

# Trip Planning and Safety for Backpackers

by Keri Bowzaylo

“To have a great adventure and survive requires good judgement. Good judgement comes from experience.” – Geoff Tabin

This article will provide information on how to hit the trail safely and responsibly.

1. Trip Planning
  - \*Choose a location – start and finish
  - \*Set a timeline – How far do you want to go? How long do you want to take?
  - \*Download maps
  - \*Book campsites and permits
  - \*Note the water sources – how far between
  - \*Know your resupply options – locations you can get packages sent to or stores you can purchase from
  - \*Check trail reports – for current trail conditions or for closures
  - \*SHARE YOUR PLAN
2. Campsite Locations
  - \*The GDTA website (<https://greatdividetrail.com/>) has a [great resource for where campsites are located](#), what is available at each, and what permits are required.
3. Guthook Guides – Downloadable Map of the Great Divide Trail
  - \*Provides offline access to the map, your current location, water resources, campsites, elevation profile, comments from other hikers on certain areas, and much more!
4. Paper Maps
  - \*In case of technology issues, carry a paper map and highlight your route.
5. Self-sufficiency
  - \*Ensure you carry all your own emergency gear.
  - \*There are many reasons a group can get split up.
6. Safety Gear
  - \*First aid kit
  - \*Space blanket
  - \*Multi tool
  - \*Headlamp
  - \*Fire starting kit

- \*All-weather tarp

- \*Poles – they are a great way to conserve energy and can be used for first aid or equipment issues

## 7. Garmin vs Spot

- \*Garmin

- two-way texting

- rechargeable battery only

- more expensive

- \*Spot

- one-way texting

- AAA battery – longer battery life

- more cost efficient

- do not know if message made it to the other end

## 8. Water Filtration

- \*Very important to filter any mountain water

- \*Many versions available

- Grayl

- MSR TrailShot

## 9. Bears/Wildlife

- \*Wildlife horns – proactive way to let animals know you are in an area, or you can use it in case you see them

- \*Bear spray – know how to use it; make sure it is accessible

- \*Bear bells – recent studies have said that the bells are not as effective and may cause the animals to be curious

“Mountains have a way of dealing with overconfidence” – Hermann Buhl

Be prepared. Be smart. Be aware.

Pack for the worst. Hope for the best.

Minimalism has its place in backpacking, but the essentials should never be sacrificed to ensure short-term comfort when your long term-comfort could be at risk. Train with the gear on your back. Become stronger to carry what you need.