

LIGHTWEIGHT BACKPACKING -- A FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

A common myth is that lightweight backpacking is more expensive than conventional/heavy backpacking. In fact, the opposite is true, primarily because lightweight items have fewer raw materials and simpler designs. The exceptions are those made of/with premium down, titanium, and carbon fiber – but, in these cases, affordable and lightweight substitutes are available.

Below is a comparison of the weight and cost of representative items from 3-season conventional/heavy, lightweight, and ultralight backpacking kits. The weights and costs are not contrived – they are based on actual products that you can find being sold at your local outdoor shop and being carried by backpackers, and maybe even sitting in your own gear closet.

CATEGORY	CONVENTIONAL/HEAVY			LIGHTWEIGHT			ULTRALIGHT		
	Item	Weight	Cost	Item	Weight	Cost	Item	Weight	Cost
Base layer	Long-sleeve polyester button down	10.0	\$50	Mid-weight short-sleeve zip-top	6.0	\$35	Liteweight short-sleeve	4.0	\$30
Storm shell	3-layer, full featured, durability panels	19.0	\$275	3-layer, fully featured	12.0	\$220	2.5-layer, minimalist	8.0	\$80
Insulated jacket	Expedition fleece	26.0	\$145	800-fill down sweater	14.0	\$200	Synthetic minimalist	10.0	\$150
Headwear	Sun hat	5.0	\$70	Cap w/neck shield	3.0	\$30	Visor	2.0	\$20
Footwear	Leather boots, waterproof	56.0	\$175	Lightweight hikers, not waterproof	40.0	\$115	Trail running sneakers, not waterproof	24.0	\$85
Trekking poles	3-piece, collapsible, anti-shock, aluminum	23.0	\$120	3-piece, collapsible, aluminum	17.0	\$110	Fixed-length, carbon fiber	12.0	\$100
Pack	Framsheet, large volume, full-featured	113.0	\$350	Framesheet, medium volume, featured	50.0	\$175	Frameless, small volume, minimalist	21.0	\$100
Shelter	Double-wall free-standing solo tent	51.0	\$170	Single-wall tent; pitch with trekking poles	29.0	\$180	Tarp + bivy sack	16.0	\$260
30-degree Sleeping bag	Synthetic, full zip	30.0	\$180	600-fill, torso zip	30.0	\$150	800-fill quilt	18.0	\$250
Sleeping pad	1.75" inflatable, full length	44.0	\$65	1" inflatable, torso length	10.0	\$70	3/4" foam, torso length	4.0	\$15
Stove and empty fuel bottle	White gas + aluminum bottle	14.0	\$100	Canister + isobutane canister	7.0	\$45	Cat can + water bottle	1.0	\$5
Cookpots	2L Stainless steel + cover/sauce pan	18.0	\$40	1.3L Aluminum	6.0	\$25	.9L Titanium	4.0	\$40
First Aid	"Essentials" First Aid Kit	12.0	\$40	Ultra-lite First Aid Kit	4.0	\$10	Luekotape, KrazyGlu, IBU, duct tape	1.0	\$5
Emergency & survival	PLB, mirror, emergency blanket	15.0	\$600	Emergency blanket, mirror	4.0	\$10	Common sense; ability to recognize hazards	0.0	\$0
Communication	Cell phone, solar-powered recharger	10.0	\$100	Cell phone (recharged in town)	5.0	\$50	Calling card w/ 1000 minutes of talk time	0.2	\$40
Lighting	4-LED & xenon bulb headlamp	9.0	\$65	4 LED headlamp	3.0	\$45	Coin-cell 1 LED light	1.0	\$20
Knife/Multi-tool	Multi-tool	5.0	\$50	7-component	4.0	\$27	3-component	1.0	\$17
Navigation	GPS	6.0	\$250	Wrist-top GPS	3.0	\$130	Simple compass	1.0	\$12
Water bottle	2 x 1L Lexan hard-sided	11.0	\$16	2L reservoir w/tube	4.0	\$25	2 x 1L soft-sided	2.0	\$14
Water treatment	Filter	17.0	\$145	UV pen	8.0	\$90	Chlorine dioxide	3.0	\$15
Insect repellent	6-oz spray can	8.0	\$6	4-oz spray pump	5.0	\$6	DEET in .3-oz dropper bottle	1.0	\$5
TOTALS	(oz)	363.0	\$2,177	(oz)	172.0	\$1,038	(oz)	74.2	\$798
	(lb)	22.7		(lb)	10.8		(lb)	4.6	