

PCC Fastpacking – The minimum kit list

What fastpacking is: A short and memorable overnight trip by bike, self-supported, with the accent on having fun and being able to move quickly both on and off-road. A micro-adventure!

What fastpacking isn't: It's not a blindingly fast point to point, nor a full-blown expedition, but it's not credit card touring either.

So what should we expect? A sociable experience, with pubs, cafes, maybe shops along the way. Lightweight camping with minimal or nil facilities, all connected by some off-road and on-road riding with speeds and distances considerate of the stuff we have to carry.

What do I need to take? Let's break this down a bit into systems (so we can discuss things) as there are choices to be made and everyone has their own preferences. You will need a shelter system, a sleeping system, a cooking system, a hygiene system, a clothing system and a luggage system. Oh, and a bike. You will need a bicycle that you are happy to ride off-road as well as on. And as an important consideration, you should be able to lift the whole rig above your head when packed (or have a friend who can do that for you by prior agreement) because that may be essential for some of the off-road sections. So think light 😊

Shelter System – keeping dry with minimum weight	
Bare Minimum	A bivi-bag like Alpkit Hunka is the place to start. People have camped successfully in cardboard boxes but it rains in UK. Rule #1 of camping is to stay dry whilst you sleep.
Premium Economy	A tarp is versatile, protects you from wind and weather and can also cover up all of your stuff. Example, DD Hammocks 3mx3m Lightweight tarp. Many ways to set up the tarp, you don't need poles or trees as the bike can provide support. Use with the bivi-bag for extra shelter or on its own when things are warmer. A tarp can shelter several people – but ask first! And pick a brown or green colour that blends in. Oh, and Rule#2 of camping is <u>do not</u> light the stove under the tarp or inside a tent. You can set up part of the tarp as a groundsheet, or rely on the bivibag, or get a piece of DIY window winter glazing film and edge it with gaffa tape, or a piece of Tyvek.
Gucci Version	A tent! Again in a blending colour if you can. Remember you have to carry the poles and their length is more of a limitation than the weight. But you can share components of the tent if there's more than one of you using it. Beware, though, of the inflatable poles idea – it makes a good sturdy tent and goes up quickly, but there you are next day struggling to get all the air out again.

Sleeping System – warmth without bulk	
Bare Minimum	A lightweight 1 – 2 season synthetic fill mummy-bag like Alpkit Cloud Peak 140 is OK if you usually sleep hot (or fully clothed) and only plan to camp in 20C+ weather. Most won't mind the additional weight of a 3 season bag (eg, Cloud Peak 300, 1600g) but get one with a zip to help regulate temperature. You'll want an inflatable sleep-mat rather than a self-inflating one, as whilst the latter are more comfortable they are also very bulky. We like Alpkit Cloudbase or Numo, or similar. You need dry stuff to sleep in so all of this goes in a dry-bag with some dry clothes. That's camping rule #3.

Premium Economy	A down bag instead, as they pack smaller and are lighter (under 1000g) if you have no ethical objections (and some rightly do). BTW, don't assume that a 4 season bag is a better choice, as there you are in Summer with your own personal sauna. Stuff clothes into the sleeping bag compression sack and use as a pillow.
Gucci Version	As above, but add an inflatable pillow. A down jacket can extend the range of a lighter sleeping bag. Camping rule #4 is to hang up your sleeping bag uncompressed when you aren't on a camping trip.

Cooking System – you only need to feed yourself	
Bare Minimum	Don't cook! Bring cold food, drinks and snacks. Mix some milk powder with dry porridge and dried fruit, you need only add water and a yogurt then leave for overnight oats. You'll need something to drink from, plus a spork if you have brought liquidy food. https://www.outdoorgearlab.com/topics/camping-and-hiking/best-sporks
Premium Economy	Most will want a hot drink or two, and that needs a stove and a tin mug. Hot water is the basis of cooking for lightweight camping. The lightest stoves run on meths https://www.bearbonesbikepacking.co.uk/product-category/cooking/ Meths burns dirty leaving sooty residue on the base of your pan, but you could burn bio-ethanol instead (B&Q). Pack some long matches if you are going to use a meths stove. Be patient trying to light it, and don't blow it out.
Gucci Version	Gas stoves are more practical and boil faster at the expense of a bit more weight. Jetboil pioneered the all-in-one stove with heat exchangers https://www.jetboil.com/buying-guide . Lighter and more compact solutions exist, if a bit slower to boil https://www.ultralightoutdoorgear.co.uk/equipment-c3/kitchen-stuff-c8/pots-and-pans-c9/pocketrocket-2-mini-stove-kit-p16792 or build your own from a titanium mug and Alpkit Kraku, or similar. If your stove has a built-in igniter, bring a spare BiC lighter anyway.

Hygiene System – essentials only	
Bare Minimum	Don't forget your toothbrush!
Premium Economy	Deodorant, wetwipes, antibacterial gel, plus toilet paper in a ziplock bag.
Gucci Version	You can go mad here (if there are showers) however you have to carry it. Remember shampoo, shower gel and face wash are chemically identical.

Clothing System – comfort vs simplicity	
Bare Minimum	Just what you rode in. Really only works on the hottest days/nights.
Premium Economy	Add a lightweight down jacket to avoid getting chilled when you stop riding. A dry change of clothing is really essential for overnight. Arrange your riding gear so that it dries for next day. A fresh pair of socks. A buff.
Gucci Version	Change into lightweight trousers or shorts. Something comfier to wear than cycling shoes, maybe not the stilettos?

Luggage System – stay streamlined and balanced	
Bare Minimum	<p>The most complex area of bikepacking. You have to be able to carry all your gear, ideally up out of the way of mud or snagging if you are on a trail, and out of the slipstream if you are on the road. You may need to grab forks and seatstays to lift the bike over a fence or gate. This argues against conventional panniers, but the smaller bags that result mean you have to work out a packing strategy. Start with a saddlepack for clothes: for example, https://www.wohobike.com/en-gb/collections/xtouring-bikepacking-gear/products/xtouring-saddle-bag-dry-s and add a handlebar bag for sleeping and shelter: for example, https://www.wohobike.com/en-gb/collections/xtouring-bikepacking-gear/products/xtouring-saddle-bag-dry-s</p> <p>Also look at Restrap, Apidura, Wildcat Gear, Straightcut Design, Alpkit, Wizard Works, 76 Projects, Aravis to get an idea of the products available. There are many players in the growing market.</p> <p>Designs for seatpacks and handlebar packs fall into 2 camps: a) a bag that straps to the bike, and b) a harness that secures a drybag. Option a) seems simpler, although may not be waterproof and has to be removed from the bike when you camp but gives you access whilst you travel. Option b) is as waterproof as your drybag, and can be easier when you get to camp but can also be a faff if you need anything whilst en-route. You'll want to avoid anything that sways about as you ride, limit loads on the bars to under 5kgs and <u>make sure they fit comfortably between the drops.</u></p> <p>It's OK to have some stuff in a small backpack or Camelbak, and that solves the water problem too. 2 litres of water is plenty for an overnight trip.</p> <p>You may be confident using a rack and conventional panniers, in which case go with what you know.</p>
Premium Economy	<p>Most would then add a framebag and a top tube bag. That's the food sorted.</p>
Gucci Version	<p>And then add a cupholder, fork cage mounts, and a kangaroo pouch over the handlebar bag. Did we mention this is lightweight camping, and that we're only going overnight?</p>

Despite what I read above, I think I need a folding woodburning stove, firelighters, a machete and a ghillie kettle, a cast iron skillet, a collapsible fishing rod, a hammock and a big penknife with 15 different blades, 200ft of paracord, a footprint for my tent and a set of 40l Ortlieb panniers to carry it all in. No, please let us advise, you don't need any of that stuff for an overnight trip. Make a pile of everything you need to take. Remove everything you don't need to take. Review what's left and try to take out another 50%. Leave behind the things you didn't use last time. Put one single luxury item back in.