

Gearing up For Another Year of OP!



Outdoor Pursuits — Tips for OP Gear

Before arrive, we would like to provide you with some tips for any OP shopping you might do over the break. **Please remember that we have a lot that you can borrow here on our campuses.**

We require all students participating in OP hiking trips above level 1 to wear quick-dry clothing (wool or synthetic) on all trips.

Why Quick-Dry?

Mountains are cold, and staying dry on a hiking trip is the best way to stay warm and avoid potential hypothermia. However, in a heavy rain it is virtually impossible to stay completely dry even with the best gear, and then it becomes imperative that clothing can dry quickly. Cotton retains moisture, and therefore wet cotton clothing creates an uncomfortable trip at best, and a very dangerous one at worst.

Fortunately, many tourists leave gear behind, and there is a remarkable amount of high quality clothing and equipment available in both Arusha and Moshi if you know what to look for. This document aims to highlight the key features to look for when shopping for gear either locally or abroad. There are no suggested brands, but the samples serve to illustrate good examples and the links can take you to the specifications for each item.

We will continue to lend some items from the OP store as indicated by a * next to the item. Happy shopping as we look forward to a fun, safe, and dry OP season next year!

Buying tips for:

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Did you know?

In wet garments, you can lose heat up to 25 times faster than in dry clothes. This occurs because water conducts heat better than air. In cold conditions, evaporative cooling of wet fabrics, such as cotton, can quickly make you cold or lead to dangerous hypothermia. But, even when saturated, wool traps body-heated air within its fibres, making it a better choice for damp or rainy conditions.



Backpacks*

A comfortable, well-fitting backpack is one of the most important pieces of a student's gear. Backpacking packs generally come in sizes from 55-75 L. A 60-70 L pack will suit a student for his/her entire OP career. This size is designed for multi-day trips. These packs have a frame that gives structural rigidity and transfers the load from your back and shoulders to your hips.

Some key backpack features:

- Shoulder straps with firm but forgiving padding. They should not pinch, chaff under armpits, or restrict movement.
- A thick, firmly padded hipbelt with a moulded shape.
- Sturdy clips that are easy to engage, release, and adjust.
- An adjustable suspension system—this will allow some adjustment of size as your child grows.



<http://www.mec.ca/product/5024-840/mec-eos-70-backpack/>

For more information: <http://www.mec.ca/AST/ContentPrimary/Learn/Packs/IntroToPacks/ChoosingABackpack.jsp>

Sleeping Bags*



A good sleeping bag is the key to staying warm at night. Sleeping bags are rated by temperature. Choose a bag rated to about -5°C to ensure your child will be warm enough on OP trips.

Mummy bags are the best choice for OP trips as they are designed to be low-weight and maximize heat retention. A hood on a sleeping bag goes a long way to retaining body warmth while sleeping. Down tends to be a more compact and light fill than synthetic fill.

<http://www.rei.com/product/847519/sierra-designs-zissou-23-dridown-sleeping-bag>

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Rainwear*

Due to our hiking in cold, sweaty conditions, the best option for OP trips is **waterproof, breathable** rainwear. Water-repellent or water-resistant gear is not sufficient. Other features to look for:



- Fully taped seams.
- Roomy cuts for layering over other clothes.
- Generous zipper flaps to prevent leakage through zippers.
- Zippered pant legs that make for easy changing.

Fabrics tend to lose their water resistance over time, making quality rainwear likely the most difficult gear to obtain locally.



<http://www.mec.ca/product/5024-361/mec-aquanator-jacket-womens/?>

<http://www.rei.com/product/844642/rei-rainwall-pants-mens-32-inseam>

Hiking Boots*

Wearing boots should be painless! Look for waterproof boots designed for multiday hikes. A good fit is crucial, so here are some tips for fitting boots:

- Wear socks of the same weight and thickness you intend to wear when hiking.
- Try on several styles to see what is most comfortable.
- Lace the boots up snugly and walk around, including both up and down a slope. On the way up, your heel should not move more than half a centimeter or the boot may be too big. On the way down, your toes should not touch the front of the boot or it may be too small. On uneven surfaces, your foot should not twist inside the boot.



<http://www.rei.com/product/842457/vasque-breeze-20-mid-gtx-hiking-boots-mens>

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Pack Covers & Liners*

Pack covers and liners are great, inexpensive ways to make sure that gear inside a backpack stays dry even in the rain. Look for waterproof materials with sealed seams, and make sure they are the right size for the pack.



Pack Cover:

<http://www.mec.ca/product/5028-721/mec-pack-rain-cover-silicone/?h=10+50042&f=10+50601>



Pack Liner:

<http://www.mec.ca/product/5016-043/mec-pack-liner/?h=10+50042&f=10+50601>

Socks



Socks are one of the most important pieces of clothing on an OP trip. Dry feet are imperative to blister prevention and staying warm.

Socks come in different thickness and lengths. Choose long enough socks that they emerge above the top of the boot. Mid-thickness socks are appropriate for OP trips.

Wool can absorb up to 35% of its weight in moisture and remain dry to the touch because the moisture is pulled inside the fibres. Wool and wool blend socks are the best choice.

<http://www.rei.com/product/742003/smartwool-hiking-socks-womens>

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Mittens & Hats



Students require warm, non-cotton mittens for OP trips. While fleece mitts with a Thinsulate layer are warm, they can get wet. Waterproof mittens are ideal for higher trips, and are available with removable fleece linings that can be used alone in warmer conditions. **Remember that mittens are much warmer than gloves!**

A warm hat is required on all levels of OP trips. Wool and fleece are good choices.



<http://www.mec.ca/product/5001-785/parkhurst-merino-wool-cap-unisex/?f=10+50093+50114>

<http://www.mec.ca/product/5024-105/mec-overlord-mitts-unisex/?f=10+50093+50111>

Base Layers

The secret to staying warm and comfortable on an OP trip is layers!

The role of a base layer is to transport moisture away from the skin to the outer layers where it can evaporate. All students should have long underwear and a long-sleeved undershirt made of synthetic material such as polyester. **Mid-weight** base layers are generally appropriate for OP trips. Base layers should be snug but not constricting.



<http://www.mec.ca/product/5020-400/mec-t1-long-sleeved-crew-womens/?h=10+50093+50020+50122&f=10+50093+50799>



<http://www.rei.com/product/839631/the-north-face-warm-long-underwear-tights-mens>

Mid-layers

The main role of mid-layers is to provide insulation. Wool and synthetics such as fleece are both suitable mid-layer fabrics. Many people prefer partial or full zips to allow venting.



Synthetic hiking pants should allow movement. Many students prefer the variety with zip-off legs allowing them to be converted to shorts in warm weather. If you do not have zip-off legs, shorts are also recommended.

<http://www.rei.com/product/844210/rei-aldervale-roll-up-pants-womens>

<http://www.rei.com/product/814743/rei-woodland-fleece-jacket-mens>



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Outer Layers

It gets cold on both Kili and Meru! OP participants need a warm winter jacket. The outer layer should offer some protection from the wind. Nylon and nylon blends are a good choice. Down and synthetic fill options are both available. As with sleeping bags, down is compact and low-weight while still offering excellent warmth.

<http://www.mec.ca/product/5023-363/mec-light-degree-hoodie-womens/?f=10+50006+50020+50093>



Warmer Weather Gear

Most student prefer to have both short-sleeved and long-sleeved synthetic shirts for hiking in warmer weather, and which can double as extra layers when it is cold.



<http://www.mec.ca/product/5026-766/patagonia-capilene-1-silkweight-stretch-long-sleeved-crew-mens/?h=10+50089+50122+50020&f=10+50089+50128>



<http://www.mec.ca/product/5022-129/mec-t1-short-sleeved-crew-womens/?h=10+50093+50020+50122&f=10+50093+50799>

Other Gear



Other items that OP participants require:

- Mug, plate, bowl, fork, knife, and spoon*
- Sleeping mat (for tenting trips)*
- 2 sturdy water bottles*
- Torch (preferably head lamp)
- Sunglasses and hat

(Items marked * may be borrowed from the OP store)

<http://www.rei.com/product/852372/rei-nalgene-narrow-mouth-loop-top-water-bottle-32-fl-oz>

Questions? Please contact:

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Bike Shorts

Mountain biking can be a lot more comfortable with the proper shorts. These deal well with the friction on these types of trips.

<https://www.rei.com/product/168768/pearl-izumi-attack-bike-shorts-mens>



Bike Helmets



Head protection is required on these trips, finding one that is comfortable for you is important.

<https://www.rei.com/product/169939/bontrager-solstice-bike-helmet>

Bike Gloves



Gloves can be key in those rough patches. Try to find something tough but breathable as it can get hot.

<https://www.rei.com/product/146843/pearl-izumi-pulaski-bike-gloves-mens>

Other items that bikers may consider:

- Camelback water pack
- Small backpack

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Mask and Snorkel

If you intend to go on multiple water OP trips or get to the ocean outside of school time while in Tanzania, a good fitting mask and possible snorkel may be helpful. Short fins (flippers) may also be handy in helping you move quickly.

<https://www.rei.com/product/172143/aqua-lung-sport-hawkeye-snorkeling-set>



Water shoes

Many beaches here may have coral, sharp shells or sea urchins that can do damage to your feet, particularly in rockpooling or snorkeling in the mangrove areas. A durable, but inexpensive set of water shoes can help.



<https://www.decathlon.com/products/diving-shoes-120?adept-product=diving-shoes-120>



Rash guard (Swim shirt)



Rash guards serve two purposes, one is that they protect you from the sun. another is they will protect you from the surf. We recommend these for water OP trips.

Long sleeve do offer more protection.

<https://www.rei.com/product/129717/nrs-h2core-rashguard-long-sleeve-shirt-mens>

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