



Hiking in the rain isn't everyone's cup of tea... but I reckon it can actually be pretty fun. For a start: if your track takes you to a beautiful waterfall, watching the water tumbling down is just the *best*. Kayaking Milford Sound in New Zealand on a particularly miserable day allowed us to see it at its best, as hundreds of little waterfalls cascading down the rock faces.

Keeping yourself dry when hiking in the rain is one thing; just don a pair of waterproof pants and a jacket, and you'll be pretty comfortable. But what about all the precious gear in your backpack just *begging* to get wet? Yep – I'm talking your down sleeping bag, charged iPad, that pita bread, those dry clothes?

In this blog, I'll share 5 easy ways to keep both your backpack and the hiking gear inside safe and dry, hike after hike!

1. Use a Rain Cover

Most hiking backpacks include a rain cover, usually stowed in a small pocket at the bottom of the pack. It unfurls and covers the entire pack, cinched in by elastic around the harness.

While rain covers won't keep all the water out, they're a handy first line of defense.

The downside of rain covers is that they create a little more difficulty in accessing gear in your pack. As they're made of a lightweight material, they can also get snagged on foliage and tear easily. If your rucksack didn't come with a rain cover, you can buy one separately.



"Yep, that'll keep it dry" says Kym. Most hiking and travel backpacks come with a built-in rain cover that tucks away neatly into the base of the bag.



2. Line Your Pack

Lining your pack with a heavy duty plastic bag or liner is a more reliable way to keep your gear dry. Even if your pack gets soaked – it's the stuff inside that matters! I tend not to use a rain cover – but at a minimum, even if no rain is forecasted, I line my pack with a strong plastic bag.

The trick is to choose a liner that is much larger than your rucksack. For example, if your pack is 65L, use a 100L plastic bag. That way, you can push it into the corners of your pack and maximise space. Plus, you'll have plenty of bag left to roll shut.



Always choose a pack liner that's a fair bit bigger than the pack. That way you'll have plenty of the bag to roll up and tuck snugly down the side, to ensure a nice watertight seal.

3. Pack Gear into Dry Bags

If you have expensive electronic gadgets, it's a good idea to go the extra mile and stow them in quality dry bags (perhaps a bit overkill for your socks and jocks).

Other benefits of dry bags is that they allow you to organise and even colour-code your pack. For example: blue for cooking gear, and red for clothes. Should your rain cover or liner bag fail you too, you have an extra line of defense – even if it is just protecting the important stuff!

I carry gear like my first aid kit, headlamp, lighter, battery pack, and a notepad and pen in a small 2L lightweight dry sack. These are items that I really don't want to get wet – so it's worth it!



4. Go Crazy with Ziploc Bags

I'll admit it, I'm a little obsessed with Ziploc bags. I use them for everything, and love that they come in all different shapes and sizes. They do pretty much everything a dry sack does, but are far less expensive.

My first aid kit lives in a small sandwich-sized Ziploc bag, as do my camera accessories. These then go into my dry sack. Books and maps get the Ziploc treatment too. Rubbish goes in a large Ziploc, clipped onto the outside of my pack with a compression strap. My individual serves of oats and nuts, as well as my daily rations, also go into 'baggies' (as our American friends call 'em!).

Ziploc bags are especially useful for protecting the gear in your backpack's lid and hip belt pockets. Best of all, they're available almost everywhere.



Just a few of the items you can use to keep the stuff in your backpack dry on a drizzly hike.

5. Double-Line Your Sleeping Bag

Get your precious down sleeping bag wet, and it won't be much use to you. When down gets wet, it clumps and doesn't provide the 'loft' that keeps you warm – so it's really important to keep it dry!

If there's anything in your pack that you should make the time to waterproof, it's your sleeping bag. Perhaps you're off hiking in nice weather with little chance of rain? It may be reasonable to leave the dry sacks and liner at home, but don't risk your sleeping bag. I had a water bottle leak all through my pannier on a recent bicycle tour... thankfully, it was only the



pannier I kept things like my sleeping mat, tool kit, tent fly, poles, and cookware in!

Below is a nifty video that demonstrates how to make your sleeping bag nice and waterproof:

Remember, stuff sacks are called that for a reason. Don't bother trying to fold your sleeping bag. Stuff that thing in there!

PRO TIP: Don't assume that water will only get into your pack from the outside. If you have a water bottle or bladder inside your pack, it could spring a leak. Protect against that too!

Do you use any of these techniques to keep your bag dry? Or do you prefer to stay home when rain is forecasted?