped or seam-sealed.
2. **Weight vs. Durability** – Lighter tents often use thinner materials to cut weight, but this can mean reduced lifespan. If you're doing frequent long-distance hiking or rough off-track camping, look for ripstop nylon or Dyneema fabrics with sturdy aluminum poles rather than ultralight carbon fiber options that may snap in high winds.
3. **Ventilation** – Poor airflow leads to condensation, which can be just as bad as rain. A good tent has multiple vents, mesh panels, and a fly design that allows for airflow, especially in humid conditions.

4. **Ease of Setup** – In bad weather, setting up quickly is crucial. Freestanding tents are easier to pitch and move around, while non-freestanding models (like trekking pole tents) save weight but require more setup skill. Quick-pitch designs, color-coded poles, and simple attachment points can make a big difference.
5. **Vestibule & Storage Space** – A tent should have enough space to comfortably store gear outside the sleeping area. Look for vestibules or gear lofts to keep packs, boots, and wet clothes sheltered but out of your sleeping area.
6. **Capacity & Interior Space** – Tent ratings can be misleading—a “2-person” tent might be a tight squeeze for two people plus gear. Consider sizing up if you want extra room, or check for vertical wall designs that maximize interior space.

A great tent balances weight, durability, and livability. If you’re expecting harsh conditions, investing in a high-quality model will pay off in comfort and reliability. If you mostly camp in mild weather, a budget-friendly option can still get the job done—just be mindful of limitations and test it before heading out.



Tip: Consider your typical group size and conditions when choosing a tent. A solo hiker might opt for a one-person tent or bivy to save weight, whereas two friends could split a 2P tent (one carries the poles, the other the canopy) to share the load. And if bad weather camping is on your agenda, err on the side of a sturdier model. A leaky tent can quickly turn a fun adventure into a miserable night!

Premium Tent Options

[MSR Hubba Hubba Series](#)

I've been using the MSR Mutha Hubba (now called the Hubba Hubba LT 3) for nearly 15 years, across multiple versions, and it has never let me down. Among my regular hiking crew, we collectively own four of these tents, and they've been put through all kinds of conditions - from off track expeditions to car camping trips.



We've also used the Hubba 1P and Hubba 2P over the years, and across the board, these tents have been reliable, well-designed, and comfortable. They hold up well in tough conditions, though in extreme high winds (100km/hr+), we have had some bent poles - which, to be fair, is more of a testament to the wind than a fault of the tent.

The Hubba Hubbas are spacious, easy to pitch, and built with solid materials, making them one of the best all-around tents I've used. They are

versatile enough for solo use with extra space, group trips, or even as a future tent for my kids. If I ever need another, I wouldn't hesitate to pick one up again. And for anyone that is uncertain and just wants a reliable tent, well, the Hubbas are what I would normally recommend.

[Slingfin Portal 3 - For serious conditions](#)

After putting the Slingfin Portal 3 through its paces on a brutal 9-day off-track expedition in Tasmania, and on various trips since, I can confidently say that this tent holds up when it matters most. It has faced gale-force winds, torrential rain, and relentless exposure, and it came out the other side without issue.



I initially chose this tent because I needed a three-season tent that could handle serious weather without the excessive weight of a full mountaineering tent. It didn't take long to see why Slingfin has a cult following among serious hikers. The guyliner system, including an internal guyliner stabilization system, and ability to integrate trekking poles for extra support give it incredible wind resistance—something most ultralight tents struggle with.

While the Portal 3 is marketed as a three-person tent, I found it perfect as a roomy two-person setup. The dual vestibules, strong poles, and fully seam-taped waterproofing made for a comfortable and secure shelter even in extreme conditions.

I've used plenty of great tents over the years, but the Slingfin Portal 3 stands out as a serious contender for anyone who hikes in exposed, high-wind environments. If you need a durable, highly wind-resistant tent that still

keeps weight in check, this one is well worth considering. It's now my go-to for long, rugged expeditions. I'm even considering the Slingfin Portal 2 as a roomy solo tent.

[Tarptent Stratospire Li](#)

If you're looking for super lightweight shelter, trekking pole tents are worth considering. For the past couple of years, I've been using the Tarptent StratoSpire Li as a one-person option, even though it's technically a two-person tent. Once I got past the initial learning curve of setting it up correctly, it became a solid, double-wall tent that I can pitch quickly, even in the rain.



This tent is made from Dyneema Composite Fabric (DCF), which keeps it ultralight and fully waterproof but doesn't breathe as well as traditional fabrics—so condensation can build up on the inside of the fly. That said, the double-wall design helps keep the inner tent dry, and the overall performance makes it a great option for lightweight trips.

I've used it with both trekking poles and the additional support poles that turn it into a standalone tent. The StratoSpire Li is incredibly strong for its weight, handles wind well, and offers plenty of space for one person plus gear. If you want an ultralight tent that doesn't compromise on protection, this one is worth a look.

[Durston X-Dome Tents](#)

I don't own one yet, but as soon as I can get my hands on a Durston



X-Dome, I will. The only problem? They're in such high demand that there's a three-month lead time right now. When they become available, I'll be picking up an X-Dome 2.

I personally prefer freestanding tents, which is why the X-Dome stands out to me. It's one of the lightest fully freestanding double-wall tents in the world at just 985g, yet it's designed to be stronger, more spacious, and more stormworthy than comparable options.

What really interests me is its practical stormworthiness—it's not just about being strong but actually livable in bad weather. Features like the overhanging doorway (so rain doesn't drip inside), fly-first pitch (keeping the interior dry in the rain), dual peak vents (for condensation control), and the non-sag polyester fabric make it one of the most well-thought-out ultralight tents available.

I've yet to find a negative review, and Durston's X-Mid series has already proven itself among ultralight hikers. While I haven't personally used one yet, a Durston tent will be joining my kit soon, and I'm excited to see how it performs.

Budget Options

[Naturehike Opalus Tunnel Tent](#)

I recently picked up the Opalus 3-person tent as an extra shelter for when my wife, four kids, and I are all hiking together. There's no doubt—this is a budget tent, but for occasional hikers or families just



getting started, it's a great entry-level option.

Also available in a 2-person version, the Opalus is relatively lightweight, has plenty of guylines attachment points, and holds up surprisingly well in wind and rain. That said, you'll notice the drop in material and zipper quality compared to higher-end tents—but at this price, that's expected.

If tents like this had been around when I first started hiking, I probably wouldn't have had to wait nearly 10 years to buy my first tent. For a few trips a year, the Opalus gets the job done without breaking the bank.

[Naturehike CloudUp 2](#)

I've also seen the Cloud Up 2 in action, and for a lightweight, budget-friendly tent, it does the job.

The Cloud Up 2 is ultralight, freestanding, and made from 20D nylon with a silicone coating, offering decent waterproofing and wind resistance. It's easy to set up, packs down small, and has enough space for two people plus a small vestibule for gear storage but you're not going to fit a whole lot of gear in there.



At just 1.8kg, it's a good entry-level tent for anyone looking for a low-cost, lightweight shelter. While it won't match premium tents in durability or performance, it's a solid option for casual hikers or fair-weather trips.



Sleeping Gear

Splurge on Warmth (When It Matters)

A good night's sleep is crucial on the trail. Your sleeping bag (or quilt) and sleeping pad work together as your sleep system, providing the insulation and comfort you need to stay warm and rested. If you regularly camp in cold or fluctuating weather, investing in a high-quality sleep system can make all the difference.

Top-end sleeping bags and quilts use high-fill-power down or advanced synthetic fills, offering maximum warmth at minimal weight. They pack down small and can keep you surprisingly warm given their light weight. If you're doing long-distance hikes or need to minimise pack weight, a premium down bag or ultralight quilt is absolutely worth the investment. If cared for properly, it will last for many years, making it a long-term piece of gear rather than a short-term purchase.

I can't count how many times I've crawled into my sleeping bag on a freezing night and been relieved that I spent a little extra for a warm, lightweight system. Being able to sleep well and wake up refreshed in the wilderness is pure luxury.

For casual hikers or those camping in mild conditions, budget sleeping options have improved, but they come with compromises. Cheaper bags

tend to be heavier, bulkier, and less thermally efficient, meaning you'll need to carry more weight for the same warmth. While budget bags can work fine for weekend trips in warmer weather, you'll often have to layer up to compensate for their limitations.

That said, it's difficult to recommend a truly budget sleeping bag or quilt because this is one area where you really do need to invest. Your sleep system is what keeps you alive and comfortable in extreme conditions, and a poor-quality system can make for miserable nights (or worse, dangerous ones). If there's one piece of gear worth spending extra on, this is it.

And don't forget your sleeping mat/pad. It's just as important for insulation as your bag. A high-end ultralight pad (like the Therm-a-Rest NeoAir series) will cost more but offers superior warmth and comfort. A budget foam or inflatable pad can work, but it will potentially be bulkier and heavier. If choosing where to prioritise spending, make your sleep system one of your priorities, it's what makes the biggest difference.

Sleeping Bag Options

[Western Mountaineering Ultralite](#)

If I had to recommend one sleeping bag for 3-season use, it would be the Western Mountaineering Ultralite. I've had mine for nearly 15 years, and after months of use in the field, it's still as good as the day I bought it, thanks to proper care.



Although I've moved to a quilt setup in recent years, this bag still sees plenty of use (mostly by my kids these days). I also own the WM Megalite, and like everything from Western Mountaineering, the performance is top-tier. Yes, you pay a premium, but for good reason. These bags last for decades. My best mate bought one at the same time, and his is still going strong too.

The Ultralite is filled with 850+ fill power ethically sourced goose down, offering incredible warmth for its weight. Its continuous baffles allow you to shift the down for extra insulation in colder conditions, while the full-length YKK zipper makes for smooth operation without adding unnecessary bulk.

An insulated draft tube and collar help seal in warmth and block cold air, making it more effective in variable conditions. The 12-denier ripstop nylon shell keeps the bag ultralight yet durable, ensuring it holds up to years of use. Despite all these features, the bag comes in at just 820 grams (1 lb. 13 oz.), making it, in my opinion, one of the best warmth-to-weight options out there.

If you're after a lightweight, high-performance sleeping bag that will last for years, the Ultralite is one of the best investments you can make.

[Patagonia Fitzroy Sleeping Bag](#)

I've had a Patagonia sleeping bag (similar to the Fitzroy, though no longer made) for about eight years, and it's kept me warm on nights as cold as -10°C without any issues. This is one of those bags that just works, and despite heavy use, it's still in great condition.



One of my favorite features is the center chest zipper, which makes it easy to sit up cross-legged while staying in the bag—a small but really useful detail, especially for cold mornings in the tent. Like Western Mountaineering bags, this is a high-quality piece of gear that will last for years.

Making the Switch to a Quilt – No Regrets

A few years ago, I was looking to shave some weight off my pack and, after moving to an ultralight pack, the next place I looked was my sleep system. Sleeping bags are warm and reliable, but they can also be bulky and heavier than necessary, especially when carrying gear for longer hikes of 10 days or more like I do. After a lot of research, I decided to switch to a quilt, and honestly, I haven't looked back.

Why Hikers Use Quilts

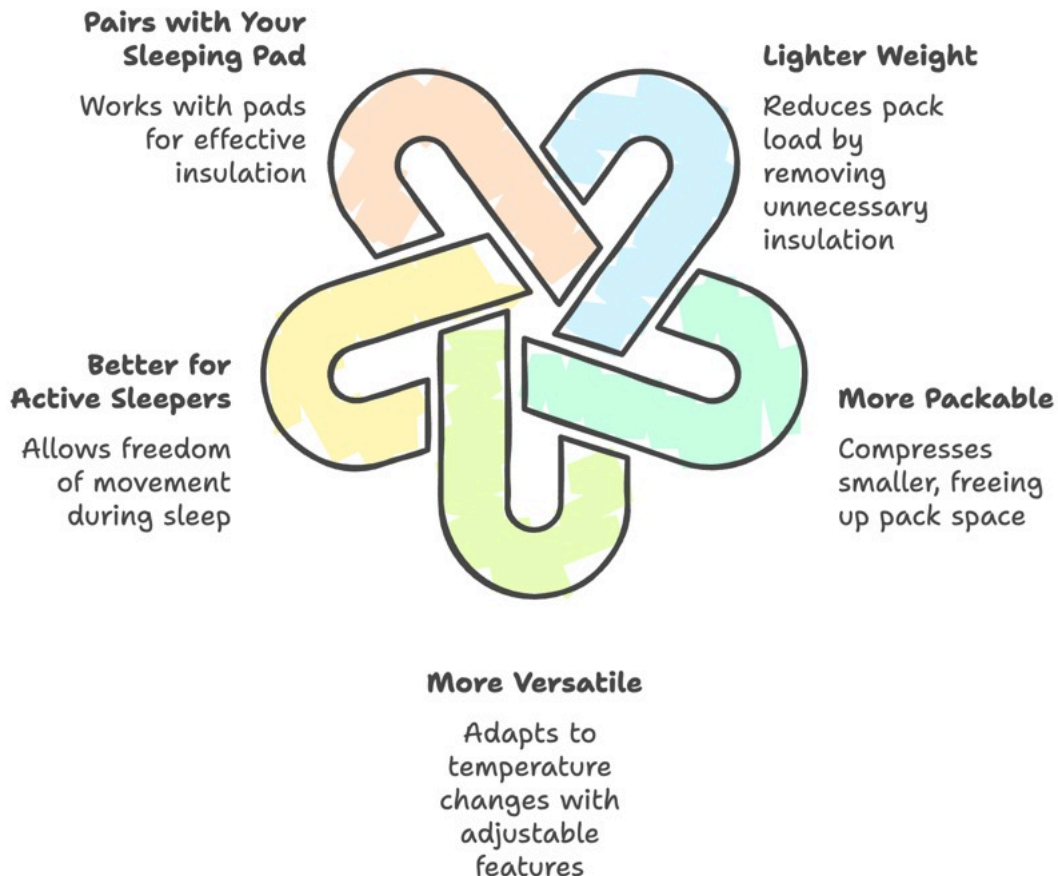
Quilts have become incredibly popular among hikers and ultralight backpackers for a few key reasons:

1. **Lighter Weight** – Traditional sleeping bags waste insulation on the underside where your body compresses it against the sleeping pad. Quilts remove that unnecessary material, making them significantly lighter.
2. **More Packable** – Without a full-length zipper or an enclosed bottom, quilts compress down smaller in your pack, freeing up valuable space.
3. **More Versatile** – With an open design and an adjustable pad attachment system, quilts let you vent when it's warm or cinch down

when it's cold. This adaptability makes them a great choice for varied conditions.

4. **Better for Active Sleepers** – If you move around a lot at night, a quilt gives you more freedom than a traditional sleeping bag. No more feeling trapped or twisted inside a narrow mummy bag.
5. **Pairs with Your Sleeping Pad** – Instead of relying on built-in insulation, quilts work in combination with a quality sleeping pad, which provides the warmth underneath while the quilt seals in heat from above.

Advantages of Quilts for Hikers



Quilt Options

[Katabatic Gear Alsek Quilt](#)

For the last three years, I've been using the Katabatic Gear Alsek quilt, and it's been fantastic. I've had plenty of sub-zero nights, and it's kept me warm every time. The pad attachment system takes a bit of getting used to, but once you figure it out, it works really well. Quilt life suits me perfectly, and I doubt I'll ever go back to a full sleeping bag.



The pad attachment system is easy to use. The elastic binding around the bottom helps seal in warmth, and the differential cut and continuous baffles let you shift the down where you need it depending on the conditions.

The footbox is well-designed—plenty of space but still warm, with extra insulation over the feet to keep them toasty.

If you're thinking about ditching the traditional sleeping bag, I'd definitely recommend looking into a quilt.

[Zenbivy Ultralight Quilt and Bed](#)

As I've gotten older, I've really started to value comfort more on the trail. I still care about weight, but not at the expense of a good night's sleep. That's where Zenbivy comes in.



In 2024, Zenbivy reached out and sent me their Ultralight Bed system to test out—no money changed hands, no obligations. Since then, it's come with me on every trip under a week. I've been using the -12°C (10°F) quilt, Ultralight mattress, Ultralight sheet, and the Soft Top pillow—and it genuinely feels like a proper bed in the bush.

I loved the setup so much I actually purchased a second Zenbivy quilt, the -6°C (22°F) version, just so I could mix and match between summer and shoulder seasons.

Yes, this system is a bit heavier than my Katabatic quilt, but it's also noticeably more comfortable, especially on shorter trips where comfort is king. I love how I can be completely enclosed, warm, and draft-free, without the claustrophobic feel of a traditional sleeping bag. My Katabatic is excellent, but on really cold nights, the occasional draft could sneak in, that's yet to be an issue with the Zenbivy system.

If you're looking to maximise comfort without fully giving up on weight savings, Zenbivy hits the sweet spot. It's cleverly designed, incredibly well-made, and honestly feels like a proper sleep setup, not just survival gear. It's one of the few systems that really does feel like sleeping in your bed at home, but in the wilderness.

Sleeping pads

Your sleeping pad is just as important as your bag or quilt—it insulates you from the cold ground and provides the cushioning you need for a decent night's rest. A good pad can make or break your sleep system, especially in colder conditions. There's a huge range out there, from ultralight inflatables to durable foam mats, and your choice will depend on how much comfort, warmth, and packability you're willing to trade off.

[Thermarest Neoair](#)

I've been using Therm-a-Rest sleeping pads in one form or another for over 20 years.

Starting with the old self-inflating models, and then moving to the NeoAir series about 10–15 years ago. While I've tested out plenty of other pads along the way, I always seem to come back to Therm-a-Rest.



They're comfortable, warm, lightweight, and come with a lifetime warranty—hard to beat. I currently rotate between three models:

- [NeoAir XLite](#) – still going strong after over a decade of use
- [XTherm](#) – my go-to for winter and shoulder seasons
- XLite Regular – for trips where I'm really cutting weight

They come with a pump sack, but these days I usually just bring a tiny electric pump to save effort at camp.

The R-value, weight, and packability on these pads are industry-leading. They roll down to the size of a 1L bottle, and the newer models with the WingLock valve makes inflation fast and easy, with micro-adjustment control when you're fine-tuning your setup. It's hard to go wrong with a NeoAir if you're chasing performance and reliability.

Other options

There are plenty of other solid pad options on the market, but like I said, I keep returning to Therm-a-Rest. It's hard to beat for weight, warmth, and

long-term reliability. That said, if I were to branch out, I'd probably look at something like the Big Agnes Rapide or the newer NEMO Tensor series, both of which are getting great reviews for comfort and packability. My experience with the older Tensor was that it ran a little cold, but newer versions appear to have addressed that. As always, your priorities such as warmth, weight, noise level, and packed size, will steer your choice.



Clothing & Rain Gear

(Focus on Function, Not Fashion)

Outdoor clothing is one area you can definitely save money if you're savvy. The key functions of hiking clothing are to keep you protected from the elements and comfortable across changing conditions. You want layers that are moisture-wicking, quick-drying, insulating when wet (in the case of base and mid-layers), and something windproof/waterproof for bad weather. None of these needs require the most expensive brand name. In fact, I've done tough hikes in budget clothing that performed just as well as fancy gear.

For example, fleece jackets, synthetic t-shirts, and hiking pants can often be found at reasonable prices from generic outdoor brands or even department stores. A basic polyester fleece will keep you warm just like a high-end fleece from Patagonia, it might just weigh a few more grams or not look as trendy. I remember in my early hiking days, most of my clothing was no-name fleece and cheap thermal base layers – yet I stayed warm through rain and snow by using proper layering. These days, the second-hand market and budget retailers (like Decathlon or outlet stores) offer high-quality materials (like merino wool blends, nylon hiking pants, etc.) at a fraction of boutique prices.

One of my hiking buddies, has a particular synthetic shirt he bought decades ago – and he’s worn it on pretty much every trip for 30 years. That thing is indestructible! It just goes to show that if you take care of your gear, even budget clothing can last a very long time.

Rain Jacket

This deserves a special mention. High-tech rain jackets (with Gore-Tex Pro or other membranes) can cost close to \$1000 or more. Unless you’re hiking in extreme alpine or off track conditions, you don’t need the priciest rain shell. A mid-range rain jacket from a reputable brand will keep you dry in typical downpours while still being breathable enough for hiking. The ultra-expensive jackets are often overkill for most hikers. So save your cash here. Get a reliable, breathable jacket but skip the top-shelf model. (If you only do short day hikes, even an inexpensive coated nylon rain jacket or poncho can suffice; they’re just less breathable and durable.)

Rain Jacket Options

[Arc'teryx Beta AR Jacket](#)

The Arc'teryx Beta AR is one of the most durable and versatile hard shells available, built to withstand extreme weather and rugged terrain. After seven years of heavy use, from Tasmania’s brutal Roaring Forties winds to relentless scrub-bashing, my jacket has held up incredibly well, showing minimal signs of wear despite countless multi-day hikes and alpine trips. It’s lightweight yet tough enough for hiking, mountaineering, and general outdoor use.



There's no getting around the high price tag, but in my experience, it's been worth every cent. This jacket has endured bush-bashing, storms, and brutal winds without issue. The only minor problem I've noticed is that it wets out a little faster than it used to, likely due to DWR wear-off, which is easily fixed with reproofing. Some newer versions may not have the same level of durability, so I'd recommend checking one out in person before buying. But if you're heading into serious terrain and need a jacket that will last, the Beta AR is hard to beat.

[Montbell Storm Cruiser](#)

The Montbell Storm Cruiser has been in my kit for nearly a decade. I take it on trips where I'll be crossing more open terrain and don't need the abrasion resistance of a heavier shell like the Beta AR. With its much lighter denier fabric, this jacket is extremely lightweight but still offers solid weather protection. It comes with me on most day walks, and it's one of my go-tos for trails like Tasmania's Overland Track. Montbell continues to make some of the best lightweight gear around, and this jacket is a perfect example.



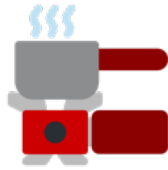
It uses 20D 3-layer Gore-tex, providing excellent waterproofing and breathability in a lightweight package. Amazingly I haven't torn this jacket at all but it is something I am conscious of due to the lighter fabric. After years of use, I still find this jacket incredibly comfortable, mobile, and reliable—a true ultralight workhorse that punches well above its weight.

Patagonia Torrentshell Jacket

If someone's not doing as much hiking and just wants a reliable rain jacket that won't break the bank, I usually point them towards the Patagonia Torrentshell. I've got a couple of older models for my wife and kids, and they've held up really well. Personally, I use the Torrentshell pants on nearly every trip as my go-to waterproof overpants. They're lightweight, packable, and do the job.



The Torrentshell 3L uses Patagonia's H2No Performance Standard 3-layer construction (As opposed to something like gore-tex), which offers solid waterproof/breathable performance with long-term durability. The fabric, membrane, and DWR finish are all made without intentionally added PFAS. It's a no-fuss, dependable option for hikers who don't need the hardcore specs of a full alpine shell.



Cooking Gear – Save with Simple Solutions

When it comes to cooking on the trail (stoves, cookware, etc.), you have a lot of flexibility to save money. Unless you have specific needs (like melting snow for water at high altitude, or needing ultrafast boil times), an inexpensive stove and pot will serve you nearly as well as fancy integrated systems.

High-end camping stoves (like Jetboil or MSR reactor systems) boil water very fast and efficiently, but they come at a premium cost. They're great for convenience or for extreme conditions (e.g., very windy, high altitude where efficiency matters). However, for the average hiker who's just boiling water for coffee or rehydrating meals, a basic hiking stove is totally fine. In fact, one of the most popular options in the ultralight community is a tiny ~\$25 AUD stove that weighs less than an 50 grams!

Your cookware (pot, cup, etc.) can also be simple: aluminum pots are cheap and perfectly functional. Titanium pots are lighter but much more expensive – a place to splurge only if you're really optimizing weight.

Overall, this is a category to save in. Many low-cost stoves and cookware options work great.

Stoves

[Jetboil Minimo](#)

The Jetboil Minimo has become my go-to stove for almost every hike. It's fast, incredibly fuel-efficient, and the integrated design is just easy. I took it on an eight-day trip to the Western Arthurs, boiling water for two people every day, and we still didn't finish a single 230g canister. That kind of efficiency is unmatched. The integrated pot locks securely to the burner, and the piezo igniter is reliable. Pouring is clean, and the pot cozies help hold heat well. It's heavier than ultralight options, but if you're rehydrating meals and want peace of mind in bad weather, it's hard to beat.



[MSR Pocket Rocket 2](#)

For short trips, day hikes, or a simple hot drink on the trail, the Pocket Rocket Deluxe is still one of my favourite stoves. It's tiny, quick to set up, and gets the job done. The broad burner head gives it more even heat distribution than the original. But it's not great in the wind, and there's no integrated pot system, so efficiency isn't stellar. Still, it all packs neatly into a small pot and weighs next to nothing—ideal when I want simplicity and speed without carrying much. I have started to use this more in recent times and plan to use it on an upcoming 8 day trip.



[Soto WindMaster](#)

Lightweight and compact, the Soto WindMaster has built a bit of a cult following, and I wanted to love it. On paper, it's brilliant. It's stable, lightweight, and excellent simmer control. But after a nine-day test in Tassie, I found it burned through fuel too quickly. We had to crack a third canister while the Jetboil crew still hadn't finished one. In controlled tests, the WindMaster boiled water fast but always used more gas. It's great for short trips, especially if you're trying to keep your base weight down. More recently I've done some research and when used with the Fire Maple heat exchanger pot, it appears to get better fuel efficiency so may be worth consideration.



[MSR Simmerlite \(now known as Whisperlite\)](#)

This was my main stove for well over a decade, and it never let me down. Twenty years ago, I took it on a 26-day trip through southwest Tasmania, carrying just two fuel bottles for the whole walk, and it didn't miss a beat. It's light for a liquid fuel stove, packs small, and is incredibly fuel-efficient. Best of all, it's field-serviceable, which matters when you're days from help. You can't buy the Simmerlite anymore, but the MSR WhisperLite is almost identical in design and performance. If you're going remote and want



something bombproof and repairable, this is still a great style of stove. Mine is 22 years old and still going strong!

[BRS 3000T Ultralight Stove](#)

This tiny titanium canister stove costs around \$15–\$25AUD and weighs only 25g! It screws onto a standard fuel canister and can boil water in a few minutes. It's not as fast or efficient as Jetboil, and its flame can



be sensitive to wind (use a windscreen made of aluminium or pick a sheltered spot), but it absolutely gets the job done for basic cooking needs. Pair it with a cheap aluminum pot and you have a full cooking kit for under a very cheap price.



Trekking Poles

Trekking poles are fantastic for reducing stress on your knees and improving stability, especially on rough terrain or steep descents. The good news: you don't have to spend a fortune to get a reliable pair of poles. High-end trekking poles might use carbon fiber shafts and have shock absorbers, fancy locking mechanisms, etc., but many hikers do just fine with basic aluminum poles.

Unless you're an ultralight thru-hiker counting every gram (in which case carbon fiber poles can save some weight), a budget pair of poles will provide similar benefits. In fact, inexpensive aluminum poles are often more durable than ultralight carbon poles (which can crack if stressed hard). I've seen cheap poles survive years of use and even abuse. And if you do bend or break them, they're much cheaper to replace.

Features to look for in any price range: a comfortable grip (cork or foam is best for sweat management), secure locking mechanism (flip locks are generally more reliable than twist locks), and appropriate length for your height (most are adjustable to cover a range). Many budget poles check all these boxes.

Trekking Pole Options

[Durston Iceline Poles](#)

I've been testing the Durston Iceline Poles, and they're easily one of the toughest and most refined trekking poles I've used. Designed as the world's lightest three-piece trekking poles, they're built for hikers who want ultralight performance without sacrificing durability.



What makes them stand out isn't just the weight for me but the modular design. Unlike most poles that are basically disposable once they snap, the Iceline Poles allow you to replace individual parts which are available at Durston's website. If a section breaks, you don't have to bin the whole thing. You just swap out the damaged part and keep going. This makes them a long-term investment rather than a short-lived piece of gear.

That said, these are a premium option, and I wouldn't recommend them unless you're doing serious mileage and don't mind spending the money. The lever locks are solid, the grip is comfortable, and they feel incredibly well-balanced, but for casual hikers, a more budget-friendly aluminium pair will do the job just fine.

If you're hiking regularly, heading into remote terrain, or just want the best ultralight poles on the market, the Iceline Poles are an excellent investment. But if you're just starting out or don't plan on pushing your gear to the limits, a cheaper set of aluminium poles will be more than enough.

[Black Diamond Pursuit Trekking Poles](#)

The Black Diamond Pursuit Poles are another high-end option that I seriously considered as my go-to before settling on the Durstons. These are built for serious conditions. Ideal for rugged off-track hikes, multi-day expeditions, and anyone who needs gear that can take a beating.



For me, what sets the Pursuit poles apart is the comfort factor. The natural cork grips are more ergonomic and slightly more comfortable than the Durston grips, especially on long days where your hands are doing a lot of work. Black Diamond's FlickLock adjusters are also time-tested and reliable in bad weather, mud, or freezing conditions.

They're not the lightest poles around, but they strike a great balance between strength, comfort, and reliability, making them a top pick for serious hikers who value durability and comfort over shaving grams. Like the Durstons, these aren't budget poles—but if you want something that will last and perform well in tough conditions, the Pursuit poles are a smart investment.

[Black Diamond Distance Carbon Z Poles](#)

I used the Black Diamond Distance Carbon Z Poles for close to a decade after upgrading from a set of aluminium Black Diamond poles. And I'll be honest, they were a joy to use. Incredibly lightweight, compact, and fast to setup and store with their



Z-fold design, they became a staple in my setup for many years.

But over that time, I snapped three separate poles. And after the third one, I'd had enough. For something that can't be repaired, I just couldn't justify replacing them again. That's the biggest drawback: once they break, they're done. No modular components, no swapping out damaged sections. It's a full replacement or nothing.

That said, they were fantastic in use. The foam grip is comfortable even on long days, they collapse down small, and they're ideal for fast, lightweight missions where every gram counts. If you're gentle on gear or doing mostly formed-track hiking, they could still be a solid option. But for tougher, remote terrain, I'd go with something stronger and repairable.

[Macpac A3 Trekking Poles](#)

You can find budget trekking poles just about anywhere these days, but if you're looking for a reliable, no-frills option in Australia, the Macpac A3 Aluminium Trekking Poles are a great pick. I like these because they're sturdy, affordable, and easy to replace if one eventually gives out, which is all you really need from a budget pole.



They feature a three-section adjustable design with lever locks, making them quick to set up and easy to adjust on the fly. The extended foam grip is comfortable on long descents or when shifting hand positions, and the adjustable wrist strap gives you a secure grip. The carbon steel tip and rubber cap provide solid traction on different surfaces, and they even come with trekking baskets for added versatility.

These aren't high-end ultralight poles, and they won't win any awards for innovation but they work, and they won't break the bank. If you're new to trekking poles, don't want to spend a fortune, or just need a simple set for general hiking, these are a great choice.



Safety & Navigation – Don't Skimp on Essentials

This is one category where I firmly believe you should not cut corners. Safety gear includes items like your navigation tools (map, compass, GPS device), headlamp, fire starter, first aid kit, and emergency communication devices (like a Personal Locator Beacon or satellite messenger). These items are your lifelines if something goes wrong – you don't want them failing when you need them most.

Some safety gear isn't expensive anyway (a compass or basic first aid supplies are cheap), so there's no excuse not to carry them. For more expensive safety items, consider it an important investment if you venture into remote areas. For example, a satellite communicator such as the Garmin inReach can send SOS signals and two-way messages when you're out of phone range which can truly be a lifesaver. It is expensive, yes, but if you frequently hike solo or in remote locations, it's money well spent for peace of mind.

If you cannot afford a satellite device right now, at least carry a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or have a plan to rent/borrow one for big trips. There are many places providing rental services for these now such as [Oz Satellite Rentals](#) and [Nomad Outback hire](#) here in Australia. And always let someone

know your route and expected return time (the cheapest safety measure of all).

Quality and reliability matter here. A high-quality headlamp with fresh batteries (or a USB-rechargeable one kept charged) is worth a bit more money so you're not left in the dark. A knife or multitool from a reputable brand will be dependable when you need to cut kindling or make gear repairs. These aren't typically big-ticket items compared to tents or packs, but they are very important.

Recommended Safety Options

Communication

[Garmin inReach Mini 2](#) – A compact satellite communicator that allows you to send text messages and SOS signals from anywhere. It interfaces with your smartphone or can be used standalone for basic texts. It's rugged and lightweight (100g). This device requires a subscription service, but for serious adventurers it's a game-changer for safety. I love this as an option because you can pause your subscription when not in use.



Navigation

[Suunto A-10 Compass](#)

Simple, reliable compass and normally at a cheap price. Pair it with a good topo map of your area and you'll never be truly lost, as long as you know how to



use the two together. Even if you use a GPS or phone app, always carry a compass and map as backup.

Lighting

[Petzl Bindi Headlamp](#)

I've used the Petzl Bindi for years and absolutely love it. It's the kind of gear that just does exactly what you need, without overcomplicating anything. At just 35 grams, it's so light you'll forget it's even on your head.



Despite its tiny size, it still pumps out 200 lumens, which is more than enough for camp tasks and early starts. It charges via micro-USB, which is super handy, and in all the time I've used it, I've never run out of battery on a trip.

It's not a search-and-rescue torch, but for most hiking, running, and daily use, the Bindi is a near-perfect headlamp. Minimalist design, no fluff, and just works.

First Aid

Instead of a specific product, I'll recommend assembling a small first aid kit if you haven't already. Bandages, blister care (moleskin or tape), disinfectant wipes, any personal medications, pain relievers, and a snake bite kit including compression and triangular bandages (for sprains or snake bite if in snake country) are key. You can buy a pre-made kit (Adventure Medical

Kits makes good ones) or DIY it. The key is to have it and know how to use it.

Bottom Line

Don't go without safety essentials. It's not so much about premium vs. budget in this category – it's about having the right gear and it being dependable. If you do want to save money here: consider renting a satellite messenger for a specific trip instead of buying one, or share the cost among group members. But never hit the trail unprepared; your life could quite literally depend on this gear.



What's next?

With the spend/save framework and category breakdowns covered, let's talk about getting the best deals on gear – so you can afford those quality splurges where they count!



Finding the Best Deals & Second-Hand Gear

Outdoors gear can be expensive, but if you're patient and resourceful, you can stretch your budget much further. Here are some tried-and-true strategies for finding great deals on hiking equipment:

Buy Second-Hand

One hiker's unused gear in the closet is another hiker's treasure! The second-hand market is my favorite way to save money. Check out online platforms like **eBay**, **Facebook Marketplace**, and Gumtree in Australia for used gear listings. There are also gear-specific forums and Facebook groups

where people sell or trade equipment. I've seen high-end backpacks and tents go for 50% or more off retail just because they were used a few times.

Always examine photos and descriptions for condition – but often you'll find gear in excellent shape (some people buy gear to try a new hobby, then never end up using it much). I myself sell used gear all the time after buying gear to test out. This is often only used on a limited number of occasions and is well cared for so if you're buying from people like me you're always in for a bargain!

Second-hand is not only cheaper but also more sustainable, keeping gear out of landfills.

Past Season Models

Keep an eye on retailer outlet sections. Many brands update their product lines yearly, which means last year's model gets discounted. The differences are often minor – maybe a new color or slight design tweak – but you can snag the “old” model for much less. Websites are a great place to find bargains. For high quality gear, one of my favourites is Norwegian Brand, [Norrøna](#) . Their dedicated [online outlet](#) is a great price to find the highest quality gear at a good price. You need to [be a loyalty member](#) (free to join) and then you can login to access the pricing. Online ever purchase [Norrøna](#) gear direct from them as they rarely sell via any other outlets other than their own stores or website.

Also, in Australia, outlets like Macpac and Kathmandu's clearance sales are worth browsing. Also, sign up for newsletters of outdoor stores – they'll alert you to clearance sales.

One word of caution: if buying second-hand **critical safety gear** (like a climbing harness or something that if it fails could be catastrophic), be extra careful. For hiking gear, most items are fine to get used. For example, used trekking poles, tents, packs, clothing, etc., are generally low-risk. Always inspect items for damage when you get them. Most people take good care of their gear, so chances are you'll find some gems.

By combining these strategies, you can assemble a top-notch gear kit at a fraction of full retail cost. That allows you to allocate your budget where it matters most to you. Maybe you save a bunch by getting a used pack and tent, and then you can afford that high-end sleeping bag you wanted – that kind of balance is what smart gear shopping is all about.

Conclusion

Optimising your hiking gear setup is all about making smart choices: investing in quality where it counts and taking advantage of savings where you can. The goal is to feel confident and prepared on the trail without feeling like you've emptied your wallet on unnecessary equipment.

Let's recap the big takeaways:

Have a Strategy:

Use the spend vs. save framework. Focus your budget on safety, comfort, and critical durability (boots, backpack, shelter, sleep system) and save on things that matter less or have cheaper alternatives (clothing, cookware, etc.).

Try and Learn:

Gear is personal. Borrow, rent, or test gear when possible to learn your preferences. This prevents wasteful spending on gear that doesn't suit you. Upgrade gradually as you gain experience – you'll appreciate high-end gear more once you've been out there a while and know exactly why you need it.

Be Deal-Savvy

There are tons of ways to get quality gear at lower cost. Second-hand markets and sales are your friends. A used premium tent can be more valuable than a new cheap tent for the same money, for example.

Don't Fear "Budget" Gear

A lot of affordable gear these days is actually quite good. You don't need the absolute top-of-line to enjoy hiking. Many hikers have completed epic journeys with mostly budget gear, by choosing items carefully and taking care of them. **Your skills and knowledge as a hiker matter more than the logo on your gear.**

When in Doubt, Simplicity Wins

A simple kit that covers your needs is better than an expensive, complicated kit you're unsure about. At the end of the day, it's about getting out there and enjoying nature. The fancy gadgets and ultralight doodads are optional. What's necessary is gear that keeps you safe and reasonably comfortable.

I hope this guide has given you a clear game plan for building or refining your hiking gear set-up. By knowing where to splurge and where to save, you can allocate your resources wisely and avoid both overspending and under-preparing.

Now, pack up your gear (old, new, borrowed, and everything in between) and hit the trail! With your optimized kit, you'll hike further, sleep better, and smile knowing you've kept your budget intact.

Happy hiking, and see you out there on the trails!

Mowser

