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Recommended Muzzleloader 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 are overweight, try to shed a few pounds before your trip. If you smoke, try to quit.

Use all your gear before your trip. This especially applies to boots, day pack and safety equipment. New boots should be worn and broken-in before arrival. Making sure your day pack fits well will make your trip more enjoyable. If you have purchased new gear for your trip, familiarize yourself with how it fits and works before arriving.

If you are coming with a group that is hunting in the same camp, do not duplicate items. Work with each other to organize who brings what. Everywhere we hunt requires pack stock. We want to avoid packing unneeded weight.

Guns will be packed in scabbards on riding stock. We will not pack hard gun cases on our pack stock. Pack any tools/parts in your personal gear to be packed on stock.

September weather is highly unpredictable in the high country. A large portion of our hunting area is around 11,000ft. Days can be warm (into the 70's) and nights below freezing.

Stay away from cotton. When cotton gets wet it is useless and it will exacerbate cold or wet 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.

In the below gear list, we offer a handful of recommendations based on what our guides currently use and endorse. However, other brands/models may be similarly effective. In regards to clothing, most of the major hunting brands (Kuiu, Sitka, First Lite, Stone Glacier, etc.) offer high-quality mountain gear that will serve your needs. We are not affiliated with any brand and our recommendations reflect that.



Please don't hesitate to give us a call/email about any specific gear questions!

Boots and Footwear

I - Primary Pair of Waterproof Hiking Boots

- If we have indicated that you will be hunting one of our high camps, a stiffer mountaineering-type boot is best.
- Visit a retail location so 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.
- *Staff recommendations:*
 - Kennetrek Mountain Extreme (Uninsulated)
 - Crispi Guide GTX (Uninsulated)
 - Schnee's Granite (Uninsulated)

I - Secondary Pair of Boots/Shoes

- In September, a pair of lightweight hiking shoes can work well as camp/backup footwear. Many of the newer trail running shoes offer Gore-Tex membranes and are comfortable/effective for light mountain hiking. Choose something less aggressive and lighter weight than your primary boots. They will work in a pinch if your primary boots fail. A backup pair of footwear also allows you to dry out your primary boots and be more comfortable around camp.
- *Staff recommendations:*
 - Salomon Ultra 4 Mid GTX

I - Pair of Camp Shoes

- Something easy to pack like Crocs or moccasins are great when you are inside your sleep tent.

4 - Pairs Sock Liners

- Thin liner socks will help you avoid blisters and allow you to pack fewer pairs of primary socks.

4 - Pairs Primary Socks

- Even in September, the best option is heavy-cushion wool.
- Darn Tough and Smartwool make great socks.
- 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.

Gaiters



- Great in snow and/or rain. They also work well in high, frosty or dewy vegetation. They will keep your boots and feet dryer and warmer.

Base Layer Clothing

2 - Pairs of Base Layer Sets (Top and bottom)

- Synthetics and merino wool are best.
- Merino tends to hold less odor and is preferred as a next-to-skin layer.
- Get different weights so you have flexibility for temperatures.
- Zip-off varieties are great when mornings are crisp and days are warm. When the temperature rises, you can peel them off without removing your boots.
- You can substitute merino or synthetic boxer shorts if you know you run warm.
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - First Lite Wick 150 Aerowool (lightweight)
 - First Lite Kiln 250 Merino-X (midweight)

Mid Layer Clothing

For muzzleloader hunters, all clothing (except base layers) should be camouflage. However, don't obsess about which "pattern" to wear. You don't need to match head-to-toe and a few articles of solid-colored gear will not bother elk. Anything that breaks up your outline is helpful.

Bring quiet gear. Aside from rain gear, if it goes "swoosh" when you move, avoid it!

Blaze Orange

- You are required to wear 500 square inches of solid blaze orange as an outer garment while hunting. A vest is ideal. Camo orange and mesh orange are not acceptable.
- You must also wear an orange hat.

2 - Lightweight Hunting Shirts

- On warm days, a base layer shirt will be sufficient for active hunting.

1 - Mid-weight Hunting Shirt

- Quarter-zips and lightweight hoodies make an ideal mid-weight shirt.
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - First Lite Kiln Hoody

1 - Pair of Lightweight Hunting Pants

- Soft, stretchy, synthetic materials are quiet and will save you from rips and burrs.



- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Kuiu Attack Pants

I - Pair Mid-weight Hunting Pants

- Bring a slightly heavier set of pants in case you end up dealing with snow.
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - First Lite Corrugate Foundry
 - Sitka Timberline

Outerwear System (3 Layers: Light Insulation, Heavy Insulation, Shell)

- To be prepared for adverse weather, you should carry your outerwear system every day.

I - Lightweight Insulation (A vest, fleece, hoody, or jacket)

- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Sitka Heavyweight Hoody
 - First Lite Sawtooth Hybrid

I - Heavy Insulation (Puffy jackets have the best warmth/weight ratio)

- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Kuiu Super Down Pro Hooded

I - Softshell Jacket (Must have wind-stopping attributes)

- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Kuiu Guide DCS
 - First Lite Catalyst

I - Full Set of Rainwear (Don't forget rain pants)

- *Staff Recommendations*
 - Kuiu Yukon

Other Clothing

2 - Pairs of Gloves

- Bring one light and one heavy set of gloves.
- There are some great options on the market for thin, lightweight gloves that offer some warmth but are dexterous enough to easily operate an archery release.
- *Staff Recommendations:*



- First Lite Shale Touch Hybrid
- Learn to quickly remove your heavy gloves. Better yet, become proficient shooting your bow with your chosen gloves.
- Hot Hands, Little Hotties, and other air-activated hand warmers are a great way to keep your fingers toasty inside a glove or pocket.

I - Warm Hat and/or Balaclava

- Beanies fit nicely in a pocket when you aren't using them and offer a lot of warmth when needed.
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - First Lite Tag Cuff Merino Beanie

I - Lightweight Buff or Neck Gaiter

- Serves as a dual-purpose piece of clothing. On hot days, it can be used for sun protection and concealment. On cold days, it offers a little bit of warmth.

I - Camo Face Paint (optional)

Hunting Gear

A pistol is not necessary. We are not in grizzly country. It is just added weight and will not protect you any better than your muzzleloader.

Muzzleloading Rifle

- Review the Colorado regulations to make sure your equipment is compatible with the state's caliber restrictions. No scopes are allowed on muzzleloaders in Colorado. Sabots are not permitted.
- We have had good luck with Power Belts and other non-sabot projectiles that have a synthetic base cup.

Muzzleloader Tools and Accessories

- Bring Rem-oil, wipes, Bore Butter, or anything you might need to maintain your rifle.
- Many hunters use a strip of electrical tape to keep their bore from collecting rain, snow, and debris.
- Bring any tools or accessories your weapon might need.
- Bring a good field rest that you have practiced with. You should have a system of several field rest options (backpack, bipod, natural rest, etc.) Be able to deploy your field rest and get on target quickly. In our experience, one of the best solutions are forestock-mounted bipods that extend enough to shoot from a seated position.



- Keep in mind, rifles with bipods will not fit in scabbards while horseback. The best bipods are those with a quick-release function.
- *Staff recommendations:*
 - Hatch Bipod
 - Spartan Precision Javelin Bipod

Elk Calls

- Learn how to use a cow call well. Bull bugles used too frequently and aggressively save more elk than any conservation effort. If you want to bugle, learn how to do a nonaggressive locate bugle or understand how/when to get close and use an aggressive bugle.
- We've found that diaphragm calls offer the most versatile and diverse range of elk sounds. But they are also the most challenging to learn! If you've tried (and failed) to master a diaphragm, consider a bite-and-blow cow call.
- Diaphragm calls we recommend:
 - Phelps Signature Amp (pink.) Can be used for both cow and bull sounds.
- Bite-and-blow calls we recommend:
 - Reel Game Calls Elk Reel (hardwood.) This is an unusual-looking call, but it is simple to operate and it sounds great.

Wind Indicator

Tool Gear

2 – Head Lamps

- Bring a light with both white and red bulbs. On guided hunts, we often ride horses in the dark. White light throws off their vision. Red light is also less apt to spook elk in the dark. \
- Bring an extra in your daypack.
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Princeton Tec Remix LED
 - Petzl Tactikka

I - Small Flashlight

I - Small GPS

- With the advent of phone applications like OnX, GPS devices have become increasingly obsolete. For hunters who want a back-up to their primary device, small handhelds like the Garmin eTrex or Garmin Rhino will serve your needs.

Extra Batteries (For all equipment)

- Examples: AAA (headlamps/flashlights,) AA (many handheld radios,) CR2 (rangefinder)

Topo Map and Compass

- Even with today's technology, an old-fashioned compass and topo map can still be a useful navigation system.
- USGS quad maps can be found at many outdoor retail stores.
- www.mytopo.com is also a great source for custom-printed topo maps.
- Check your compass to make sure it is pointing to true North
- Do not store your compass near lead fishing weights or similar items. It is easy to reverse polarize today's cheaper compasses. 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.
- If you are budget conscious, spend less on clothing and accessories. Optics are worth the investment!
- We have had good luck with the higher end models from Vortex. However, 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.
- 10x42 binoculars seem to be the best balance of magnification/objective for active hunting.

Binocular Harness and Rangefinder Pouch

- Binocular harnesses should fit close to the chest so they don't affect your shooting sequence.
- Be sure to practice shooting your muzzleloader while wearing your chest-mounted optics.
- Lids that fold away from the body (rather than toward) are easier to operate one-handed.
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Outdoor Vision
 - Marsupial Gear

Spotting Scope (optional)

- On hunts where we will be scoring animals, your guide will have a good scope.
- When not scoring animals, tripod compatible binoculars are generally better than a big scope for finding animals. If you go this route, 15x56 Swarovskis are a worthy lifetime investment.

Rangefinder

- Many misses are simply a result of misjudged distance.
- Practice using your rangefinder at home and use it constantly while hunting. Anytime you pause, range your surroundings. Whenever possible, you should range your target before taking a shot.



- Most modern rangefinders have an angle compensating feature. Be sure yours does and understand how to operate it.

Knives and Game Processing

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

- We usually carry at least three knives while hunting:
 - A 4-inch fixed-blade knife can be used for the majority of your skinning and quartering.
 - A small, ultra-sharp replaceable blade knife can be used for detail work and face-capeing.
 - An EDC folding or sheath knife. This knife should be used for camp chores, cutting rope, joints, and any other task that might dull or damage your primary skinning blade.
- *Staff recommendations:*
 - Benchmade Steep Country (fixed-blade skinning)
 - Havalon Piranta (replaceable blade)
 - Benchmade Bugout (EDC)
- Saws and axes are not necessary. Learn to short-quarter with the gutless method. There are some great videos on YouTube and elsewhere that demonstrate the process.

6 - Game Bags

(Not needed on guided hunts. Our guides will provide game bags.)

- We can hang your quarters in game bags at base camp in our cool cabin facility.
- Bring a handful of surveyor's tape or toilet paper to mark downed game, blood trails or signal your location. Remember to "Leave No Trace" and remove any markers at the end of your hunt.

Day Pack

- Choose a comfortable pack in the 1,300-2,200 cubic inch range
- *Staff Recommendations:*
 - Mystery Ranch Pintler (lightweight, comfortable)
 - Kifaru Hellbender (daypack with meat-hauling capability)
- For unguided hunters: make sure your pack has meat-hauling capabilities. We require that all meat be packed to camp or the nearest trail. Good packs will make this work easier. Nothing is worse than carrying an elk hind quarter slung over your shoulder!

Camera/Smartphone

- Many hunters now use their Smartphone as a primary means of navigation using apps such as OnX and Gaia GPS.



- Cell phone service is a rarity in our permit area. Be sure you have downloaded “offline” maps for the areas you intend to hunt.

Charging Devices and Chords

- Bring all the necessary power chords to charge your devices
- Power banks have become affordable and readily available in recent years.
- For a week of hunting, bring at least two power banks to keep your devices charged.
- Keep a small, single-use, lightweight power bank and chord in your daypack for emergency use.
- Cold weather can quickly drain a battery. Consider keeping your device in a next-to-body pocket while hunting. At night, you can store your device and power bank inside your sleeping bag.

Two-way Radios

- Our guides always carry two-way radios.
- They can be very useful if you are coming with a group.
- Keep in mind that their range is limited. They will perform best in line-of-sight applications.

Water Bottles and Hydration Bladder

- If you choose to use a bladder, bring a Nalgene-type bottle for around camp.

Water Purification System

Many of our guides carry water purifiers, but a light weight personal purifying method makes water stops quicker and easier.

- The most common way we sanitize water in camp is by boiling or using a gravity filter. However, on long day hikes when you need to refill your water bottle in the field, having a lightweight purifying mechanism is great.
- Electrolyte tablets, powders, and concentrates improve the taste of purified water (tablet purified, filtered, or boiled) and add an energy boost.
- *Staff recommendations:*
 - Platypus GravityWorks Water Filter
 - Katadyn Steripen UV Water Purifier

Backpacking Stove (optional)

- An easy to use and light stove like the JetBoil are nice to have for quick water purification or making up a hot cup of tea or instant coffee in the field. You can also start a hell of a fire with them if you get into a bind!



Personal Gear

Sleeping Bag

- Even for archery season, a 0-10 degree rated bag is best.
- You can always unzip if you are too warm.
- We prefer non-mummy type bags for comfort, but 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
- A travel-size bottle of Gold Bond Powder is helpful in relieving chafe, blisters and dealing with “monkey butt.”
- Bring 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)

Baby Wipes

- No better bathroom wipe around!

Chapstick and Sunscreen

Bug Spray

Latex Gloves (For cleaning game or first aid)

Eyeglasses, Contacts and Solution (If you wear them)

Soft Duffle Bags (To pack most your gear in for packing on mules. Dry bags work great.)

- Bags must weigh less than 50lbs a piece
- Water, camera, clothing layers, and snacks are allowed in saddlebags. Other gear is not allowed.
- Wearing day packs while riding is prohibited



Absorbent Personal Towel/Rag

Garbage Bags for Trash (Not required on guided hunts)

Safety Gear

Design a method to carry the bare essential safety gear on your person at all times. Redundancy is key. For example, you should carry a lighter in your pocket, your bino harness, and your backpack.

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 insurance for starting fires. High altitude and cold temperatures can drastically affect the reliability of lighters.

2 Heavy Duty Garbage Bags

- 2 mil+ 55 gallon contractor bags are best
- Believe it or not, these bags are a better bivvy alternative 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
- Can also be used as a meat tarp or to protect your backpack from blood.

Water Purification Tablets

- Tablets or chemical treatments are a lightweight emergency water purification option.

Communication Device

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

Parachute Cord 15-30ft

Whistle (For signaling)

Small Backpacking 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 attaching tags, emergency shoe laces, making a quick shelter

Tape

- A small roll of electrical tape has many practical uses.
- Duct tape or Gorilla tape can be used for gear repairs.

Pen/Small Notebook

(Not required on guided hunts)

- Necessary for signing and validating a filled tag.
- Can be used to leave notes at camp for FTWG staff or others in your group.

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 and Equipment (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!

Please bring 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

Pen

Radio or other communication

Fire starting capability

Tarp

Bivy bag or contractor's garbage bags

Rope or Parachute Cord

Surveyor's tape

Elk calls

Game bags

Garbage bags for trash

Game processing and field dressing 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