

Cliff Gray, Owner/Outfitter – Lic. # 2975  
PO Box 5977  
Eagle, CO 81631

Phone: (970) 343-4460  
Email: cliff@FTGuides.com  
FlatTopsWildernessGuides.com

## Recommended Fall Bear Equipment List

### General Considerations

The best gear you can bring is a pair of lungs and legs in the best shape possible. All the money in the world can't buy gear that will replace fitness. If you smoke, try your best to quit before your trip.

On bear hunts you need to be prepared to 1) ride a horse 1-3 hours per day, and 2) comfortably glass for 2-3 hours at a time. This typically means warmer clothing than you would usually pack for a September hunt. Limited movement during both activities can bring on a chill.

The weather in September is unpredictable and any day can turn out to be a winter day up in the high country. A large portion of our hunting area is around 10,000ft and above. Days can be warm, into the 70's, and nights below freezing.

**Stay away from cotton**, i.e. Carhartt, blue jeans, cotton socks, etc... When cotton gets wet it is useless and it will exacerbate suboptimal weather's effect on your body. Focus on wool and synthetics. There is a lot of newer technology clothing that is lightweight, packable, warm and dries quickly.

We recommend brands and models of specific gear in our lists. Do not construe these recommendations as the only option. We use these items personally. Because we do this for a living, our choices are on the more expensive end of the spectrum. There is always a range of prices on gear that will get the job done.

At the end of this list, we include a list of what our guides carry that can be shared. If you are on a guided hunt you can choose to not carry/bring these items yourself.

Don't hesitate to give us a call about any specific gear questions.

## **Boots and Footwear**

### 1 Primary pair of waterproof hiking boots.

- Boots that are lined with Gore-Tex (usually indicated with GTX in the model name) are a good option.
- If we have indicated to you that we will be hunting our high camps, a mountaineering type boot is best. We use Hanwag Alaskas, Kenetrek Mountain Extremes, Scarpa Fuego or Wrangell, Lowa Tibets, and Meindl Alaska Hunters.
- As a less expensive option, many hunters are happy with Danner boots.
- Try to visit a retail location where you can try on different boot models. Fit is essential.
- In steep terrain, the rigidity of the sole is more important than the boot height. Wearing boots that are uncomfortably high can cause “shin bump”, an uncomfortable sore spot on your shins.
- We do not recommend plastic mountaineering boots. They are too uncomfortable when covering level ground.

### 1 Secondary pair of boots/shoes

- In September, a pair of Merrel type hiking shoes is great backup footwear. They are not great in wet conditions, but the reduced weight and increased breathability are nice.
- A pair of tennis shoes can even work well in September as camp/backup footwear.

### 4 Pair sock liners

- Thin liner socks will help you avoid blisters and allow you to pack fewer pairs of primary socks.
- We prefer ultra-thin, silk liners. Merino wool and synthetics will also work well.

### 4 Pair primary socks

- Even in September, the best option is heavy wool.
- If you tend to have warm feet, bring lightweight wool socks in place of your liner socks. If the weather is warm, you can just wear the lightweight socks.

### Gators (Optional)

- Great in snow and/or rain. Also great when dealing with high, frosty or dewy vegetation
- Keep your boots and feet dryer



## **Base Clothing and Layers**

Bring enough layers to be comfortable hiking for an hour in 70 degrees and sitting still for 2-3 hours at 35 degrees.

**All clothing, except base clothing, should be camouflage. We use mostly predator and outfitter camo patterns. Both Sitka and Kuiu patterns work well. Other patterns also work well.**

**Bring quiet gear. If it goes “swoosh” when you move, don’t bring it.**

1 Full set of rain gear

- If you see yourself hunting a lot in the rain (not just waiting it out), purchase the more expensive Sitka or Kuiu gear. It does a good job, is comfortable and is not noisy. We guide using Kuiu Yukon rain gear, but you can get away with lighter options.
- Don’t forget rain pants!

## **Other Clothing**

2 Pairs of gloves

- One light weight and one heavier (wool is best) pair of gloves is optimal.
- We prefer glommits because they allow us to use our fingers. Cabelas Big Game Glommits are a good choice.
- You can also wear dark pig skin leather gloves with separate wool liners for insulation if needed.
- Some of our archers choose to not wear gloves so they are better ready for shooting opportunities.
- Learn to quickly remove or shoot your bow with your chosen gloves.

1 Warm hat and/or baclava

- We usually wear wool beanies, but this is personal preference
- Light fleece hats can be plenty warmth during archery season

Camo face paint

- The tube kind works and travels the best



## Archery/Rifle/Hunting Gear

### Bow

#### Arrows with extra broadheads and fieldpoints

- Work with an archery shop to setup a consistent set of arrows specifically geared towards bears
- The better brands of mechanical broadheads work well on black bears
- We do not make recommendations on arrow specifics because so much personal preference is involved. The important factor is that you have practiced and are confident at varying distances.
- You must safely pack your broad heads and arrows for packing on mules. Arrows must be in a hard tube. Large diameter pvc pipe with caps works well. Poster tubes also work. Broad heads must be packed off in a hard box or tin. No exceptions.

#### Release and an extra release

#### Arm guard if used

#### Spare parts for you bow

#### Allen wrench set

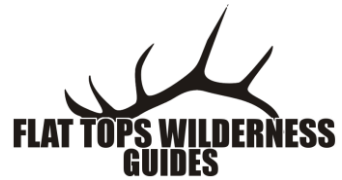
#### String wax

#### Wind indicator

Do not bring a pistol. It is just added weight and will not protect you any better than your bow.

#### Rifle - .270 and larger

- 20 rounds of ammo
- Be capable of 300 yard shots. Being confident at 350-500 yards is a plus in our big country.



## Tool Gear

### 1 Head lamp

- A light with both a red and white light is best. Having multiple bulbs is a good backup and red is better while riding because the horses/mules are more comfortable with it.

### 1 Small flashlight

### 1 Small GPS (Optional)

- Simple GPS's are fine. We use eTrex models that are small, easy to use, economical, and waterproof.

Extra batteries and bulbs for all equipment

### Topo map and compass (Optional)

- Check your compass to make sure it is pointing to North
- Do not store your compass near lead fishing weights or similar items. It is easy to reverse polarize today's cheaper compass. A reverse polarized compass will take you in the exact opposite direction.

### Binoculars

- Your optics are the second most important piece of gear, right behind boots.
- We have had good luck with the top models from Nikon. Swarovski and other euro glass optics are worth the money if you plan to use them for years of hunting.
- Low-light performance is the most important variable.
- Nikon Trailblazer 10x50s that are waterproof and Leupold Compacts are good mid-range options. SLC and EL Swaros are good high-end optics.
- Cliff guides using 8x42 ELs because he prefers the light gathering of a 5mm+ exit pupil.

One of the best high end optics dealers on the planet is Jaret Owens in Ojai, CA. Jaret has a lifetime of guiding under his belt, has unbeatable pricing and treats people well. Give him a call at 805-551-6815 and tell him Colorado Cliff sent you.

### Binocular Harness

- The original Alaska Guide Creations bino harnesses are a must have in our book.



### Spotting Scope (optional)

- On hunts where we will be scoring animals, your guide will have a good scope
- A guide favorite is Vortex's Razor 20-60x85 or Swaro Modular ATX 85mm
- When not scoring animals, tripod compatible binoculars are generally better than a big scope for finding animals. If going this route, 15x56 Swaros are a worthy lifetime investment.

### Rangefinder (optional)

- The best thing you can do is practice with an elk-sized target at known distances
- Do not practice with a whitetail or smaller target. This will cause you to underestimate the distance of live elk and mule deer
- Vortex makes an economical, high-quality range finder. Several of the European glass brands have nice range finding binoculars.

### Knives and game cleaning (Guide will bring)

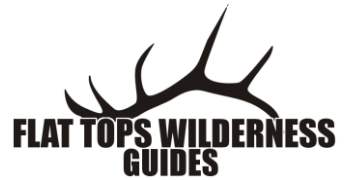
- We carry replaceable blade type knives as our primary game processing tool. Not having to sharpen and carry sharpening tools is a huge plus.
- Havalon and Razor-lite are good replaceable blade knives
- Some of us use axes for quartering, but your guide or drop camp will already be supplied with them.
- Have a classic fixed blade knife for utility jobs and getting around bone if you need to. We use foldable buck knives with 2-4" blades. Their Omni Hunter is a good knife.
- Small bone saws are not necessary. It's difficult to saw an elk pelvic bone with these small saws. Learn to short quarter elk (gutless method).

(Not needed on guided hunts. Having a good knife on you is always a good idea, but your guide will perform your field dressing for you.)

### 6 Game Bags (Guide will bring)

- We can hang your quarters in game bags at base camp in our cool cabin facility.
- Handful of surveyors tape to mark downed game, blood trails or signal your location
- Bags by T.A.G. Bag are pricey but awesome for long-term use. Lightweight too.

(Not needed on guided hunts. We provide game bags in our guided camp.)



#### Day pack

- A comfortable pack in the 1,300-2,200 cubic inch range

#### Camera

- Bring your charger and/or spare batteries
- The cold can quickly uncharge a charged battery

#### Water bottle and/or hydration bladder

- Sturdy bladders that go in your day pack are best

### **Personal Gear**

#### Sleeping bag

- 0-10 degree rated bag is best.
- We prefer non-mummy type bags for comfort, this is personal preference

#### Personal Hygiene and Medication Items

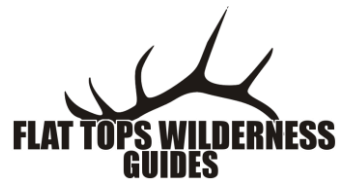
- Make sure you have enough of any prescriptions
- If you have had anaphylaxis (allergic reaction) to bees or other insects, please carry an Epi-Pen at all times.
- Pepto-Bismol and other routine medications can be helpful
- Altitude medication if you have a history of altitude sickness
- Carry personal Aspirin as an immediate treatment for heart attack or pain.  
(We carry extensive first aid kits in our guided camps. These include basic medication like Ibuprofen, Aspirin, Pepto, Imodium)

#### Chapstick and Sunscreen

#### Bug spray

Couple pairs of latex or equivalent gloves for cleaning game or first aid

An extra pair of eye glasses or contacts if you wear them



## Safety Gear

**Design a method to carry the bare essential safety gear on your person at all times. We carry small fanny pack type bags with this gear.**

### Fire starting capability

- Being able to start a fire quickly, without panic, can save your life.
- We use wax covered cotton balls or wax covered dryer lint as tinder that we always carry. These hold a flame for up to a minute in the worst conditions. Always carry tinder that you are confident using. **Do not depend on starting a fire from natural material.**
- Storm matches and water proof matches are good for starting fires here. High altitude can drastically affect the reliability of lighters.
- Have more than one way to start a fire on your person at all times

### 2 Heavy Duty Garbage Bags

- 2 mil+ 55 gallon contractor bags are best
- These bags work better than the thin, shiny safety blankets you find in first aid kits
- Cut a hole for your head and wear as a poncho to keep yourself warm and dry
- Heavy duty emergency bags (usually called emergencies bivys) are a good alternative

### Extra Batteries and Bulbs for your Devices

### Water purification tablets

### Communication device

- In our contracts, we mandate that our hunters rent or we rent on their behalf, a satellite phone or satellite message system (Spot, InReach, etc...)

### Parachute Cord 15-30ft

### Whistle for signaling

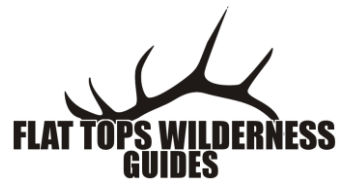
### Small 8x10 Tarp (optional)

- Can be bulky but great to put in the bottom of your day pack until the day you need it. Fantastic for extra warmth or a quick shelter from elements.

### Zip ties

- Useful for a ton of different things from emergency shoe laces to making a quick shelter





### **First Aid Kit**

**Our guides carry first aid kits and our camps have first aid kits in them. Do not waste weight by carrying first aid items you won't use or do not know how to use. For example if you don't have any wilderness medicine training, a zip lock bag with Band-Aids, gauze, Neosporin, tweezers, Benadryl, Moleskin, soap and Ibuprofen is plenty.**

**If you are at risk of a heart attack, bring Aspirin.**

**Bring an Epi-Pen if you are allergic to any insects. You must get these via doctor's prescription.**

### **Paper Work**

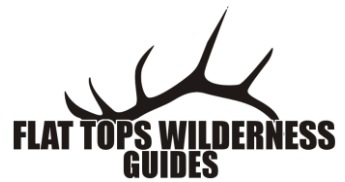
Hunting license and tag

Fishing license if you plan to fish

Anyone born after Jan. 1, 1949 MUST have a Hunter's Safety Card to buy a Colorado hunting license. You must also carry your card with you while hunting!

Any remaining payment for your trip

- **We will not pack in hunters who have not completely paid for their trip.**
- Cash preferred. Cashier's checks are OK. **We do not accept personal checks or credit cards for the remaining balance.**



### **Important Items Our Guides Carry (Only applicable to guided hunts)**

Knives

Radio or other communication

Fire starting capability

Tarp

Bivy bag or contractor's garbage bags

Rope or Parachute Cord

Compass

Surveyors' tape

Elk calls

Game bags

Garbage bags for trash

Game field dressing and quartering equipment

First Aid Kit:

Gauze pads, Combine dressing, Band-aids, Roller gauze, Occlusive dressings, Triangular bandage, Elastic wrap (Ace bandage), Sam splint or Wire splint, Exam gloves, 1 CPR Pocket mask, Blister kit (moleskin, second skin), Splinter tweezers, Medical tape