

Daypack (Overnight Trips) – If you are on a backpack hunt, your backpack is a very important part of your trip. Don't buy just any pack and expect it to work perfectly for you. Packs need to be fitted to your shape. A pack capable of carrying 5,000 to 6,000 cubic inches is necessary for extended trips. Since hunters are often off the beaten path with no trails and encounter brushy conditions to reach their hunting areas, an internal frame pack is generally the best choice. Internal frame packs will comfortably carry 50 to 80 pounds, which is about as much as any sane hunter should consider carrying. Internal frame packs have a better center of gravity and do not stand up above the hunter's head to catch brush, knock snow down your neck, etc. It is not particularly easy to carry a rifle with any backpack. Hunters should devise some type of system to hang their gun on their shoulder strap so that the gun sling will rest there without sling off the nylon strap. The setup should also be lightweight and the gun easy to put into action.

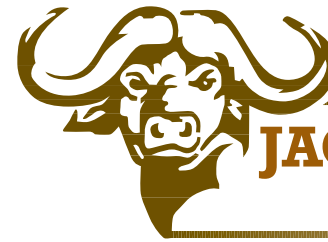
Hats – Mountainous hunting usually requires vigorous walking, so a lightweight baseball cap is usually fine as far as keeping the sun out of your eyes and offering some protection from weather. Hunters should also take a second hat that is well insulated and has good earflaps. Snow is possible even in August. Two hats are a great idea. A wind gust can blow a hat off a cliff leaving you without good coverage. Go prepared. In November and December, cold temperatures and high winds can really (literally) freeze your face. Throw in a lightweight ski mask.

Orange Vests – Many states require a safety orange vest while hunting big game. Check with your outfitter. Some states require safety orange hats as well. Animals don't see safety orange like humans do. I have had deer walk within ten feet of me if I remained motionless, yet I had a 400-square inch vest on. So don't worry about the game seeing you. Be safe and wear the orange vest!

Suspenders – A lot of my friends have developed potbellies; if they wear a pair of heavy pants or carry around a pocket full of cartridges or candy bars, the pants start sliding down over their ankles. Not only does this look bad, it makes walking difficult. If you are backpacking, the pack will often push your trousers down as well. Every hunter should have a good pair of suspenders. Not only will they improve your stride, they will make you look less cumbersome to any animals that happen to be watching. The best suspender set-up is generally the button-on model that attaches to the front and back of your pants, but the claw-snap is fine.

Gloves – You will need two pairs. One pair of light finger gloves, Gore-tex or wool are fine; one pair of mittens, preferably with leather exteriors, with a good fleece or wool liner. Quite often hunters will be using a fire for heat or cooking at night. A leather mitten makes a handy potholder and won't burn as easily as fleece or cotton. Make sure you don't burn up your gloves around the fire while drying them. Maybe you should take an extra set of finger gloves to replace the ones you will probably lose.

Canteen – When hunting in drier weather, it is important to have about two quarts of water with you each day. In cooler weather, one quart will do for most people. A wide-mouth canteen is generally best, as they are easier to fill from streams.



**JACK ATCHESON
& SONS, INC.**

Hunting Consultants ♦ Butte, Montana

Elk & Deer Hunting



Gear List

Rain Jacket & Pants – Nylon-coated with rubber on the outside of the garment is quiet and lightweight, but it does not breathe. A Goretex jacket and pants will work, but are noisy. If you are stalking an elk or deer at close proximity, remove the rain gear. Wear wool or fleece. You may still get wet, but you will notice it less. A good trophy is worth it anyway!

Shirts – Two lightweight shirts with long sleeves. Wool is generally best.

Jacket – Midweight wool or fleece in September through mid-October. Go with heavyweight wool or fleece in November and December. The layering system is applicable during any period.

Vest – A good down or synthetic fill vest with a collar.

Underwear—The best underwear is a synthetic fiber. Lightweight is generally adequate on these hunts, except in late November or December. Then take the heavyweight long handles. We suggest a zip-down turtleneck so you can control the warmth of the garment and provide better venting. It is a great idea to take two pairs of long underwear. Store one pair inside your sleeping bag so that you can use them as pajamas. If you sleep warm, you will be in good shape to hunt the next day.

Socks – Three pairs of heavy socks and three pairs of lightweight socks preferably designed for anti-blistering. The socks can be washed and dried daily.

Sleeping Bag – Because of the varied conditions hunters can experience in mountainous terrain, it is often better to take two lightweight sleeping bags. I prefer synthetic bags, such as Hollofil, etc. Place one bag inside the other. The inside bag should be the mummy style, a more compact model. The outside bag can be a rectangular one that offers a little more room. Because you have two bags, you can leave the outside bag open if you encounter warmer weather. Should it get cold, zip both bags up and you can brave subzero temperatures. Sleeping bags are bulky, so hunters should obtain a compression stuff sack that helps bind the bags into a smaller parcel for easier transportation. Keep a set of down underwear in your sleeping bag if you are a cold sleeper. If you are hunting from a lodge, you may not need to take a sleeping bag. Ask your outfitter.

Walking Sticks – No one likes to look like an old man with a cane, but walking sticks have their place. They can prevent you from falling down when you descent a steep slope. They are invaluable for going around side hills. We recommend every hunter going to the mountains have some sort of walking stick – a ski pole, something to act as a third leg. It will act as a rest if you are shooting at something across a wide canyon and have no time to get a better rest. A walking stick has saved me from many bad falls while returning to camp in the dark. We use them all of the time.

Canteen – When hunting in drier weather, it is important to have about two quarts of water with you each day. In cooler weather, one quart will do for most people. A wide-mouth canteen is generally best, as they are easier to fill from streams.

Coveralls – Insulated coveralls are a good idea on all late season hunts. If you are riding horses, you will find the back of a horse to be one of the coldest places on earth. The same goes for a hunt from a stand for deer or elk. It can be cold! When you are inactive, sitting on a stand or riding a horse, put on a set of insulated coveralls; ones that you can remove easily so you can shed the coveralls to pursue game in less cumbersome clothing.

Gators —Quite often you will be traveling in wet grass or snow. Staying dry becomes critical. Snug-fitting Goretex gators are best. They come in various sizes, but generally large or extra-large is necessary to fit over high top hunting boots. Quiet wool and fleece gators are available, but snow and ice cling to them. Nylon gators are the lightest, and if they fit well, they are generally the most quiet. Gators prevent moisture from wicking up your pants.

Pants – If you are hunting during September and early October, generally the weather can be quite warm, so lighter weight wool or fleece is a good choice. Elk have incredibly keen hearing and quiet clothing is a must. If you are hunting late October through November, you can usually expect down right wintry conditions. Heavy wool pants or wool bibs are a good choice on these hunts. Take two pairs.

Boots – Due to the varied weather conditions you can encounter on elk hunts, you should probably take two pairs of boots. If you are hunting September through October, weather is generally warmer and drier. If it does snow, it often melts off in a few days. A leather boot with a good lug sole and a pair of insulated rubber boot packs are an excellent choice. The leather boots really don't need to have heavy insulation. Be sure to take extra liners for the boots. Wet liners lose a great deal of insulating power. Rotate the liners each night so you have a dry pair at all times. On late October and November hunts, weather conditions are usually quite cool and, in late November, sometimes below zero. Heavily insulated boot packs are a definite must at that point.

Spotting Scope – A quality, high-powered spotting scope is very important for sheep, goat, deer and antelope hunting. Generally, hunters are looking for just a few inches of horn and sometimes at great distances. A 20-power scope just won't give you the view at a mile and a half to give you an idea of size. You might have to spend a half day walking in one direction just to find that it wasn't as big as you had hoped, taking time from your hunt. A good extendable tripod is also a great help if you spend a fair amount of time looking through a spotting scope. When you transport your optics to and from the hunting area, it is smart to have a handbag with a foam rubber bottom to carry fragiles. Good optics are as important, or more important, than your rifle.

