

Choosing Boots

Your enjoyment whilst walking rests literally on your feet!!!

Walking boots may be the single most important piece of backpacking equipment you buy. Nothing can end a great outdoor experience quicker than painful blisters, pinched toes or even injuries, caused by inappropriate walking boots.

Here are some guidelines to help you choose the correct walking boots for all your outdoor adventures:

1. Think carefully about the kind of walking you plan to do. Select boots that are designed to provide the support and protection you will need in the most difficult terrain you expect to encounter.
2. Choose boots that are designed to support the load you expect to be carrying. The heavier your load, the more support you will need.
3. Great walking boots do not have to weigh a great deal. Today's hi-tech materials have replaced traditional metal shank and other heavy elements that provide stability in a boot. As a result, walking boots are lighter but still offer plenty of support.
4. Consider the various advantages of fabric-and-leather boots and all-leather boots. Fabric-and-leather boots are lighter and easier to break in, but all-leather boots offer added protection and durability in rigorous terrain, as well as being water resistant and breathable. Boots with many seams and greater fabric content are less water resistant.
5. Many walking boots, are made with a Gore-Tex® lining that keeps water out whilst allowing perspiration to escape. A real plus if you encounter puddles and shallow streams.

Types of Walking Boots

Trail Shoes

For walking in a dry climate, on well-established paths with few rocks, trail shoes may be just what you need. They are ideal for up to a day's walking, carrying a light day pack.

*****Trail shoes are NOT suitable for your Duke of Edinburgh Expedition*****

Trail Walkers

For encountering steeper inclines and muddy paths, or for if walking for longer than one day, you will need sturdier higher-cut waterproof boots. These provide added stability and ankle protection.

Mountaineering

If you plan to climb in the mountains, you will want an extremely strong boot with a stiff sole to give your ankles support and protection as you climb on challenging terrain (you might even need to attach crampons for a better grip on glaciers or hard-packed snow).



Trail Shoes ✗



Trail Walkers ✓



Mountaineering Boots ✓

Ankle Support is Vital

Terrain and weight alone don't determine the ideal strength of a boot. The strength of your feet, particularly your ankles, is decisive. The support requirements for carrying a 7kg pack in easy terrain are considerably less than those for carrying 20kg in rough terrain. Your boots should provide sufficient support to prevent sprained ankles. Walking boots should reach above the ankle to provide the support needed.

Finding the Best Fit

1. When trying on boots, wear the socks you plan to use during your expedition. High quality socks are usually wool blend with some nylon or lycra. Cheaper socks are acrylic, polyester or cotton. Good socks are worth the investment and should last a long time.
2. Try boots on in the afternoon or at the end of the day when your feet are more swollen.
3. Boots should feel snug but comfortable, so you can still wiggle your toes. Most walking boots won't feel as instantly comfortable as trainers, but they shouldn't pinch, cause hot spots or constrict circulation. They should fit securely around your ankle and instep.
4. When trying on boots, try walking down an incline. Your feet should not slide forward, nor should your toenails scrape against the front of your boot. If your foot slides forward the boot could be too wide. If the back of your heel moves around, your boots might not be laced up tightly enough.

Breaking in your New Boots

Once you've bought a pair of new boots, break them in slowly with short walks. Leather boots in particular take a while to break in so take a couple of one or two hour walks before your expedition.

Care & Maintenance

1. Cleaning and waterproofing your boots from time to time is vital. Use waterproofing on leather and be sure to concentrate on the seams, which can become porous over time. For boots with a Gore-Tex® lining, use a silicon-based waterproofing treatment, not a wax-based treatment. Wax-based treatments keep the leather from 'breathing'.
2. Whilst walking, if a blister or hot spot develops, place padding or an adhesive bandage over the area. You can cut a 'donut' in the padding to create a buffer around the blister.
3. Remember, walking boots will never feel like bedroom slippers, but if you are consistently developing blisters and have uncomfortable pressure points, consult the manufacturer for advice.

Clothing

Wind and rain are the two most uncomfortable elements of the weather to cope with whilst on an expedition.

Therefore clothing has three main functions:

1. To keep out water (and wind).
2. To keep heat in.
3. To allow water vapour (sweat) to escape, especially from your skin.

Clothing should be selected on the basis of keeping the body at a constant, comfortable, and safe temperature. The three factors which will cause the most uncomfortable conditions are **moisture**, **wind**, and **extremes of temperature**.

No single garment can protect against all these factors, therefore a layered clothing system is recommended to make sure you are warm, dry and happy when you are out. Layers can be added or removed, according to the weather and the amount of physical exertion being undertaken.

Generally garments should be loose fitting either to trap air or to allow it to circulate, as the need arises.

1. **Inner or Base Layer** Absorbs perspiration and should therefore have the ability to wick moisture away from the skin. Thermal, cellular cotton or wool but NOT nylon.
2. **Middle Layer** Provides insulation (warmth). A few thin fleece, cotton or wool garments will help to regulate body temperature.
3. **Outer Layer** Keeps out wind. Jackets should have a hood and close fitting cuffs. DO NOT wear jeans, they are cold and heavy when wet and don't dry easily.
4. **Waterproof Shell Layer** For use in wet weather. A zip fronted nylon waterproof is cheaper than breathable fabrics. A hood is essential with close fitting cuffs. Over trousers with elasticated waistband are also needed. Gaiters fit over your boots and shins and keep water, mud, stones and vegetation out of your boots.

