Trail Adventure Planning Checklist

■ always = All efforts ■ 3h+ = Trips over 3 hours ■ 6h+ = Trips over 6 hours ■ overnight = Multi-day / overnight ■ snow = Snow / ice on trail ■ alpine = Above treeline ■ technical = Remote / technical terrain

Movement + Carry | Items that support forward progress

ITEM	NOTES	WHEN TO INCLUDE
Running vest or waist pack	Sized to carry your full load comfortably	[always]
Trail running shoes	Choose a tread that is compatable with your running surface	[always]
Trekking poles	Poles can reduce leg load ~25% on sustained climbs	[3h+] [alpine] [technical]
Pole tips / rubber caps	Rubber caps for hard surfaces; carbide for trail	[3h+] [alpine]
Spare laces or paracord	Lightweight and versatile. A good tool to have in your pack	[6h+] [overnight]
Gaiters	Low-cut for debris; full for mud/snow	[snow] [technical]
Microspikes or ice cleats	Essential when trail has frozen sections	[snow]
Trekking pole baskets (snow)	Swap standard tips for deep snow or soft trail	[snow]

Fuel + Water | Energy and hydration to sustain effort

ITEM	NOTES	WHEN TO INCLUDE
Water bottles or bladder	Target 0.5-1L carry capacity per hour between sources	[always]
Water filter	Map water sources in advance on CalTopo or Gaia	[3h+] [alpine]
Chemical treatment tabs	Aquatabs as a backup if filter freezes or clogs	[snow] [overnight]
Electrolyte mix or tablets	Sodium is critical on efforts over 4 hours	[3h+]
Fast-burning fuel (gels/chews)	Target 200-300 cal/hr; test brands in training	[always]
Slower-burning real food	Rice balls, dates, nut butter, bars for hour 4+	[6h+] [overnight]
20% caloric reserve	Always carry more than your calculated minimum	[always]
Caffeine source	Gels, chews, or instant coffee for night sections	[6h+] [overnight] [technical]
Insulated bottle / thermos	Warm drink in cold conditions prevents early fatigue	[snow]
Resupply plan / drop bag list	Write contents list; label with km marker	[overnight]

Pre-Departure Planning | Complete before leaving the trailhead

- ☐ **Route loaded on GPS watch and phone (offline)**
- ☐ **Water sources mapped along route**
- ☐ **Decision points identified and noted**
- ☐ **Bailout options reviewed**
- ☐ **Trip plan completed and left with emergency contact**
- ☐ **Emergency contact knows: trailhead, route, return ETA, action plan**
- ☐ **All gear tested on a prior training effort**
- ☐ **Pack weight assessed, unnecessary items removed**
- ☐ **Weather forecast checked (48-hour window)**

Comfort + Protection | Protection from the elements and sustained effort

ITEM	NOTES	WHEN TO INCLUDE
Waterproof / wind shell	Non-negotiable on any effort over 3 hours or in the alpine	[3h+] [alpine]
Warm insulating layer	Puffy or fleece: stored and accessible, not buried	[3h+] [alpine]
Moisture-wicking base layer	Avoid cotton; choose merino or synthetic	[always]
Hat (sun or warm)	Sun hat in summer / toque in shoulder seasons	[always]
Gloves (lightweight)	Even in summer. It can be much colder above treelines	[alpine] [snow]
Gloves (insulated)	Waterproof shell gloves for winter or wet alpine	[snow]
Neck gaiter / balaclava	Critical once wind picks up on exposed ridges	[snow] [alpine]
Sunglasses	UV protection and glare reduction on snow	[always]
Sunscreen (face + hands)	Apply before start; pack a travel-size for reapply	[always]
Lip balm with SPF	Often overlooked, but the damage is real on long days	[always]
Anti-chafe cream / lube	Apply to inner thighs, underarms, nipples, and known hotspots	[3h+]
Moisture-wicking socks	Avoid cotton; consider Injinji or double-layer thin socks	[always]
Spare socks	Dry feet = happy feet	[6h+] [overnight]
Foot care kit	Leukotape, needle, alcohol wipes for blister triage	[6h+] [overnight]
Emergency bivy / space blanket	Weighs ~100g and could save your life in an emergency	[3h+] [alpine]
Sleeping bag or quilt	Choose one rated for the forecasted overnight low temperature.	[overnight]
Sleeping pad (insulated)	Ground insulation is as critical as bag rating	[overnight]

Problem-Solving | Tools to get you home safely

ITEM	NOTES	WHEN TO INCLUDE
Headlamp (primary)	Absolute minimum 200 lumens; fresh batteries or charged	[3h+]
Backup lighting	Small clip light or spare headlamp	[6h+] [overnight]
Spare batteries or power bank	Cold kills battery life quickly. Be sure to include charge cables	[3h+]
GPS watch (route loaded)	Download route offline *BEFORE* leaving service	[always]
Offline map (Phone: Gaia/CalTopo)	Screenshot key waypoints as a failsafe	[3h+] [alpine]
Paper map (waterproofed)	Backup if device fails; mark decision points	[overnight] [technical]
Compass	Know how to use it before you need it	[overnight] [technical]
First aid kit	Wound care, pain management, trauma bandage.	[3h+]
Satellite communicator (inReach)	Two-way messaging + SOS in areas with no cell service	[alpine] [overnight] [technical]
Phone (charged, service checked)	Download offline maps; know last cell service zone	[always]
Trip plan (left with contact)	Route, decision points, return time, emergency contact	[always]
Emergency whistle	Usually attached to vest strap; audible at long range	[always]
Bear spray	Know deployment technique; carry accessible	[always]
Bear canister or hang kit	Required for overnight stays in some permit areas	[overnight] [alpine]
Knife or multi-tool	Gear repairs, first aid, emergency use	[overnight] [technical]
Duct tape (small wrap)	Gear repairs, blister backup, improvised splint	[6h+] [overnight]
Emergency fire starter	Lighter + firestarter tabs in waterproof bag	[overnight] [alpine]

Notes / Route Details