



SWS Mountain Guides
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General Expedition Information Hotels, Flights, Food, Feet, Drink, Hygiene, Altitude, Attitude, and More

One of the definitions of adventure travel is when the outcome of an undertaking is uncertain. By this definition, mountaineering indeed qualifies and especially expeditions to foreign lands. We go to the mountains for many reasons, but a common one for most people is the adventurous nature of the experience. But the same variables contributing to the joy and excitement we can get in the mountains can also cause problems and discomfort if not considered by those planning an adventure into the alpine world. Our brief overview of the more critical issues concerning the health and safety of all mountaineers and their impact on the mountains is provided to help you control your well-being while on your expedition.

Hotel Reservations and Plane Flight Schedules: Your Lead Guide will contact you approximately- 14-21 days before your departure date. You are sent the hotel name, address, and phone number, along with instructions on how to get to the meeting place "hotel." You will also be sent your guide's name(s) and flight information so you can check at the airport to see if there has been a delay in your guide's flight(s). So, make sure you have this information before leaving home. And be sure to give your flight information to the SWS Mountain Guides office once it's been confirmed so we can check on your arrival.

The reservations for your room will be in the name of your guide(s) or SWS Mountain Guides; you can try either; it depends on the hotel and the staff. Your guide(s) will try to get to the hotel before the clients. We do most of the time, but this is international travel in second and third-world countries, so don't panic if we are delayed. If the hotel staff can't find your reservation when you arrive, get a room, and we will see you! If you are uncomfortable with getting to the meeting "hotel" on your own, we can arrange to meet you at the airport, as long as you don't arrive in the middle of the night! Above all, please don't panic. We will find you at either the airport or the hotel.

Altitude: As altitude is gained and the atmospheric pressure drops, there is less available oxygen in the air. The percentage of oxygen remains the same, but there is less per given volume. At 18,000 feet, the atmospheric and oxygen pressure in the air is only half that at sea level. Our bodies undergo complex, yet not fully understood, changes to compensate for the lack of oxygen. At moderate heights (8,000'-10 000'), most people coming from a sea level start to notice shortness of breath that can progress to tiredness, headache, and flu-like symptoms. Usually, this will subside after a day or two at altitude. At higher elevations, these problems can be much more severe.

It takes longer than the Length of most expeditions to acclimate to the altitude fully, but there are a few things you can do to facilitate the process: 1.) Try and be well-rested, fed, and hydrated at the start of your trip. 2.) Avoid alcohol and other drugs immediately before and during your trip. 3.) Drink lots of water and keep caffeine intake to moderate levels, especially during your airline flight. Most airline cabins are pressurized to between 6,000 and 8,000 ft. 4.) When you arrive at your destination, pace yourself and breathe. Slow and steady is the way to go; remember to drink plenty of water. 5.) Our expedition schedules allow as much time as possible to acclimate properly. At first, the trip may go at a slow pace. To enable everyone to acclimatize since people do acclimatize at different rates. So relax, enjoy the culture, and explore the new country. 6.) On more extended expeditions, remember to bring a book, a travel journal, or another diversion because much time is spent sitting at higher camps continuing the acclimatization process. Maintaining your health at altitudes above 18,000 ft is essential.

Hydration: How much water do you drink on a typical day at home or work? Most of us need to drink at least 4-6 quarts in a day of climbing or hiking, more on a hot day. That's much more than most people drink in the city, but drinking enough water is the most natural thing to avoid altitude, fatigue, heat, and cold problems. Dehydration is a contributing factor to almost all health problems in the mountains. Do not include alcoholic drinks when gauging your fluid intake. Alcohol can contribute to dehydration in your body. Instead, we encourage using the new "Sports Drinks" – they help replace lost electrolytes. Besides, they make the water you need to drink more appealing – something important in a situation where natural hunger and thirst responses are suppressed. See below.



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Food: SWS Mountain Guides provide nutrition on all expeditions while in the field. There are no significant decisions to be made – we know how much and what kind of foods are best for each type of activity. Although you will be asked for input as we buy/or served mostly local foodstuff in the market, the selection is significant in big cities. You are welcome to come along on our shopping days (if we shop) and help with various foods. If you are bringing special snacks from the United States, there are some important choices to consider. Contrary to the popular image of increased appetites in the "Great Outdoors," most people experience diminished cravings at the increased altitudes of most of our expeditions. Though your body is working much harder and using up to 4,000-6,000 calories daily, or roughly twice the average expenditure, you often won't feel like eating. But it's essential to make every calorie count. Choose foods high in complex carbohydrates for sustained energy, and have flavors that you strongly like. **Remember** that this is one place fats are okay. You won't have to worry about gaining weight – many folks lose weight on an expedition! Instead, try to eat small amounts frequently – even if you don't feel like it. On our more strenuous trips, you'll get used to your guide urging you to eat, eat, eat. Finger foods work best, so look for whole-grain bars, trail mixes (usually labeled "super" or "deluxe"), dried fruit, power bars, energy bars, and other small, tasty choices. Go for as much variety as possible, but remember, you've got to eat it, or the weight in your pack is just wasted – so forget the power bar and bring the snickers.

Sanitation: In the field, human waste should be disposed of at least 200 feet from trails, campsites, huts, and water sources or use the facility provided. Solid human waste should be buried 6-8 inches underground in mineral soil, and toilet paper should be burned. In most areas of the foreign countries we visit, the sewage systems are less developed than in the U.S.; you will find a small trash can next to the toilet for your used toilet paper (South America, Mexico, and Nepal). Don't put the paper down the toilet, because the systems can't handle the toilet paper. There are other methods for waste disposal depending on the particular environment or hut system; your guide will provide more information.

Staying clean in a foreign country is more challenging than in the States, but preventing disease and travelers' diarrhea is more critical. Bring soap to the hotels, huts, and camps in the mountains. Also, individually packaged alcohol towelettes or small bottles of hand sanitizer are perfect for cleaning hands, which is just as important in the mountains as at home, especially when preparing or handling food.

Foot care: Even perfect feet in the best boots can be prone to problems. A bad blister can ruin an expedition, so fixing irritating hot spots is essential before they become serious trouble. Hot spots on your feet caused by friction between your foot and boot should be repaired with moleskin when they first appear. Don't worry about slowing down the group to stop; most folks appreciate the break. Come prepared with plenty of moleskin and some Vaseline. An inexpensive and effective blister prevention technique is a thin layer of petroleum jelly (Vaseline) applied to all potentially troublesome areas. It is messy, so be prepared for stained sock liners but happier feet!

Impact: Our prime directive when in a foreign country is to be ecologically minded. Respect the environment as you would any wilderness area in the States. You may find locals and others abuse the land more than we are used to, but respect their country and their right to do so; it does not give you the freedom to abuse the land. Pick up all the trash, burn your toilet paper, and bury your feces. Leave a good example, respect the environment, and remember this is not our country, and you are a guest!

Expedition Packing: If you are in doubt about something on the equipment list or have any questions, please give our office a call. Remember, the airlines have restrictions on the weight and bulk of your equipment (see below). So first, we recommend you pack most of your equipment in a large duffel bag, including your pack, which prevents the straps from getting tangled or broken in the baggage.



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Equipment: Tape up all ice ax points, crampons, and other sharp objects with cardboard and duct tape. Remember, no fuel or fuel containers are allowed on any airline. Hopefully, you can restrict your baggage to one large duffel max of 50 lbs.; Use two duffels to keep the weight under 50 pounds per bag. **Second**, you should bring with you on the plane a small travel bag containing these critical items:

Small Travel Bags should include the following:

- Extra change of clothing (socks, underwear, shirt), proper footwear,
- Toiletries: toothbrush, razor, personal prescriptions,
- Cell Phone & headphones
- Extra batteries and chargers for your phone – **Note:** Download the airlines' app for entertainment before leaving.
- Warm Jacket
- Passport, money, credit cards, a copy of electronic airline tickets, Copy of expedition hotel information
- Copy of your Passport / Extra Passport Photos – at least two/four are nice to carry for last-minute visas
- Driver's License or other Official ID in case you need to replace your Passport
- You're hiking or climbing boots, if practical (they may be the only things we cannot get at your destination)

International flights can sometimes be tricky; you may end up in another destination due to weather conditions in the mountains or other circumstances. We will wait for you to arrive if this happens. You will be much more comfortable with the above items if you have to "overnight in a strange place"... it's just part of the adventure. Remember, it will be a great story when you get home! Try to carry your boots on the plane as well. Usually, we can replace or borrow other items and make the expedition happen if they lose your luggage, but boots can be a problem.

Please bring all the items on the equipment list. Our guides try to get some extra gear with them, but they can only do so much, and certain things might be available at your destination. If you need to bring the proper equipment, SWS Mountain Guides reserves the right to send you home without a refund. Also, you will be required to carry your share of the group equipment (food, stoves, tents) unless other arrangements have been made, so leave some extra room in that pack. As always, give us a call if you have any questions.

Airline Baggage Regulations: Current international baggage limits are as follows, but check with your particular airline for international baggage restrictions. Note: some international airlines are starting to charge for baggage and have kilo restrictions instead of lbs which maybe be less. Please check with your airlines.

2 Bags weighing no more than 50 lbs/ plus one carry-on that fits under your seat up to 35 lbs Bag one: 62" determined by Length x Width x Length = 62 inches

Bag two: 55" determined by Length x Width x Length = 55 inches

If you exceed these restrictions, the airlines may charge you expensive excess baggage fees.

Finally, remember, the summit is only 49% of the climb... Getting to the top of a mountain can be the easy part of the climb. Now that you're on top, you've to get down, only now you're tired, clouds are building, and napping sounds more like what you'd rather be doing. Remember to budget enough mental as well as physical energy for the descent. Remember, summits only count when you've returned safely to the hotel and can tell someone about it!

Tipping/Gratuities: Tipping is customary on guided trips and are usually between 10% to 20% of the total cost of the trip. If you are pleased with the service provided by your guide or instructor and would like to show additional appreciation, then a gratuity is always appreciated.