

Alonzo Stagg 50/20 Hike

Equipment Advice for Long-Distance (25-50 Mile) Hikers (2014 Update)

The Alonzo Stagg Hike is both a physical and a mental challenge. In addition to proper nutrition, proper hydration, proper sleep, proper training, and having a positive mental attitude, you can help yourself “somewhat” by traveling light and wearing proper clothing and proper footwear. This handout discusses equipment for Long Distance Hiking (meaning 25 Miles or more).

Support Daypack or Duffel

Our Alonzo Stagg Hike is “supported” – meaning that there are Support Stops along the way that provide food, drink, first aid, and encouragement. Equally importantly, it also means that the Support Stop Staff will forward a daypack or a small duffel bag containing whatever you want to your next Support Stop. This relay system is kept up all hike long. This is a huge benefit versus you having to carry all this stuff on your back, and in fact many hikers who have finished the hike will tell you that they never would have made it if they had had to carry 10-20 pounds of personal gear along the way.

To take advantage of this, pack a small duffel or large daypack of your stuff (**with your name VISIBLY written on the bag or on a tag on the bag**). It helps you locate it quickly if you have an unusually colored or shaped bag, as opposed to one with a common appearance. Extra shoes, socks, layer-type clothing, music accessories, sunglasses, rain gear, cold weather gear, new batteries, personal meds, personal first aid gear, keys and wallets, can all be placed inside your bag. **Also put a 3x5 card INSIDE your bag with your name, Troop number, and home telephone number** written down on it (legibly!) This is a critical backup in case your outside tag is lost, and also gives us contact information if you just have your name written on the outside of your bag. If it’s likely to be a wet day, be sure to pack everything in big plastic bags. Keep everything organized in such a way that you’re not spending 5 minutes looking for things.

At St. Agnes, your bag will go in a van that is going to the first Support Stop, and so it will be waiting for you when you arrive there. If you’re **continuing** on the Hike, you shift your bag to whichever shuttle van is going to the next stop (there will be signs telling you where to put your bag). If you’re **quitting** the Hike, you take your bag with you.

DO NOT carry a heavy daypack on your hike! One of the sillier things we see every year are young Scouts carry 20, 30, or even 40 pound packs for a 10 mile hike (a 40 pound pack weighs more than the backpack I carried for 3 months on my attempted Appalachian Trail through-hike!) Adult leaders should be very wary of this mistake, because a Scout who unnecessarily exhausts himself hiking just 10 miles is unlikely to participate in any future hikes or backpacking events.

Clothing

This is a performance event. With the possible exception of the new zip-off long pants, **Scout uniforms and especially Scout socks are never appropriate clothing for long distance hiking**. Dress in layers for the weather. Pay attention to the forecast, and bring appropriate clothing to handle the weather AND the temperature changes through the course of the Hike. Be aware, you could start hiking at 35 degrees, have it crest 70 by mid-afternoon, and be back in the 20’s by midnight. It could be sunny to start and raining (or even thunder-storming) at the finish. Or vice versa. It could be perfectly calm all day, or blowing 25 mph all

morning. And so on. If you're going for 50 miles, you may have to be able to handle that entire range. Know what's expected, hope for the best and "Be Prepared" for the worst.

Footwear

Footwear is very important. Unless it's raining heavily (in which case we'd likely postpone the hike), **don't wear boots** – they weigh too much, and will rapidly tire you out. Use a comfortable pair of hiking or running shoes that are already broken in. The key to foot comfort is good cushioning and proper fit. Do not wear new footwear, or you'll be blistering up in 5 miles. Your shoes should be flexible enough for comfortable walking but not so flexible or loose fitting as to cause foot strain or blistering. Some hikers, especially those going for 50 miles, bring two or three pairs of shoes, and change them at regular intervals. This gives their feet a break from the same wear-points all day, and if the second or third pair is slightly larger they can accommodate swelling feet (your feet will swell during the hike – and so will your hands). Some hikers wear "hiking" sandals late in their hike (or even for their entire hike) to help compensate for swelling (however, don't use beach sandals or flip-flops for this purpose!)* If you feel that you need additional cushioning, you can use an insert to help – if you do this, remember to take original thin padding out of the shoe, or your feet will rub against the top of the shoe; this will cause "turf toes"*** and abrasions on the tops of your toes and the tops of your feet. If you decide to use inserts, you should put them in your shoes at least a week in advance, to allow your feet to get used to the new pressure and wear points.

[* Another recent innovation are "toe" hiking or running sandals – but these are so new that their effectiveness for long distance hiking is unknown. To my knowledge, to date no one has attempted any of our 50/20 Hikes wearing these type sandals. For now, they are not recommended for this event. If anyone experiments with these on this or future, similar events, we'd appreciate an evaluation of how well they worked – or didn't.]

[** "Turf toes" (i.e., blackened toenails) are blood blisters under your toenails. This typically occurs when your feet slide too much in your shoe, causing your toes to mash repeatedly into the toe-box. Most hikers and athletes that experience turf toes will eventually lose the affected toenails (a painful experience, and extremely painful if it happens during the hike itself). To limit this possibility, cut your nails back as much as possible before the hike, and make sure that while you have ample room to wiggle your toes, that your feet do not slide forward and back inside the shoe while walking. If they do slide, you need better fitting shoes! (over-tightening a pair of loose shoes doesn't work).]

Socks

Socks are as important as shoes. Good socks help cushion your feet and also help prevent blisters. Conversely, bad socks can ruin your feet. Cotton socks are usually a really bad idea. Many hikers wear "liner" socks with outside socks to help prevent blisters. Polypro liner socks wick moisture away from your feet, and reduce friction. If you wear liner socks, use "SmartWool" or equivalent socks as the outside layer. A recent innovation are "toe" socks (e.g., InJinJi) which are very effective at preventing blisters between toes – now available at most camping outlets, including locally at Casual Adventure and REI. If possible, change your socks at every rest stop, and apply foot powder liberally. This helps "revitalize" your feet, keeps your feet dry, and reduces the incidence of blisters. Apply Blistex, moleskin, or (best!) blister pads to hotspots as soon as you feel them; don't wait!

Bad Weather

If there is one thing that few long-distance hikers have any enthusiasm for, it's hiking for many hours or all day in the rain – especially a cold downpour. This event would likely be postponed for all day rain (and was in

2010), but not for drizzle, sporadic showers, or a passing line of storms. In such cases, a breathable rain suit can help. Multiple changes of clothing are also very important – even with a rain suit on, you will get wet from condensation and sweat. Gaiters can help keep your feet drier. If it's warm outside (e.g., about 70 degrees or more), some hikers will hike through a heavy storm, then stop and completely change into dry clothing once it's passed by. Others will try and wait out a storm under a bridge or in a convenient building, but this risks stiffening up to the point of having to drop out (so if you do this, keep moving around while you're waiting – don't just sit there). Obviously, be very cautious through thunderstorms and/or in storms with high winds. The bottom line is that bad weather adds to the challenge, but it can be overcome. In such cases, having bad weather gear **when you need it** is key; i.e., you need to anticipate when you need to change, because your gear duffel may be miles away when you need it.

Topical Lubricants and Medications for Chafing, Blisters, Or Soreness

Desitin “creamy ointment” (the white cream) is an excellent protective lubricant in the crotch and anal areas (don't get hung up on its marketed purpose – it's great stuff). Apply it at home, before coming to St. Agnes. If you experience chafing in armpits, the back of your ankles, or elsewhere, application of a Body Lube or Vaseline can help. Use of Icy-Hot or a similar product on your lower back, hamstrings, quads, and calves can help prevent soreness, or alleviate it if you're too late in preventing it. All of these items can be kept in your duffel or daypack. Many long distance hikers apply lubricants or muscle soreness medications before starting their hikes, and reapply as needed during their hike, at the Support Stops.

Be Ready Friday Night!

All of your equipment and clothing – EVERYTHING – should be packed or laid out, ready to go, when you go to bed on Friday night. Waiting til Saturday morning almost guarantees that you will forget critical items – and if you forget critical items, you will have badly hurt your chances to make your intended distance. Most folks are not at their sharpest at 4:00 am. Many experienced hikers (including myself) are actually ready to go several days in advance with respect to their equipment.

Good Luck! Hike On!