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Cross-country skiing in the Pyrenees - suggested packing list

The following list has been put together to give you an idea of what to pack for your holiday. Please note that different people feel the cold in different ways, so if you are a 'cold' person then pack a bit more. There is a very good gear shop in Ax, so any items you are missing can be purchased here – there is no need to make a special shopping trip.

EXPECTED WEATHER CONDITIONS.

In the mountains the weather changes very fast and in the same day we could expect anything from -10 to +20. Even walking / skiing into the shadow of a forest can cause a 10 degree temperature drop.

REGULATING YOUR TEMPERATURE.

The best thing to pack is lots of layers which can be used in any combination and all together in the case of an emergency. The most important items are gloves and hats. For cross-country skiing I would suggest that you are better off setting off with normal summer walking trousers and putting on your waterproof trousers if it gets cold. Thermal leggings are normally too warm and getting out of them too cold! Although cross-country skiing can be fairly energetic you need to have your arms and hands covered at all times, just in case you fall. We are never far from the vans and it is normally downhill, so not everything needs to be carried with us.

HOTEL

Towels are provided, but you will be expected to provide all your own toiletries.

AX-LES-THERMES

Ax is at 700m so rarely has snow on the ground. There are also several bars, a casino and a disco in town. A swimming costume is needed if you intend on using the thermal baths / Spa in Ax.

LUNCHES

Lunches are normally taken in the Mountain Refuges or Restaurants at the ski stations. These are heated and provide us with the perfect break. On several days we may go on extended ski trips and we will need a packed lunch. Provisions can be purchased in town or a packed lunch is available from James and Cathy for 5 Euros. Your backpack should be large enough to carry the lunch and water with you during the day.

ESSENTIAL KIT

Big bum bag or small 10 to 15 L backpack
Walking Boots (or shoes to wear in bus – we may be stepping out into deep snow!)
Evening shoes (we may have to go out in snow)
Personal medication (eg. drugs and blister treatment, not First Aid kit)
Water bottle / hydration pack (minimum of 1.5 liters of capacity in total)
Sunglasses
Sunscreen creams
Passport

CLOTHING (Can be left in van)

Windproof / waterproof jacket (close fitting is best)
Windproof / waterproof trousers
Tracksuit trousers / Ron-hills / "summer" walking trousers
Long sleeved wicking tops or equivalent long sleeved t-shirts
Thin fleece (or more wicking t-shirts)
Thick fleece
Thin gloves (long fingered cycling gloves are ideal)
Warm gloves
Waterproof gloves
Warm hat (covering ears ideally)
Sun hat

OPTIONAL GEAR

Flask for journey home in bus (tea etc. can be provided by hotel)
Goggles (if you have them)
Map (best to get in Ax)
Good Book (we cannot all ski all day!)
Silk glove liners
Camera

GROUP KIT (Provided by James)

First Aid kit
Piste maps

Telephone

SNOWSHOEING (Option for day-off)

25 to 30 L Backpack.

Gaiters (essential – can be purchased in Ax)

Walking boots. (waterproof -the stiffer the better)

DOWNHILL SKIING (Option every day, or Day-off)

Salopets (or tracksuit bottoms with waterproof trousers)

DOG SLEDDING (option when at Beille)

Waterproof walking boots are essential!

Gaiters

INSURANCE

Please make sure that you arrange suitable insurance cover and that you bring the details with you.

European Health Card. (UK residents only). It is advisable that you also obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before you travel. The EHIC entitles you to free or reduced cost emergency medical treatment, in the EEA (European Economic area) and certain other countries. Applications are available at the post office or online at <http://www.dh.gov.uk>. The EHIC is the replacement of the E111 which is no longer valid. Many insurers will insist you travel with this.