

85th Renfrew & Inverclyde (1st Inverkip)



Rucksack Buying Guide

We are often asked what we recommend for Scouts buying a first (basic) rucksack for hillwalking. Here's some things to look for. Note for weekend or summer camps where we're not carrying our personal gear long distances, hold-alls are as practical as rucksacks as they allow easier access to clothes and equipment. This guide therefore refers to rucksacks for the purpose of walking

1. Size: Should be 25-40litres for day hillwalking. Older scouts / explorers may consider 60-70litres for overnight hill expeditions, but will still prefer to have a 2nd smaller size rucksack for day trips. Look to spend £30 - £50 for a first 'day' rucksack that should last. More for a larger overnight rucksack.
2. Pockets – allow you to keep lunch, water bottle, waterproofs, map/compass, emergency torch/whistle handy without having to dig
3. Ice Axe loops allow you to carry your ice axe safely on the outside of your rucksack. Rucksacks often have 1 or 2 loops at the base of the rucksack to secure the head of the ice axe. Make sure there's a matching loop higher up the body of the rucksack to secure the handle. It seems surprising that the first would be there but not the other, but we've seen some rucksacks that didn't have the loop for the handle.
4. Loops on top of the lid – can be used to secure crampons safely as their spikes will damage your other equipment if you have to pack them inside your rucksack. If not planning on winter hillwalking, you may still use these to secure a camper mat instead.
5. Hip Belt – a wide hip belt adjusted properly will allow your hips to carry much of the weight of your rucksack – relieving your back and shoulders
6. Adjustable shoulder straps. Most rucksacks have these but remember to use them every time you put your rucksack on. Use them to make sure your hip belt takes the weight.
7. Padded back – nice to have for day trips, but mostly you won't notice the advantage as your pack will be fairly light anyway. More of a good thing for overnight expeditions.
8. Material Strength – you should be able to get a low cost rucksack made of good quality material. Beware very cheap rucksacks which will tear or the shoulder strap stitching will give. Millets are a good place to start. Remember you get a 10% discount as a Scout from Millets – just take in your neckie.
9. Waterproofing. Most good rucksacks will have a reasonable waterproofing level. Be aware that no rucksack will protect your equipment 100% from the Scottish mountain weather. Always use a plastic liner inside your rucksack. These are like extra thick bin-bags which are normally priced higher than you would expect, but are essential. At least use a strong bin bag.
10. Sleeping bag Compartment – Won't be used for most day trips. Only an advantage for overnight trips
11. Other loops and clips are often available. These are really targeted at technical climbers for easy access to karabiners, etc. A nice to have only for most scouts.