



Hiking in the rain isn't everyone's cup of tea but I reckon it can actually be pretty fun. For a start, if you're on a track that takes you to a beautiful waterfall, then obviously it's going to be best when water is tumbling down.

Kayaking Milford Sound in New Zealand a few years back on a particularly miserable day allowed us to see the sound at its best, as hundreds of little waterfalls cascading down the rock faces.

Keeping yourself dry when hiking in the rain is one thing. You can don waterproof pants and a jacket and you'll probably be pretty comfortable. But what about all the precious gear in your backpack just waiting to get wet? Your down sleeping bag, your iPad, that pita bread, your dry clothes?

Well, in this blog I am going to share 5 easy ways to keep your backpack and all your hiking gear safe and dry.

1. Use a rain cover for your backpack

Most hiking backpacks come with a rain cover. It's usually stowed in a small pocket at the bottom of the pack and unfurls covering the entire pack before being cinched in by elastic, around the harness. While rain covers won't keep all the water out, they're a handy first line of defence.

The downside of rain covers is they make accessing gear in the pack difficult and because they're made of a lightweight material, can easily get snagged on foliage and rip. 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 with a plastic bag or liner

Lining your pack with a heavy duty plastic bag is a more reliable way of keeping your gear dry. Sure, your pack will get soaked but it's the stuff in it that matters. I tend not to use a rain cover but at a minimum, even if no rain is forecasted, line my pack with a strong, black plastic bag.

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

If you want to get fancy and you're looking for a pack liner that will last you can **buy specially designed liner bags**.



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. Put your gear in dry bags

If you have expensive electronic gear it's definitely a good idea to go the extra mile and stow it in quality dry bags. Perhaps a bit of an overkill for your socks and jocks though.



The other benefits of using dry bags is that they allow you to organise your pack, even colour code it – e.g. blue for cooking gear, red for clothes – and, should your rain cover or liner bag fail you, 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 little **2L lightweight dry sack**. These are things I really don't want to get wet, so it's worth it.

4. Go crazy with zip lock bags

I'll admit it, I'm a bit obsessed with zip lock bags. I use them for everything. I love how they come in all different shapes and sizes and do pretty much everything a dry sack does, but for way cheaper.

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

Ziplock bags are especially useful for protecting the gear in your backpacks 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. Wet down clumps up and doesn't provide that 'loft' that keeps you warm. It's really important to keep it dry. If you're going to take the time to waterproof anything in your pack, make it 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 and poles, and cookware in.

Here's a nifty video that shows you 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 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?