



So, you've decided to finally bite the bullet and start training and planning for a huge multi-day hike. Whether it's Larapinta, Bibbulman, or the Overland track - one thing you need to start thinking about is the kind of food you'll need to fuel your body for the entire journey.

How much weight should I allow for food each day?

You should allow for approximately 700g - 1kg on average of food per day, depending on how much you know your body will need. It's also a good idea to bring extra food in case you need it - an extra meal plus snacks should do the trick, just in case you have to spend an extra night on the trail.

Where can I get lightweight hiking food?

Meal prep for hiking is as easy as jumping in the car and heading down to your local shops, so you won't need to stray far to get mostly everything you need. You can buy all your condiments, snacks, breakfast, lunch and dinners from the supermarket, and then for more specialised items like freeze dried meals - head to your [favourite](#) online camping or hiking store.



Here's what approximately a day's worth of food might look like.



How should I pack my meals?

The best way to go about it is to do a little bit of food prep and planning in the week or days leading up to your trip (the night before is *not* a good idea!). Remove all excess packaging that you don't need to bring with you, as that will just weigh you down, and take up valuable space in your pack. Ziplock bags are perfect for hiking, as they form a tight seal that won't leak, they're super lightweight, and they'll keep your meals fresh.

Pre-mix your meals e.g. put your muesli, powdered milk, and dried fruit together- and label each bag carefully with the day number, meal, and even what's in it (you'd be surprised at how similar food can look in low light conditions) so you know *exactly* what it is, and when you're going to eat it.

You can also separate your meals into different bags in your pack, as that might make it easier rather than sorting through lunch and dinners looking for your morning brekkie.



Ziplock bags are a lightweight, and easy way to pack your meals and keep them fresh.

Breakfast

Depending on your schedule you may want to cook something that involves the least amount of prep time as possible such as a muesli or power bar, or you might want to put something warm in your belly to start the day - especially on a chilly morning!



Instant oatmeal with some honey, fruit or nuts added is a solid choice that's a good start to a long day of hiking. If you're set on a cooked breakfast, you could bring instant pancake mix, so all you have to do is add water and shake and you'll be on your way to a hot breakfast on the trail.

Don't forget a cup of tea or coffee as well to get you going!

Food ideas for breakfast

- Instant Oatmeal
- Muesli
- Cereals
- Powdered milk
- Pre-made pancake mix
- Muesli, protein or energy bars

Lunch

For lunch, you'll want something easy to prepare, and that doesn't involve having to fire up your stove. Some hikers prefer not to take a longer stop for lunch, and will just snack at intervals throughout the day to keep their momentum going.

Crackers, wrap bread, or dense bread with toppings are an excellent staple for lunch. If you're a vegetarian, you can add sun-dried tomatoes, shelf stable hummus or tahini. If you eat meat and dairy - salami and cheese or packet tuna are full of protein, just add your favourite condiments and you should be all set!

Easy to prepare food for lunches

- Crackers, biscuits
- Pita bread
- Tortillas
- Rye or other dense bread
- Cheese
- Sun-dried tomatoes
- Dried meats
- Tuna
- Shelf stable hummus or tahini
- Honey, jam, nut butter, chutney or relish



Protein and carbs are just what you need after a long day of trekking.

Dinner

If you're more of a gourmet eater, you might prefer preparing your own meals on the trail. If you pack staple carbs such as instant rice, pasta, couscous or noodles, and then add some protein, dried vegetables, and sauces or spices – you'll have a pretty tasty meal that will provide you with the protein, carbohydrates and fats you need after a long day of exertion.

You do want to provide yourself with options, as the same meal 7 nights in a row will get pretty tiresome. When coming up with your hiking menu, also check how long it will take to cook certain foods as the longer the cook time – the more fuel you'll have to bring.

For example, something like quinoa might not be the best food to take on a hike, as it takes around 15 minutes to cook – which isn't the best use of your precious fuel.

Food ideas for hiking dinners

- Fast cooking rice
- Pasta
- Couscous
- Noodles



- Tuna, salmon, or sardines in a packet (not a tin)
- Jerky, salami, or other dried meat
- Cheese such as gouda or cheddar
- Lentils
- Dried vegetables
- Instant mash potato



Dinner can be as simple as adding a sauce to pasta, or you can get a little more creative.

Freeze dried meals

If you know that you'll be a complete zombie after an intensely long day of hiking, then you might want to consider bringing freeze dried pre-packaged meals.

Freeze dried meals are a great option as they're lightweight, involve very little preparation, and come in an array of different options from meal sides, to desserts. As this food is made for hiking, it has the right balance of carbs, sugar, protein and fats - so it'll cover pretty much all your bases nutrition-wise.

All you have to do is boil water, add it to the pack, let it stand for 10 minutes, and the meal is ready to eat. They do end up costing a little more than if you prepared it yourself, but for some, it's well worth it for the convenience alone.



It can be difficult to guess how much water to add to your freeze dried foods, so a good tip is to take a drink bottle with measurements on the side, so you don't go overboard and end up with watery food. If you're eating straight from the packet, it's also useful to take a longer spoon or fork to stir with – that way your hands won't get grubby in the packet.

Serving wise, if you normally have a big appetite, then definitely go for a double size – you'll be starving after hours of trekking and you don't want to go to bed hungry. Freeze dried meals also come in ration packs, which contain breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and beverages for a whole day – which makes meal prep an absolute breeze.



Freeze dried meals are a convenient and lightweight menu choice that makes food planning a little easier.

Dehydrate your own food

If you prefer for your ingredients to have as little preservatives and additives as possible, then dehydrating your own fruits and vegetables may be right up your alley.

Dehydrating food is cheaper than buying freeze dried meals and it's a great option for when you want to add more texture and flavour to starchy meals, but it'll involve a little more effort on your part.

Dehydrating reduces the volume and weight, but it requires a little extra water and time to rehydrate. Plus it has the tendency to be a little more on the chewy side once rehydrated – so



that's something to keep in mind.

Snacks

Regularly refuelling your body as you hike is very important to keep your energy levels up, and to also treat yourself when you take a break from the trek. It's best to keep snacks in an accessible area, like the hip belt or side pockets of your pack so you don't have to sort through your pack to find them.

Snacks to bring on the trail

- Dried fruit, or fruit leather
- Nuts and seeds
- Chocolate
- Nut butters
- Muesli bars, protein bars, energy bars, or gels
- Freeze dried desserts
- Instant pudding
- Powdered custard
- Lollies



Grazing throughout the hike is important to make sure that you don't deplete your energy levels.

Condiments and spices

Whilst almost anything will taste great when you're that tired after a long day, you'll be patting yourself on the back later for bringing along various condiments and spices to make your evening meal as delicious as possible.

Bring along a selection of your favourites, so you don't get too tired of the same basic meal each day. If you're pre-packaging each meal into a ziplock bag, you can add it straight in, or carry it separately if you'd prefer to add to taste as you go.

Condiments and spices to pack

- Curry powder
- Tomato paste
- Garlic and onion flakes
- Capers
- Olives
- Sun-dried tomatoes



- Parmesan cheese
- Chili flakes
- Jam
- Honey, rice or malt syrup
- Packet sauces
- Powdered sauces
- Hummus
- Tahini
- Sauces
- Salt and pepper

Beverages

If you're a serious caffeine fiend, then you're probably rather attached to your coffee machine at home. If the thought of granulated coffee touching your lips sends involuntary shivers up your spine, then perhaps a lightweight espresso maker made just for hiking, may be worth an extra 200-300g in your pack.

Not everyone is fussed about taste, so if this is you - then just pack plenty of tea bags and granulated coffee for your early morning caffeine kick.

During the day, a smoothie or hydration drink is nice to break up the monotony of plain water now and again, and in the evenings a sachet of hot chocolate or Milo can go down a treat on a chilly evening before bed.

Beverages to take

- Instant coffee
- Powdered milk
- Tea bags
- Powdered hydration beverages or tablets
- Freeze dried or powdered smoothies
- Hot chocolate sachets / Milo



Take along several different drinks to mix it up, as it's important to stay motivated to drink fluids on the trail.

Top 5 meal planning tips for multi-day hikes

1. Make sure you give some of the recipes you're planning a test run before you go. This way you'll know what meals you're going to enjoy and get the most out of on the trail.
2. Variety is very important for longer trips. This helps to keep you motivated to fuel your body for the entire trek.
3. If you want to be super organised, use a spreadsheet to record your food (and gear). This way you can weigh and add up the total weight and also how much energy you'll get per day.
4. If you're a big eater, try to find ways to cut down on weight in other areas of your pack so that you can take more food with you.
5. Pack some food that doesn't have to be cooked in your stove breaks or you run out of fuel.

Do you have any excellent tips for packing your food like a pro? Let us know in the comments below.