

Animas Valley Institute

Beauty Mesa Quest Equipment List

Please read through this thoroughly:

The weather while we're camped on the land can do anything (and probably will). Significant rainfall is quite possible -- even in the desert. **The Utah Quest can be cold, even in summer. Make sure you bring the warm gear recommended on this list. It can be challenging to stay warm when fasting.** It's your responsibility to properly clothe and equip yourself, although you are welcome to email or call us at any time if you have questions that you cannot get answered by a friend or salesperson. Once we begin as a group, there will be no further opportunity to acquire any additional gear. We recommend assembling and trial-packing your gear a few days before your departure. You want to be sure that your backpack is adequate in size and fit. Prior to leaving for the wilderness, we will offer packing tips and can help make final pack adjustments.

If you don't already have camping gear, you can likely obtain it by borrowing from friends, renting it from a local sporting goods store (such as REI), or obtaining gear from an on-line store like Camp-Mor, etc. If you purchase your gear on-line, please speak with a sales representative from that store first to be sure that the sleeping bag you are ordering meets the requirements below. The list below is intentionally specific. Please follow our guidelines. If you have any questions, please contact the Animas office at 970-259-0585.

GEAR

While we highly recommend you have everything listed in the GEAR section, you must have all items listed in **RED** in this section (which are critical for safety). If you do not have all the items listed in **red**, the guides will ask you to find and/or go buy the missing or inadequate items, which means you'll lose valuable time during the preparation phase of the quest. Please have all gear with you when you show up on the first day. If you are unable to procure the necessary gear, the guides will not let you go with them into the backcountry.

In terms of layers, you know whether you tend to be hot or cold. If you get cold easily, err on the side of bringing more layers. If you have experience camping/backpacking and know a particular system that works for you, bring that system (keeping in mind the altitude and weather may be different from your home location).

If you have questions about anything that is on this list, please call 970-259-0585 or email soulcraft@animas.org.

Camping gear:

___ **Tarp or tent:** with sealed seams

- At least 7' x 9' - 9' x 11' is better
- Rip-stop nylon is best, but others will do if they are strong and have grommets. **Brown or green are the best colors** because they blend more readily with the desert and forest environments.

- Be sure the interior seams are water-sealed! Here's how to tell: hold a seam up to a strong light, spread the seam apart, can you see light coming through? If yes, it's not sealed. Buy a tube of seam sealer and follow the directions.

Tents versus Tarps: Each person must bring a personal shelter. On most programs, we strongly prefer tarps because they isolate you so much less from the very wilderness you have labored so hard to get into, the wilderness that will be your teacher and, with good fortune, a mirror of your soul. Tarps are also much lighter and less bulky to carry. Tarps are entirely adequate shelter for most wilderness areas in which we enact vision fasts. If you do not know how to set up a tarp, please look up information on the internet or ask a friend to teach you. We will go over this again in camp, and expect everyone to have at least a basic understanding of how to do this. **For any Quest, a tent is recommended because of the high probability of rain. You can still bring a tarp or choose to sleep outside your tent when it is not raining. If you are skilled in the wilderness and prefer a tarp, you are welcome to bring a tarp instead of a tent. You are also welcome to bring both and choose later (although your pack will be heavier).**

You can buy a thick plastic tarp fairly cheaply or invest in a fancier nylon or sil-nylon tarp. Either will be just fine. We have received negative reviews on the Outdoor Products nylon tarps, so recommend *not* buying their tarps.

___ Tent stakes: 6-10

___ **Nylon cord** (to set up your tarp and hang your food bag): 100' minimum light-weight nylon cord. Ask for "alpine cord" or "3 mm-utility cord"- not clothesline. This is often available at hardware or camping stores by the foot. **Bring some extra nylon cord for your bear hang.**

___ **Waterproof ground cloth**: minimum 4' x 7' - 5' x 8' is better

___ **Sleeping pad** (either inflatable [e.g. Thermarest] or closed cell foam [e.g. Ridgerest])

___ **Sleeping bag**:

- Down-filled or synthetic fiber-filled, *not* cotton-filled
- MUST have a hood with a functioning drawstring
- **For an older (3 years, or more than 100 nights) bag**, it MUST have a minimum of 4 inches of loft. Here's how to check: unstuff your bag, fluff it up, and lay it flat on the floor, zipped up - the top of the bag MUST be at least 4 inches off the floor everywhere from hood to toe. Please measure your bag's loft with a ruler. **Your guides will be checking this, too, on the first day of the quest. They won't make any exceptions. Those without adequate gear will not be allowed to go with the group into the wilderness. This policy is for your safety and allows us to be in integrity with our safety protocols and insurance requirements.**
- If you are purchasing a new sleeping bag, you can use the temperature rating. We recommend a 10-30 degree rating (Fahrenheit). **Please remember it can be very cold in the high country. A summer bag alone will be too cold there. Fasting tends to make you even colder.**

Sleeping bag tips: If you have been storing your sleeping bag stuffed into its little stuff sack, please unstuff it now, fluff it up really well, apologize to it, and tell it that you'll never stuff it again except when you absolutely have to for travel. Keeping it stuffed eventually destroys its loft and its ability

to keep you warm; **it's not the manufacturer's starry-eyed temperature-rating that keeps you warm, it's the inches of loft.** Hang it in a closet for storage.

___ **Backpack:** Be sure that your pack has a well-padded hip-belt, is large enough and adequate to carry 5 days worth of gear (approximately 70-80L). It is important that the pack fit you well; if you are not very experienced as a backpacker, be sure to find someone who is and have them help you. *(If your quest is a "drive-to-base camp," your pack doesn't need to be quite so big.)*

___ **Waterproof pack cover or plastic bag liner for pack** (can be a large garbage bag)

___ Daypack or large fanny pack

___ **Flashlight or headlamp**, with new batteries installed, and extra batteries

Clothing:

___ **Hiking boots or sturdy shoes**

___ **Long pants** (1 pair for warmth - fleece or wool)

___ Long pants (1 pair quick dry or cotton)

___ **Long sleeve shirt** (turtleneck or zip-neck, best if synthetic or wool)

___ **Long underwear, top and bottom (synthetic or wool, NOT COTTON)**

___ One additional warm non-cotton layer, such as a fleece or wool shirt

___ T-shirts (1 to 3)

___ Hiking socks (2 to 5 pair, synthetic or wool, NOT COTTON)

___ **Warm jacket, preferably fleece or wool.** Definitely NO COTTON; must be warm but can still be lightweight material. Regardless of the time of year, it can get very cold at night! **Down jackets are also great. It can be chilly at night.**

___ **Rain jacket with hood** (or long poncho with hood)

___ **Rain pants** (yes, required and essential)

___ **Warm hat** (synthetic or wool)

___ Sun hat

___ Sunglasses

___ Bandanas (1 or 2)

___ **Watch or time-piece** (**not** your cell phone or other electronic device)

___ Additional warm clothing as necessary / desired

Kitchen Gear, Food and Water:

___ Large plastic / metal cup or mug (or insulated water bottle)

___ Lightweight bowl for your breakfasts and lunches

___ Spoon, with optional fork

___ Water bottle (1 quart or 1 liter) filled with water with your own identifying mark on it

- ___ **Three 1-gallon containers to carry water for your solo.** Empty (and cleaned) one-gallon jugs from water or juice, etc., will do (be sure that they have screw-on caps, and then reinforce the bottoms and sides with duct tape). Or you can purchase 2-, 3-, or 4-gallon collapsible water jugs with handles that are made for backpackers.
- ___ Breakfasts, lunches and snacks – please check your prep letter for the number of breakfasts and lunches (no refrigeration available; see “*Quest Food Suggestions*” at the bottom of this)
- ___ Any food you expect to need during your solo, if you do not fast (you need to be in communication with the guides if you choose not to fast)
- ___ Tea and beverages
- ___ **Emergency food stash** (see “*Quest Food Suggestions*” at the end of this document)
- ___ **Water treatment method:** either a filter/pump system or a chemical treatment system (unless your preparation letter says you don’t need one). If you choose a chemical treatment, get the chlorine-and-hydrogen-peroxide type or the iodine-and-ascorbic acid type, not iodine alone). Be sure you have practiced using your system before you leave home for your quest.
- ___ Camp Stove (optional, if you want hot water in the morning or a warm breakfast)
- ___ Bag and p-cord to make a personal bear hang for your lunches, breakfasts, and snacks
- ___ **Dromedary bag, p-cord to hang it, and soap** for personal handwashing, hygiene, and dishwashing (Covid-19 protocol)
- ___ Personal sponge(s) to clean your dishes

Sundries and Miscellaneous:

- ___ **Small trowel for digging “cat holes”**
- ___ Sunscreen (fragrance-free)
- ___ Lip balm
- ___ Toothbrush, toothpaste, and other personal hygiene items (opt for *fragrance-free* lotions)
- ___ Toilet paper in Ziploc bag (1/2 to 1 roll is sufficient)
- ___ Women may want to bring several washable “pee rags” to wipe yourself after peeing outside. Bandanas work great.
- ___ Large Ziploc bag for used toilet paper, or several smaller bags
- ___ For women: menstruation supplies and zip-lock baggies to carry out used supplies. Bring these even if you do not anticipate being on your cycle, as spending time in the wilderness and with other women can and often does alter cycles.
- ___ Garbage bags (two large heavy-duty plastic bags) for storing your sleeping bag and other gear under your tarp during inclement weather
- ___ Personal journal in Ziploc bag with pen and/or pencil

EMERGENCY KIT (carried with you at all times in the wilderness):

- ___ An emergency First-aid Procedure Checklist will be given to you by your guides at the beginning of the Quest

- ___ Band aids – just a few
- ___ **Anaphylactic shock kit, Epi Pen or AnaKit if you know you have any life-threatening allergic reactions to, e.g., insect stings, medications, or certain foods.**
- ___ **Benadryl for anyone with life-compromising allergies (this is in addition to your Epi Pen)**
- ___ Waterproof adhesive tape (small roll) and/or some moleskin
- ___ Other first-aid materials that you want to bring and know how to use
- ___ **Emergency blanket** (lightweight super-compact inexpensive foil type)
- ___ **Emergency whistle**
- ___ **Pocket knife**
- ___ **Matches in watertight container** (also a lighter if you'd like)
- ___ **Small candle** or the top inch or two of a candle (for emergency fire starting)
- ___ **Personal hand sanitizer/ hand wipes** (COVID-19 protocol)
- ___ **Mask and gloves** (COVID-19 protocol)

Optional Items:

- ___ Baby wipes or Wet Wipes for hygiene (in a sealed baggie: bring an extra Ziploc baggie to carry them out)
- ___ Backpacker's chair
 - A great option is to bring a chair sleeve that will convert your Thermarest or other inflatable mattress to a chair. Light-weight Crazy Creek-type chairs are acceptable options, but are hard on the sit-bones for extended periods of time. Whatever chair you bring should be low-to-the-ground for sitting in circle with others, and be light and easy to carry. **You will likely be sitting for several hours a day and may be outside in light rain, so make sure it is one you can be comfortable in.**
- ___ Camp shoes, sturdy sandals, or down-filled booties (for cold weather) - a nice option to get out of your hiking boots and relax in light weight, comfortable footwear
- ___ Candle lantern and an extra candle
- ___ Insect repellent
- ___ Extra upper-body layer if you tend to get cold easily. This could be a wool sweater, fleece shirt, down jacket, or down or fleece vest. You will likely be colder while you are fasting.
- ___ Short pants (1 pair, or long pants with zip-off legs)
- ___ Sarong (useful as a scarf, skirt, blanket, towel, ground cloth, shade cover, etc.)
- ___ Warm gloves or mittens

Ceremonial Items: (see additional information on "ceremony" in the next section below)

- ___ Drum, shaker, lightweight rhythm-maker

- __ Ceremonial clothing
- __ Sacred objects
- __ Items for the Fire Ceremony (see “*Psychospiritual Preparation*” document)

CEREMONIAL ITEMS

Creating the Dance (Music):

We will create ceremonial dance and song to help us ease out of our ordinary modes of being and perceiving—into the sacred, timeless, symbolic world of myth and transformation. It will help if you bring with you some rhythm or musical instruments. Most relevant are the “primitive” (original) ones: drums, shakers (rattles, gourds, maracas, tambourines, tin cans with pebbles or seeds inside, etc.), bells, conches, whistles, flutes, and recorders.

Any instrument with which you can easily travel is welcome. However, small and light ones that you can place in or attach to your backpack are especially relevant. Without a doubt, you will at least want to make, borrow, or buy a ceremonial gourd shaker to have with you during your solo time!

Threads:

First and foremost, it is essential that the clothing that you bring with you is functional – that it keeps you warm, dry, comfortable, and mobile. Once you are sure you are properly equipped on the functional level, you may want to consider the symbolic significance and ceremonial potential of your garments:

What would you really want to wear when you are preparing to consciously die or surrender?

What would you want to wear when you are being (re-)born, celebrating your essential core human-ness or encountering spirit beings or your own soul?

You may want to pay attention to the colors of what you bring to wear, as well as to personal meaning and significance—meanings of which only you may be aware. It may be a favorite t-shirt, a piece of clothing that you wore during an important life transition (formal or otherwise), or an article of clothing that helps you feel more deeply for any of a variety of reasons.

Your ceremonial clothing may include hats, cloaks, sarongs, ribbons, jewelry, face/body paints, and so on.

For the ceremonial dance that we will enact in base-camp, come prepared to dress as the Inner Magician of yourself: the one who can access and manifest any and all of your sub-personalities!

On backpacking quests, keep in mind that you will have to carry to base-camp in your backpack whatever you plan to wear for the dance. If you have any doubts about any piece of clothing, bring it with you: you can always leave it in a car at the trailhead.

Sacred Objects:

Like many people, you might live with (not necessarily “possess”) certain small objects that are of great meaning and significance to you—that help you access the dimensions of spirit, soul, tradition, archetype, myth, courage, insight, intuition, imagination, will, love, truth, and so on—that stimulate, focus, or amplify your experience of personal or transpersonal power. These

objects may include special or “magical” stones, seeds, jewels, figurines, bones, teeth, claws, photographs, feathers, powders, crystals, carvings, etc.

You are encouraged to bring with you any such small power objects that may help you access important personal or transpersonal qualities and that may aid you during moments of fear, or confusion, or numinous encounters. Some people bring special pouches or satchels in which to carry these objects.

Mood Altering Substances

Please leave all mood/perception altering substances at home (even if they are legal).

Animas Valley Institute: Quest Food Suggestions

While on the backcountry portion of the quest, dinners will be provided by Animas and prepared by the guides or an assistant. Breakfasts and lunches (see prep letter for number required for your quest), snacks, beverages, and any emergency food while on your solo, are your responsibility. In order to assist you with bringing the most nutritious, delicious, and easy to pack meals, we are offering the following suggestions. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Concerning the fast:

Whether or not you fast and in what way you fast are ultimately up to you (except that it is recommended that you drink at least three quarts of water per day). Most people choose to consume only water. We recommend a 4-day fast and a 3-day solo, so that the fast begins a day before the solo.

Some people, especially those for whom fasting is not medically safe, eat very light foods that require no preparation. We encourage you to do a water-only fast unless a healthcare professional has advised you otherwise. If you choose to eat lightly during your 3-day solo, you must bring the relevant food items for yourself. If you are concerned about constipation, bring a laxative or herbal laxative tea such as Smooth Move.

To prepare for your fast and to ease the possible effects the fast may have on your body, we recommend doing a gentle cleanse in the weeks preceding the quest. At the very least, consider abstaining from sugar and caffeine prior to your quest.

Breakfast and Lunch suggestions:

The main considerations for planning, purchasing, and packaging your food are:

- How **perishable** is it? *There will be no refrigeration or coolers available for personal use.*
- **Weight:** On backpacking quests, you will be carrying this food in your pack along with a small portion of group gear.
- **Quantity:** spend some time thinking about how much you will actually eat. You may want to experiment with making your lunch ideas at home and see how much you need to feel nourished.
- **Nutrition:** you will want things that are rich in nutritious calories...lots of calories for their weight. On the note of purification, consider less meat, less salt, less sugar, etc.
- **Simplicity:** little or no preparation required. The guides will not be able to consistently provide hot water at lunches. While dehydrated soups, etc. might be a yummy option, it is likely best not to rely on this type of meal, (unless you plan to bring a “pocket rocket,” or other mini stove with your own fuel).

- **Packaging:** it is generally best to take everything you bring out of its original packaging because you will have to pack OUT what you don't use, plus extra packaging takes up valuable space. Consider putting items susceptible to leakage or breakage (such as honey or peanut butter) in a plastic tube and then in a Ziploc bag to reduce smells AND prevent leaks if the tube breaks.

Breakfast Ideas:

- Grains for cooking such as oatmeal, Mighty Tasty Cereal, Rice & Shine Cereal, etc.
- Granola with powdered milk
- Hard-boiled eggs (will keep a few days unrefrigerated)
- Breakfast bars/granola bars
- Powdered protein drink mixes

Lunch and snack ideas:

- Dried fruit (fresh fruit like apples or oranges are fine, but heavy.)
- Cheese - white cheese that is made with skim milk keeps better than oily, fatty cheeses. Hard cheeses (like aged gouda/some cheddar) do better than soft (like jack).
- Crackers - packaging is important here, as well as how you pack them in your backpack, as crackers that are just in a bag crumble easily. We have found the brand "Dr. Kracker" to be very hard & nutritious, available at health food markets. This cracker is similar to WASA.
- Dark German or Swedish breads - usually found in the international aisle, these thinly sliced dark-dense breads (like sunflower seed, rye or pumpernickel) last a long time and keep their shape. High in fiber too!
- Nuts or nut mixes - making your own trail mix is great (a mix of nuts and dried fruit is a great thing to have on the trail)
- Hard salami or dried salmon keeps well if you are a meat eater
- Jerky (any kind works great) - Attempt to find jerky without nitrates. Health food stores typically carry some great turkey and fish jerkies.
- Dried hummus (add water as needed). If bringing hummus, you might want to consider a small plastic Nalgene or reused container to bring olive oil in. Olive oil makes hummus much more palatable. A small supply of sea salt & cayenne could also greatly enhance this staple.
- Sun-dried tomatoes
- Avocados, if purchased rock hard, will carry well and hopefully ripen at just the right time - they are great on crackers
- Carrots (if you like fresh veggies, carrots keep well)
- Beets, turnips, etc. can be good grated (but you'll need a small grater) or thinly sliced
- A plastic bottle or tube of almond butter or peanut butter, etc
- Honey or jam (also in plastic tube) if you desire
- Tortillas are generally better than bread - they are easier to pack & last longer
- Bags of tuna or chicken - in bear country it's not as good of an idea, as your trash will get smelly
- Nutrition & snack bars - Powerbars, Cliff Bars, Balance Bars, Kind bars...you choose - these are great to have handy on the trail or for a quick snack

- Tabbouleh – just add water & spices...yum! Even better with hummus!
- “Tasty Bite Meals” - While meant to be warmed, there are quite tasty at room temp and are very filling, especially the ones that come with rice. You may want to purchase one and try it at room temp to see if it will work for you. Available at health food markets.

One last suggestion on quantity: *It's a great idea to actually figure quantities for each lunch, and then don't bring extra...like, 10 crackers, 5 slices of cheese, 1/4 cup nuts, etc.*

What NOT to bring as lunch:

- airy bread
- lunch meat
- soft fruit
- chips
- glass bottles or jars of any kind

Beverages

- Bring tea bags and/or powder for hot drinks. You will likely drink more than you expect, count on one for breakfast, one for dinner, and maybe one for snack or lunch, depending on if there is hot water. We generally have hot water each morning and sometimes after dinner.
- If you like milk, bring powdered milk.
- If you are a coffee drinker or black tea drinker, we recommend quitting before the quest to avoid caffeine headaches. If you must have it, consider instant coffee.

Tips

- Whatever you choose to bring, you will want to make sure that you have enough for lunches & snacks.
- If you are concerned about constipation during the quest, you may want to bring along some herbal laxative tea bags, such as Smooth-Move Tea (from Traditional Medicinals Teas), or a fiber supplement.
- Consider bringing Emergen-C's or another electrolyte powder that is easily packable.

Emergency Food:

This is important! Don't forget it ☺...The following information is intentionally precise. This small food stash is for the rare situation in which we'd have to pull folks off of their fast and ask you to be present and energized quickly to assist with an emergency. On the morning you return to basecamp from your fast, we will be serving you a yummy, nutritional, well planned meal to break your fast. Your emergency stash is not intended for that meal. Historically, this stash is rarely used for emergencies, so it will be a great treat post fast. In addition, we will be instructing you to eat a very small morsel of your emergency food should you enter into a state of physical need while on the solo.

Package the following separately in a Ziploc or two and stash it in your pack:

- 1/4 cup dried fruit without sugar added: raisins or cranberries work well
- a nutritional bar with protein in it
- a couple of packets of Emergen-C

Please contact us with any questions! 970-259-0585 soulcraft@animas.org