

Needle Sports - Suggested Alpine Gear List

NB This list and the comments below are not infallible - use your nous!

Main Kit	
Trekking Poles	Not perhaps essential in summer, and a definite encumbrance on many climbs. However if you suffer from knee/ankle injuries they may be useful. Brilliant for winter where route approaches often involve wading through heavy snow.
Ice Axe	A 55cm alpine style curved pick axe or similar is probably the best all round alpine axe, being short enough for technical climbing and long enough for glacier work. We would only recommend a pair of drooped pick tools for more technical routes (TD and above).
Ice Hammer	A shorter hammer 50cm or 45cm is best - or consider a really lightweight "third tool" instead for voie normal type routes where some harder sections may be expected.
Alpine Axe	If you are taking a pair of drooped pick tools, it may be worth having an alpine axe (see above) for use on easier routes.
Spring Leashes	Having used (and got tangled up in) many a tat and micro-krab botch-up over the years, we took little convincing that a purpose built "Double Spring Leash" is the best we have found to stop those expensive and useful axes taking a tumble down the nearest crevasse.
Crampons	12 point semi-rigid for preference (Grivel Airtech or similar) - alpine climbing is mainly walking, so only take fully rigid crampons on the hardest routes!
Boots	Once it was all plastics but now soft boots like the Scarpa Phantom, and Sportiva Batura provide a more comfortable lighter alternative. For winter, plastics or high altitude boots like the new Sportiva G2 SM are best if you want to avoid frostbite.
Helmet	Absolutely essential. Lightweight and probably white (for coolness), make sure it has head torch fixing points. Must be dry treated and preferably a pair for harder routes. Beal's 8.1mm Iceline or Mammut's 8.0mm Alpine Dry are both great choices. For easier, "voie normal" type routes, many parties would use a single rope in which case Mammut's 8.7mm Alpine Sender Dry would be perfect.
Ropes	Something light with adjustable leg-loops, or better no leg-loops at all like the BD Couloir, Blue Ice Coucas or Petzl Altitude all of which you can put on without having to put a cramponed boot through a leg loop (tricky on a steep slope!).
Harness	
Expedition Bag	A large bag to transport and store this lot in.
Climbing Rucksack	Should be big enough (around 55 litres with a 10 litre extension) for routes involving several bivis, but light enough to use as a crag sac.
Hardware	
Slings x 6	Take lots of slings, they are very quick to place, and can be used as extenders too.
Quickdraws x 15	Take lots in case you go valley cragging on an off-day, or even end up in the Verdon. On a typical Difficile route, 4 plus your slings would probably do. Wiregate krabs save weight and don't freeze up.
Set of Wires	Again this may be cut down for the actual route to say, Rock 1, Rock 3, Rock 5 and Rock 7, but take lots to basecamp in case you abandon some on your first route.

Set of Cams	Ditto (sort of). For many easier routes it is probably not worth the extra weight.
Pegs	Ditto (sort of). Worth having a few blades if nothing else, as they may get you out of a sticky situation.
Ice Screws x 6	You'll certainly need one long one apiece for crevasse rescue, and more if you intend doing any big ice/snow faces. Considerable weight can be saved by using modern lightweight aluminium screws.
Warthogs x 2	These drive in/screw out "turf screws" can be handy for the rock hard black ice that is often encountered in the alps in summer and winter, but they are not essential and are quite heavy.
Belay Plate	In fact best to take two to base camp, and learn how to do an Italian Hitch in case you drop one. They must be double rope plates so that you can abseil.
Prusik Loops	Essential for crevasse rescue and useful as ab tat for retreats too. Practice how to use them before you need to! Alternatively, Ascenders work better but are heavier.
Ab Tat	Take plenty of abseil tape or cord to abandon as you abseil down when things go horribly wrong. 5mm cord and 10mm tape are the lightest you can use safely and are both OK as long as you check for sharp edges.
Abalakov Threader	For making Abalakov Threads for belays or abseils.
Bivi Gear	
Tent	Something solid for your valley base.
Inflatable Mat	Worth having for the valley - you'll sleep better.
Down Sleeping Bag	A super lightweight one, probably 1 or 2 season, is best for summer, as the less weight and bulk the better, and it can be used without clothes at valley level and with clothes at altitude. In winter, you really need something that you can survive in, say 4/5 season.
Bivi Bag	Essential, and it should be a breathable one, not a glorified plastic bag.
Closed Cell Foam Mat	Better than a Thermarest for bivis as it's lighter and indestructible.
Bivi Boots	Very useful for winter bivis and well worth their weight.
Pee Bottle	Very useful for winter bivis. Make sure it's clearly labelled(!), and large enough (1litre).
Stove	For summer use, a micro gas stove is fine (but see note on fuel below). For winter use take an MSR XGK or similar as gas won't burn effectively below 0°C unless it's specialised Winter Gas which you may find hard to buy locally and won't be able to take on a plane. We can't send fuel by post, hence it doesn't feature on our website. Be aware that screw-threaded gas cylinders are not widely available in remote alpine valleys and it is best to take them with you (though not if travelling by plane). A firelighter cut into small chunks or a small bottle of methylated spirit will be need to prime a stove in winter if you are burning paraffin (kerosene).
Fuel	Preferably both and x 2!
Lighter and Matches	Something that doubles as a bowl.
Plate	A large one if you want your fair share of the soup.
Mug	Something light and quite large. It makes little difference to the weight and is less likely to spill.
Pan	Though the real 'ard men use use their pitons!
Knife, Spoon, Fork	

Cling Film, Plastic Bags and Ties
Water Container

Handy for wrapping up sandwiches made the day before.
A large one, and if there is not water en route, consider taking two.

Climbing Clothing

Wicking Underpants x 2
Wicking Long Sleeve T

Much better than cotton.
Much better than cotton. Long sleeves to stave off sunburn.

Belay Jacket & Expedition Hood or Down Jacket

This item of Buffalo is super for summer use as spare clothing, being light and still warm when wet. If you don't like it then a down jacket will do. For winter, either take the full Buffalo Double-P System (ie Big Face Shirt, Half-Zip Salopettes, Belay Jacket & XPD Hood) and ignore the next four items and the above two, or take summer kit, with tougher waterproofs and extra pullovers.

Fleece or Synthetic Fibre Midlayer

Pullover or jacket according to preference. Modern Active Insulation fleeces and synthetic fibre tops are excellent as they are very lightweight and extremely breathable

Waterproof Jacket

Very lightweight - if you get the forecast right you should not need to wear it and if you do have to wear it you'll almost certainly be descending.

Waterproof Trousers

Very lightweight - ditto. Make sure you can get them on over big boots.

Windproof Top or Softshell Top

Wear this in preference to a waterproof and carry the waterproof in your sack. You'll be far more comfortable and will not need to stop all the time to adjust your layers. It can be a lightweight softshell or, lighter still, a Pertex top.

Softshell Trousers

Hardwearing, stretchy and fairly wind and weather resistant.

Thick Socks x 2

Go for good quality if you can afford it - your feet will appreciate it.

Liner Socks x 2

Ditto - but only take them if you need them to stop blisters.

Gaiters

If using leather/fabric boots.

Neck Gaiter

For cold conditions (especially winter) a fleece one. A silk neckerchief or thin neck gaiter is handy in summer.

Balaclava

For emergency use.

Headband

Very useful for ascents where you are sweating buckets but risk getting your ear-tips frost bitten if you don't wear a hat.

Warm Hat

For when you stop moving so fast, or it gets colder.

Liner Gloves

For summer approaches

Thicker Gloves

For winter approaches.

Buffalo Mitts

Brilliant emergency mitts, light and very warm.

Climbing Gloves

Don't put them on until you actually start climbing as you will sweat into them too much. Take two pairs if its a long mixed or ice route.

Other Clothing etc

Overnight Bag
Personal

For travel and basecamp/valley stuff, it is worth having a separate bag of clean kit.
Washkit, Shampoo, Underpants, Socks, T Shirt, Pullovers, Shoes, Sandals, Coat

Pillow

You may mock, but car journeys (as a passenger!) are greatly improved, as is comfort on the campsite

Food – Evening Meals

Totally personal and probably best bought locally. Beware that too much dehydrated food can leave you dehydrated yourself. Supermarkets seem just as good for instant food as many specialist outdoor brands, and about half the price.

Food – Breakfast and Lunch

Marmalade, Peanut Butter, Honey, Bread, Breakfast Mix, Chocolate, Tea, Coffee, Powdered Milk, Nuts, Biscuits, Cake. Breakfast Mix is muesli and milk powder mixed together meaning at bivis you just need to add hot or cold water.

Miscellaneous

Camera

Get one small enough to hang around your neck and stuff down your shirt.

Huge Memory Card

Most people will use digital cameras these days. Make sure you have enough memory for all those wonderful climbs you are going to do.

Compass

Essential.

GPS/Altimeter Watch

Or a watch at least, preferably with an alarm. But an altimeter watch is very useful.

Whistle

Essential.

Maps

Essential.

Map Case

Not essential, but consider a plastic bag at least.

Guidebooks

Essential.

Goggles

Ski-goggles with almost clear lenses can be a life saver in a storm, particularly in winter.

Glacier Glasses

Essential unless you want to go snow-blind.

Sun Cream

Essential - should be Factor 50.

Lip Salve

Essential - make sure it is an anti-sunburn one.

First Aid Kit

Essential - but you'll almost certainly chuck it out at the last minute.

Pocket Knife

Very useful for all sorts of repairs. Don't put it in your hand luggage!

Passport Bag

Something to keep all your valuables dry in.

Head torches x 2

Well ... at least one.

Spare Batteries

Take a set on every route.

Biro

Or a pencil, anything to write with.

Documents & Essentials

Tickets

Don't forget them!

Passport	Is it in date? Be aware that your passport may not be more than 10 years old for EU travel and must have at least 6 months left to run after your return date.
Insurance	Essential. Mountain rescue and medical treatment is not free in most Continental countries. Getting choppered out could cost you thousands. As could medical treatment. Even in EU countries you are likely to have to pay a considerable proportion of the costs and if you are in Switzerland, all of them. The major UK alpine climbing insurers are the BMC and the AAC. The former is dearer but covers your kit, the latter is rescue and medical only but also gets you discounts in many alpine club huts (which is available also from the BMC but at further cost).
UK Global Health Insurance Card	Get one of these in case you need to see a doctor in another country. This card has replaced the old E111.
Credit Card	Essential, but be aware that quite common UK cards are not accepted everywhere.
Foreign Cash	You will need some - especially in huts - see above.
Driver's Licence	Don't forget it if you are picking up a hire car or taking your own. In some non-EU countries you may need an International Driving Permit.
European Breakdown Assistance	Essential if you are taking your own car abroad.
Spare Car Key	In case your rucksack goes down a crevasse.
Road Map or Sat Nav	To stop you getting lost.
Dictionaries	In case you do get lost.
Mobile Phone	Many of the above listed items (GPS, Maps, Sat Nav, Translate etc) are available as apps on any good mobile phone. However limited battery life means it will need to spend much of it's time switched off if it's to be useful in an emergency.