

What you need for an Alpine adventure – written by expert guide Kathy Murphy

Kathy Murphy, IFMGA Guide (she was the second British woman to achieve this status), runs our mountaineering and glacier trekking holidays in the Alps. She guides many of these trips herself and her particular brand of leadership, described variously by clients as 'highly professional', 'fun' and 'kick-ass', makes her a very popular choice. Here she gives a no-nonsense guide to her Alpine essentials for trips which involve carrying your equipment throughout.

1). Comfy boots –

stiff enough to hold a crampon well, comfortable enough for long descents back to the valley and warm enough for early starts from high huts. My favourite boot is the La Sportiva Trango Alp GTX. It's a B2 boot, so it's got a bit of flex in the front half, as well as good support around the ankle. Worn in a bit to avoid blisters – it does the job well.

2). Ankle gaiters/mini-gaiters

– these keep the snow out of my boots and are not as heavy, bulky, hot or as expensive as full-size gaiters. Grasmere DRY Gaiters by Trekmates are my mini-gaiters of choice.

3). Crampons

– I use Grivel G10's with anti-balling plates already fitted.

They have
the 'new-matic' system – a plastic cup at the heel and toe
which means
they fit any boot – even my ski-mountaineering boots in
winter. Plus,
the flexible central bar means they're more comfortable than a
rigid
crampon and don't pull on your heel and cause blisters.

You will notice that the first three essentials are all to do
with my feet – if my feet aren't happy then neither am I!

4). Travel sized bits and pieces

– these are easily found in the UK and at the airport shops –
so a
travel-sized toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, sun cream etc.
And to go
with this – a pack towel – these dry quickly and pack up
really small.

5). Drinking water

– It's always important to stay hydrated when in the
mountains. Make
sure you take a reusable bottle you can fill up along the way!

6). Pack of cards –

great for passing the downtime in the huts. It's sociable and
I have a
whole selection of card games that anyone can quickly learn
and a few
tricks up my sleeve! Obviously, 1 pack per group is enough!

7). Rucksack – my new pack for this season is a Millet

Prolighter 32 in the shorter back length womans version. It
fits well
to my back, close, no fancy frames – when I'm carrying a pack
I want the
load to be stable against my back, not wobbling several inches

away

from it. Importantly, it has 2 compression straps on each side which

effectively make the pack smaller when it's not full and are also useful

for stashing walking poles or ice axe. It's also light at around 1kg.

Avoid packs with gimmicky features such as back systems which add

weight. Why else did I choose it? It's blue – my favourite colour!

8). Waterproof overtrousers –the clue to these is in the name – they should fit over everything

you are already wearing, including your harness! Again, I go for light

weight but with a full-length zip that comes up to my hip which means I

can put them on over my boots and crampons. When I'm back in the UK I

always buy a new pair of Goretex Packlite Overtrousers made by Berghaus.