v1 · EN



OUTDOORS · 000 · START HERE — 72 HOURS OUTDOORS

72 HOURS OUTDOORS

A free field checklist — what to carry, who to tell, when to turn back, and what to do if night catches you outside

STAYSAFE72

A4 · SCREEN VERSION
12 CHAPTERS · 6 APPENDICES
LANGUAGES: BALKAN · EN · DE · ES · FR · PT · TR · AR
BALKAN = BIH · HR · SRB · MNE

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

OUTDOORS, A CRISIS DOESN'T ANNOUNCE ITSELF

A hike that runs late into the dark. A car stuck in the snow on a mountain pass. The night after an earthquake, when nobody wants to sleep inside the building. An evacuation, with shelter available only two days later. In all of these, an ordinary day turns into a few hours or days outdoors — without a house, without power and often without a signal.

This guide is not about wilderness survival. It is a simple plan for people who go out into nature, drive in winter or live where the ground shakes: what to always carry, who to tell where you are going, how to stay warm and dry, and what to do when you realize you won't make it home before dark. When you finish, you will have a day pack, a trip plan and a few rules that save lives.

IN SHORT

- **Tell someone** where you are going and when you'll be back — this is the single most important thing in this guide.
- Always carry the **ten essentials**, even for a short hike: light, warmth, water, food, first aid, navigation, shelter.
- **Cold and wet are a bigger danger than hunger** — dry clothes and insulation from the ground come first.
- If you get lost: **stop, think, observe, plan** — and stay put if you left a trip plan.
- **Fire only when it is allowed** and safe — in fire season, outdoor fires are often banned.

72 HOURS	2 WEEKS	3 MONTHS	1 YEAR+
covered by this guide			

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01 · CHAPTER

WHEN 72 HOURS HAPPEN OUTDOORS



3 hours
without shelter in cold, wind and wet

3 days
without water

72 h
until help reaches everyone

This is the old mountaineering "rule of threes" — a guideline, not a law. But it shows the order well: outdoors, the cold threatens you first, then thirst, and hunger only much later. That is why a pack starts with clothing and shelter, not food.

Three Situations We Prepare For

Situation	What usually happens	What helps most
A hike or mountain walk	injury, fog, late return, darkness	trip plan, light, warm layers, first aid
Car on the road in winter	traffic jam, snow, breakdown far from town	blanket, water, light, charger, CO rules
A night outdoors after an earthquake or evacuation	sleeping in a park, yard or car	tent or tarp, sleeping pad, warm layers, water

FROM EXPERIENCE

After the 2020 earthquake in Petrinja (Croatia) and the 2023 earthquakes in Turkey, thousands of families spent days and weeks in tents, cars and containers. Those who had a sleeping bag, a pad and a tarp had much easier first nights than those who ran out in their slippers.

02 · CHAPTER

BEFORE YOU GO: MAKE A PLAN AND TELL SOMEONE



Most mountain searches take a long time because nobody knows where the person went. A trip plan left at home shortens a search from days to hours.

1. **Route**: where you start, where you are going, which way you come back
2. **Tell someone** your plan and return time — by text or on paper
3. **Forecast and sunset**: head back while there is still light
4. **Charged phone and power bank**, map downloaded for offline use
5. **Alarm time**: if you haven't checked in by then — call for help

What to Write in the Trip Plan

- Who is going (names, number of people, phone numbers) and how experienced the group is.
- Where the car is parked (place, license plate).
- Route and backup route, mountain hut or shelter along the way.
- Latest return time and **the time to call for help** — e.g. two hours after the planned return.
- What you are wearing: color of jackets and packs (makes you easier to spot and describe).

The form is in the appendix (Appendix B · p. 17). Take a photo of it and send it to the person staying at home.

TIP

Turn back in time. Agree on a "turnaround time" in advance — the hour when you head back whether or not you've reached the summit. Most accidents happen on the way down, tired and in the dark.

03 · CHAPTER

THE TEN ESSENTIALS



Hikers around the world carry the same list of ten items — even for a three-hour walk. Not because something will happen, but because if it does, there is no store.

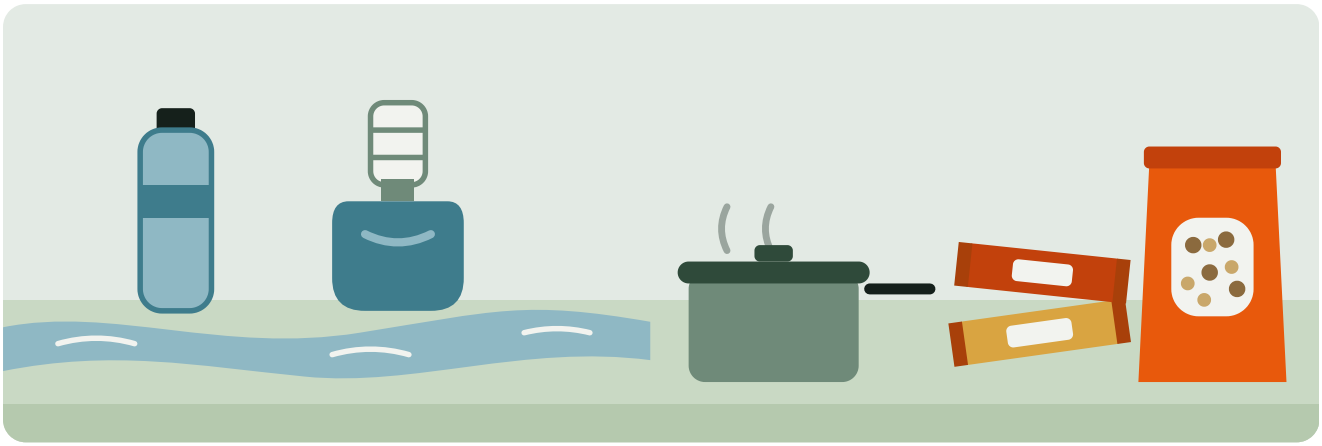
Item	Why	Minimum
Navigation	fog, darkness, dead battery	map + compass or an offline map on your phone
Light	darkness comes faster than you think	headlamp + spare batteries
Sun protection	sunburn, heat stroke, snow glare	hat, sunglasses, sunscreen
First aid	blisters, cuts, sprains	small kit + personal medicines (ch. 09 · p. 12)
Knife or multitool	repairs, food, first aid	small pocket knife
Fire	warmth and a signal, when allowed	lighter + matches in a bag (ch. 07 · p. 10)
Emergency shelter	wind, rain, night	emergency blanket or bivy bag
Extra food	longer route, waiting for help	one meal more than planned
Extra water	heat, exertion	0.5–1 L more + a way to treat it (ch. 04 · p. 7)
Extra clothing	rain, wind, night	one layer more than you think you need (ch. 05 · p. 8)

TIP

Pack your bag once and keep it ready — just add water and food. What lives in your pack permanently, you never forget.

04 · CHAPTER

WATER AND FOOD OUTDOORS



Water

When hiking, an adult needs **2–3 liters (about 2–3 US quarts) a day**, more in the heat and on climbs. Thirst is a late sign — drink a little and often.

- Carry at least 1–1.5 L per person even for a short hike; for a full day, plan where you will refill.
- **Always treat water from nature** — even a clear stream can carry bacteria and parasites. Filter, tablets or boiling (details in the guides *Water* and *Water Outdoors*).
- Melt snow and ice first — eating snow chills your body.

Food

Outdoors, food is fuel for warmth. Choose food that is light, doesn't spoil and can be eaten without cooking: nuts, dried fruit, energy bars, chocolate, crackers, and cheese and cured meat in the colder part of the year.

FROM EXPERIENCE

Besides the food for your plan, bring "waiting food" — a few bars you don't touch. If you are waiting for rescuers or for morning, that is the difference between shivering and sleeping.

05 · CHAPTER

WARM AND DRY



Hypothermia doesn't only happen in winter. Rain, wind and wet clothes can chill your body even at +10 °C (50 °F), especially when you are tired and hungry.

Three Layers

Layer	Job	Material
Base (next to the skin)	wicks away sweat	wool or synthetic — **not cotton**
Mid	keeps you warm	fleece, wool, a light down or synthetic jacket
Outer	protects from wind and rain	jacket and pants with a hood

Add a hat, gloves and spare socks — even for a summer hike in the mountains. Cotton stays wet once soaked and keeps chilling you.

Signs of Hypothermia

- **Mild:** strong shivering, cold hands, clumsiness, bad mood.
- **Severe:** shivering stops even though the person is cold, confusion, slurred speech, drowsiness, cannot walk.

WARNING

If a person stops shivering but is still cold, confused or drowsy — it is an emergency. **Call for help.** Until help comes: shelter from the wind, dry clothes, insulation from the ground, wrap them in a blanket or sleeping bag. A warm sweet drink only if they are fully conscious and can swallow. Don't rub them, don't give alcohol.

06 · CHAPTER

A NIGHT OUTDOORS



Sometimes it is smarter to spend the night than to walk in the dark over unfamiliar ground. If you have warm layers, water and left a trip plan, a night outdoors is unpleasant but survivable.

Choosing a Spot

- Shelter from the wind: behind a rock, in dense forest, on the lee side of a hill.
- **Not** in a stream bed or gully (water can rise suddenly), not under dry or broken branches.
- Flat, dry ground, away from edges and steep slopes.
- After an earthquake: open space, away from buildings, walls, power lines and trees that could fall.

Insulation from the Ground Matters More Than a Cover

The ground draws heat away faster than air. First a layer underneath — a pad, your pack, dry branches and leaves, cardboard — and only then a cover. An emergency blanket around your body, a hat on your head and dry socks for sleeping.

TIP

A 3 × 3 m (10 × 10 ft) tarp and a few meters of cord weigh less than half a kilo (1 lb), and in five minutes they make a roof for two. Details in the guide *Shelter*.

07 · CHAPTER

FIRE — ONLY WHEN ALLOWED AND SAFE



Fire warms, dries and signals. But every year, wildfires start from exactly that "small fire".

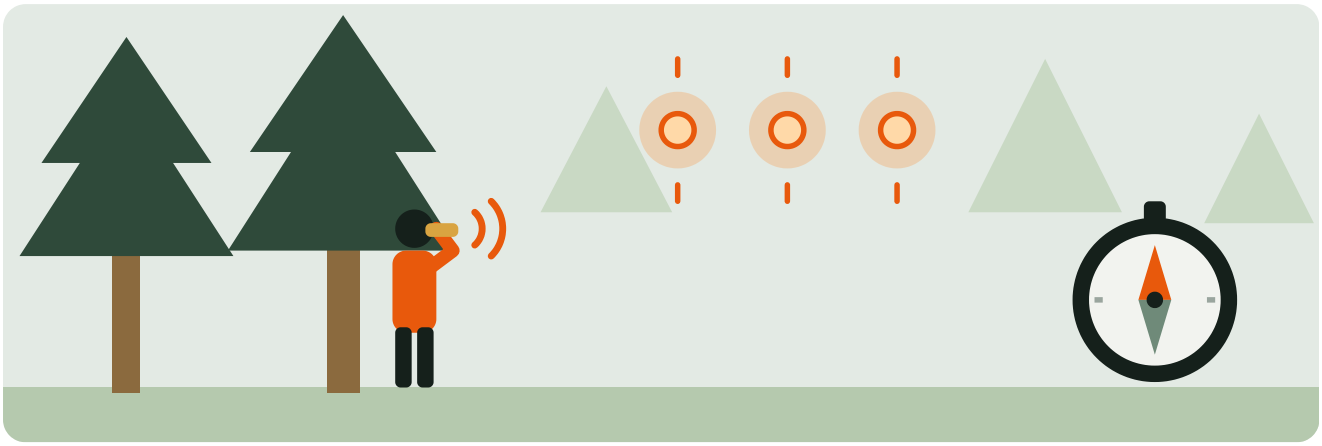
- **Check for bans.** In fire season, open fires are banned in many areas, and the fines are high. In national parks and protected areas, fires are usually allowed only at designated fire pits.
- **The spot:** bare ground or a stone fire ring, away from trees, roots, grass and tents. Don't light a fire in strong wind.
- **Always next to the fire:** water or soil to put it out.
- **Putting it out:** drown it with water, stir, drown it again — until the ashes are **cool to the touch**.

WARNING

Never use a fire, gas stove or grill in a tent, car or enclosed space — carbon monoxide has no smell and kills in your sleep.

08 · CHAPTER

IF YOU GET LOST



1. **Stop** — don't keep walking at random
2. **Think** — where were you last sure of your position?
3. **Observe** — trails, markers, a stream, sounds, lights
4. **Plan** — go back the way you know, or stay and call for help

Stay or Go?

If you left a trip plan, **stay where you are** — rescuers search along the route first. Move only if you are sure you know the way back and there is enough light.

Call for Help

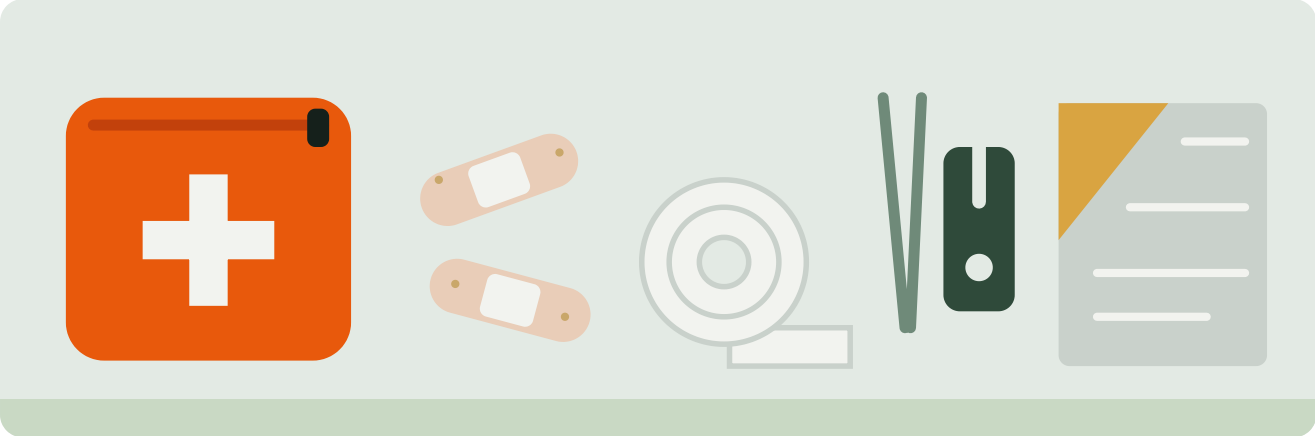
- **Call the emergency number** (112 in the EU and most of Europe, 911 in North America — Appendix E · p. 20). Say where you are, what happened, how many of you there are and what condition you are in.
- Send your **location** by text (coordinates from the map on your phone).
- **Save the battery:** brightness to minimum, airplane mode between calls, check in at agreed times.

Distress Signals

Signal	How
Alpine distress signal	**6 whistles or flashes per minute**, then a minute's pause, then repeat
Rescuers' reply	3 signals per minute
Anything "three times"	3 whistles, 3 flashes, 3 piles of stones — means trouble everywhere
Visibility	a bright jacket or emergency blanket spread out in the open

09 · CHAPTER

FIRST AID OUTDOORS



A small kit in your pack solves most problems on the trail: blisters, cuts, sprains and ticks.

- **Blister:** as soon as you feel rubbing — stop and apply a blister plaster. Don't wait for it to burst.
- **Sprain:** rest, cooling (a stream, a cold bottle), an elastic bandage, leg up. If you can't put weight on the foot — call for help.
- **Tick:** remove it as soon as possible with tweezers or a tick card — grab it close to the skin and pull out slowly and steadily. Don't smear it with oil, don't burn it. Clean the spot and note the date.

> WARNING
> If a spreading redness appears around the tick bite in the following days, or you get a fever and aches — see a doctor. Lyme disease and tick-borne encephalitis are present in many parts of Europe; ask your doctor about the vaccine.

Mini Kit for the Pack

Plasters and blister plasters, sterile gauze, an elastic bandage, tape, tweezers or a tick card, disinfectant, painkillers and allergy medicine, personal medicines for 3 days, an emergency blanket, gloves. A fuller list is in the guide *First Aid*.

10 · CHAPTER

WINTER DRIVING AND SLEEPING IN THE CAR



A car is a good shelter — if you know the rules. If you get stuck in snow far from town, **stay in the car**: you are easier to find and protected from the wind.

1. **Clear the exhaust pipe of snow** — before starting the engine, every time
2. **Run the engine about 10 minutes an hour** — just enough to warm up
3. **Open a window slightly** while the engine runs
4. **Dome light on** at night while the engine runs — so you can be seen
5. **Blanket, hat, dry socks** — warm your body, not the cabin

WARNING

A blocked exhaust fills the cabin with carbon monoxide within minutes. Never sleep in a car with the engine running unless you are sure the exhaust is clear.

Winter Car Kit

A blanket or sleeping bag, hat and gloves, water and food for all passengers, a headlamp, a car phone charger, a small shovel, jumper cables, a tow strap, a safety vest and warning triangle, grit or sand. Details in the guide *Car as Shelter*.

11 · CHAPTER

THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES

- ✕ Nobody knows where you went or when you'll be back.
- ✕ Setting off late without a headlamp — "just to the top and back".
- ✕ A cotton T-shirt and jeans in the mountains in rain and wind.
- ✕ The last of your water gone halfway, with no way to treat more.
- ✕ Phone at 30% battery, no power bank and no downloaded map.
- ✕ A fire in fire season, or one left to "burn out on its own".
- ✕ Engine running in the snow with the exhaust buried.
- ✕ Kids without a whistle and without a plan for what to do if they get lost.

12 · CHAPTER

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

You don't need everything. What matters is having a **basic plan** and **one backup option** in case the basic method doesn't work.

Essential — the Basic Plan

- [ ] Trip plan left with someone, including the time to call for help (ch. 02 · p. 5)
- [ ] The ten essentials in my pack, even for a short hike (ch. 03 · p. 6)
- [ ] Water for the trip and a way to treat more (ch. 04 · p. 7)
- [ ] A warm, waterproof layer more than I think I need (ch. 05 · p. 8)
- [ ] Charged phone, power bank and a map that works offline

Backup Option — Choose at Least One

Choose something that is **not** your basic method. If you rely on your phone — your backup is a paper map and compass. If you count on a mountain hut — your backup is an emergency shelter.

- [ ] Paper map and compass
- [ ] Emergency blanket or bivy bag
- [ ] Whistle and headlamp with spare batteries
- [ ] Water tablets or a filter

Expansion — Once You Have the Basics

- [ ] A pack for 72 hours outdoors (Appendix C · p. 18)
- [ ] Tarp, cord and sleeping pad (ch. 06 · p. 9)
- [ ] Winter kit in the car (ch. 10 · p. 13)
- [ ] A first aid course or a mountaineering course

Knowledge

- [ ] I can use a map and compass without a phone (ch. 08 · p. 11)
- [ ] Everyone in the group knows the alpine distress signal (ch. 08 · p. 11)
- [ ] I can recognize hypothermia (ch. 05 · p. 8)
- [ ] I know how to put out a fire safely and where fires are banned (ch. 07 · p. 10)

APPENDIX A

I'M LOST — WHAT FIRST?

Print it, fold it and keep it in the lid of your pack. Work through it in order — each step points to the chapter with details.

1. **Stop.** Don't keep walking at random. Sit on something dry. ch. 08 · p. 11
2. **Put on another layer and eat something** — cold and fatigue spoil decisions. ch. 05 · p. 8
3. **Think:** where were you last sure of your position? How long until dark?
4. **Is there a signal?** Call the emergency number, send your location, then save the battery. Appendix E · p. 20
5. **Observe:** trail, trail markers, a stream, sounds of a village.
6. **Decide:** a known way back with enough light — or stay where you are.
7. **Signal:** 6 whistles or flashes per minute, a bright color in the open.
8. **If you spend the night:** shelter from the wind, insulation from the ground, emergency blanket, hat. ch. 06 · p. 9

WARNING

Don't cross a swollen stream, don't descend a steep slope in the dark and don't split from the group. Rescuers search along the route in your trip plan first.

APPENDIX B

TRIP PLAN

Fill it in before every trip, leave a copy at home or photograph it and send it. When you get back — check in with the same person.

Who is going (names, number of people)

Participants' phone numbers

Starting point and parking (place, license plate)

Route there and back

Backup route / mountain hut along the way

Departure (date and time)

Planned return (time)

Time to call for help

Color of jackets and packs

Who Calls for Help, and When

Who	Phone	When they call	Whom they call
Example: brother	xxx xxx xxxx	if we haven't checked in by 8 p.m.	emergency number, then mountain rescue

APPENDIX C

DAY PACK AND 72-HOUR PACK

Check off what you have. The first part is for every trip; add the second when you might stay out overnight or longer.

For Every Trip (Day)

- [ ] Map and compass / offline map on the phone
- [ ] Headlamp + spare batteries
- [ ] Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen
- [ ] Mini first aid kit + personal medicines
- [ ] Pocket knife or multitool
- [ ] Lighter and matches in a bag
- [ ] Emergency blanket
- [ ] Water 1–1.5 L per person + tablets or filter
- [ ] Food + a spare meal
- [ ] Warm layer, rain jacket, spare socks
- [ ] Whistle
- [ ] Phone + power bank + cable

Extra for 72 Hours Outdoors

- [ ] Sleeping bag and pad
- [ ] Tarp or tent + cord
- [ ] Stove, gas, pot, mug (ch. 04 · p. 7)
- [ ] Food for 3 days (no-cook or quick-cook)
- [ ] Water containers, 3–4 L per person
- [ ] Spare clothes and underwear for 3 days
- [ ] Hygiene: wipes, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, bags
- [ ] Cash and copies of documents
- [ ] A radio or another way to get news
- [ ] Medicines for 3 days and prescriptions

APPENDIX D

EQUIPMENT BY PRIORITY

Don't buy everything at once. Start with the first level — move to the next only once you have it.

1. Basics — Anyone Who Goes Outdoors

- [ ] Headlamp and whistle
- [ ] Emergency blanket or bivy bag
- [ ] Rain and wind jacket
- [ ] Mini first aid kit and tick card
- [ ] Power bank

2. Useful Expansion

- [ ] Compass and paper maps of the areas you visit
- [ ] Water filter or tablets
- [ ] Wool or synthetic shirt and a fleece
- [ ] A 3 × 3 m tarp and 10 m of cord
- [ ] Winter car kit

3. For the Night and Special Situations

- [ ] Sleeping bag and pad
- [ ] A family tent (also for the night after an earthquake)
- [ ] Stove and gas
- [ ] A flashlight for the car, and a spare hat and gloves for everyone

APPENDIX E

LOCAL INFORMATION CARD

Fill it in once for the area you visit most often, print it and keep it in your pack and in the car. Check the numbers on the official websites of your country.

Mountain rescue service — number for your country

Hiking club / mountain hut — phone

Forestry office or park — fire bans (where to check)

Mountain weather forecast (website or app)

Local radio station (name and frequency)

Contact person at home

Nearest health center or emergency room

Your local emergency number

Emergency Numbers

Where	Emergency number	Note
European Union and most of Europe	112	Works from any mobile phone, free of charge
United States, Canada	911	
United Kingdom	999	112 also works
Australia	000	112 works from mobile phones
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro	112 only in Montenegro	Ambulance 124 / 194, police 122 / 192, fire 123 / 193

APPENDIX F

WORKED EXAMPLE — A HIKE AND A NIGHT IN THE CAR

Two real plans with exact items. Adapt them to your group in the trip plan (Appendix B · p. 17).

Day Hike, Two Adults and a Child (10), 6 Hours of Walking

What	Amount	Who carries it	Note
Water	3 × 1.5 L + 1 filter	adults	refill at a spring with the filter
Food	sandwiches + 6 spare bars	everyone their own	the bars stay untouched until we're back
Warm layers	fleece + jacket for each, 3 hats	everyone their own	even when the morning is warm
Light	2 headlamps + batteries	adults	the child has a whistle
First aid	mini kit + tick card	dad	tick check in the evening
Trip plan	sent to grandma at 8 a.m.	mom	alarm if we haven't checked in by 7 p.m.

Car in Winter, Mountain Pass, Two Passengers

What	Amount	Where in the car	Note
Blanket or sleeping bag	2	back seat	not in the trunk under other things
Water and food	2 L + 4 bars per person	cabin	so it doesn't freeze in winter
Shovel and grit	1 + 5 kg	trunk	for the exhaust and the wheels
Light and charger	headlamp, car charger	glove box	
Hat, gloves, socks	one set each	bag in the cabin	dry socks = warm feet
Fuel tank	always above half	—	in winter, don't drive "on reserve"

TIP

Two minutes before you leave: a text to someone at home — where you are going and when you'll check in. It's the cheapest piece of gear you own.

SOURCES

- The Mountaineers — *Ten Essentials* (the basic mountain gear list); U.S. National Park Service — *Ten Essentials*.
- Wilderness Medical Society — guidelines for the prevention and treatment of hypothermia; CDC — *Hypothermia* and *Winter Weather: Staying Safe in a Car*.
- International Commission for Alpine Rescue (ICAR-CISA) and alpine clubs — the alpine distress signal (6 signals per minute, reply 3).
- ECDC and national public health institutes — ticks, Lyme disease and tick-borne encephalitis.
- European Commission — *Preparedness Union Strategy* (2025), recommendation on 72 hours of self-sufficiency; Ready.gov (FEMA) — *Winter Weather*; mountain rescue services and fire protection authorities in your country for local numbers and fire bans (check them for your area).

Expert content review	**[DATE] · [EXPERT / INSTITUTION, e.g. mountain rescue service]**

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THE FIRST 72 HOURS MATTER MOST.

BALKAN · EN · DE · ES · FR · PT · TR · AR