

# Boy Scout Troop 1257

*Holiday Gifts:  
an  
Opportunity to  
Prepare Your  
Scout for  
Outdoor  
Adventure*

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The Christmas Season and Holiday gift-giving provide a great opportunity to outfit your scout with outdoor gear that will enhance his safety, enjoyment and preparation for Troop 1257 camping events. This document provides our *Top-Ten Gift Ideas* for Troop 1257 scouts.

As scoutmasters with BSA Troop 1257, we regularly take your boys into a wide variety of wilderness environments and recreational situations. Along the way, we have seen a few unprepared scouts experience uncomfortable outings because they were cold, poorly hydrated, too hot, or did not have a well-fitting pack to comfortably carry their gear. Based on these observations, we have identified ten pieces of cost-effective outdoor gear that offer versatility, enhance safety and improve comfort. Consider augmenting your scout's gear chest with one or two of these items. Our recommendations won't break the bank and they will provide benefits in a breadth of situations. Dads, you might even enjoy some of this gear!

With one exception, all of our Top-Ten Gear is available from a wide range of manufacturers. Northern Virginia and Web-based outfitters can outfit your scout economically and with a broad choice of gear. Remember, with rapidly growing scouts it's often best to buy based on price!

**#1—Water Bottle:** Dehydration is by far the most frequent health issue for youth in wilderness situations. It's also the most easily prevented. A convenient water bottle does wonders to keep your scout hydrated. We recommend the *Nalgene One-Liter Wide Mouth* bottle.

A staple of the outdoor industry, it is nearly indestructible. Mr. Glor and Matt Saunders tossed one off of a waterfall in Canada and it arrived downstream without a scratch! These bottles are interoperable with Troop 1257's water filters, making back-country water filtration a breeze. Ms. Ellis favors the new 2005 "pink-snowflake" models but we suggest you stick with the traditional grey bottle or the other guy-friendly colors for your scout. These bottles are available at Galyans, Sonny's, REI, LL Bean, Hudson Trail Outfitters and most wilderness outfitters. **Price Range: \$7 to \$8.**



Nautical Red



**#2—Synthetic Shirts:** Cotton shirts are poor choices in aerobic situations like hiking and back-packing because they retain moisture and dry slowly. A short-sleeve or long-sleeve hiking shirt made of non-cotton fibers such as Coolmax, Dri-Fit, Power-Dry, Capilene, Poly-Pro or REI's Moisture

Transport System (MTS) provides a versatile layering piece that can be used cold-weather and hot-weather sports and camping. These materials wick away sweat and keep your scout comfortable even if he is sweating hard. Some models include a half-zipper that allows temperature regulation and ventilation. Try Sonny's, CampMor, Eastbay, REI, LL Bean, Galyans and Hudson Trail Outfitters. *Whatever brand you purchase, ensure that it is non-cotton and made of a wicking fabric. Price Range: \$15—\$35.*

**#3—Convertible Nylon Pants:** Cotton blue jeans, like a cotton tee-shirt, are poor choices for camping and hiking because they soak up water like a sponge and dry slowly. Consider a pair of convertible nylon hiking pants as a core element of your scout's outdoor wardrobe. They dry quickly and the pant-legs can be unzipped, providing a quick-change into shorts in the same garment! These pants are available from many manufacturers. Consider the Campmor or Galyan's house-brand if your boy is growing fast and economy is your goal. REI, Lands End and LL Bean offer their convertible pants in Kids sizes. The North Face and Columbia make versions that are virtually bomb-proof in their construction. For example, Mr. Glor fell down and scraped his knee on a curb while delivering mulch a few years ago. Fortunately, his *North Face Paramount Pants* were up to the task and did not rip—even though the skin under the pants suffered a serious, bloody cut! Don't worry, the Scoutmaster was not seriously injured! *Price Range: \$25—\$50.*



**#4— Fleece Jacket:** A fleece jacket provides an extremely versatile jacket that can be used in a myriad of ways. Wear it alone or under a rain shell. Wear it skiing or hiking. Wear it to school. These jackets are quick-drying and they retain their warmth even when wet. They are superior to popular sweatshirts and cotton "hoodies" that become a five-pound, slow-drying clump when rained on. You can buy these jackets anywhere from Target or Old Navy to REI or Galyans. Consider a versatile mid-weight version with pockets and a full-length zipper or the "anorak" version that includes a half-zipper on the front. *Price Range: \$15—50.*



Foliage



**#5—Rain Shell:** If there's one thing that Troop 1257 understands, it's the fact that rain happens! A rain shell made of DWR-treated (durable water repellent) fabric is a life saver when we get rained on. A rain shell combined with a fleece jacket provides a warm, weather-tight combination that is great for skiing and backpacking.

You can get a great jacket without springing for expensive Gore-Tex fabrics. Check out REI's Ultra-Light Jacket which is available in Kids' sizes or similar offerings from CampMor, LL Bean, Galyan's, or a variety of other retailers. Jacob Saunders wears the Marmot Pre-Cip Jacket pictured in red and it has been excellent. Whatever jacket you purchase, be sure to get the hood and make sure that jacket has some type of DWR treatment, plus pockets.  
*Price Range: \$25—\$75.*



**#6—Duffel Bag:** Suitcases are great for air-plane travel but they are tough in a camping environment due to weight and size constraints. Backpacks are great for hitting the trail but can be tough to pack in a space-constrained vehicle. The timeless duffel bag is a winner for weekend car-camping trips. Choose based on capacity and durability. We strongly recommend the "large" version! A good duffel bag will become your scout's preferred packing choice well into college (but make sure you understand your scout's color preferences!).  
*Price Range: \$20—\$50.*

Lime



**#7—Day Pack or Hydration Pack:** A day-pack can be handy for day hikes that do not warrant a full-scale backpack. A pocket for a water bottle or hydration bladder does wonders for keeping water accessible. Look for a comfortable suspension system and a few pockets. These do not need to be fancy and might easily double for school activities.

Troop 1257 attendees at Boy Scout Reservations during the Summer have made *hydration* packs a staple. A hydration pack combines a 1.5—3.0 liter hydration bladder with a backpack to provide a “wearable” water source that is always accessible via a tube that attaches to the shoulder strap. A wide variety of manufacturers and form factors are available. All accomplish the goal of making water accessible in hot hiking environments where steady water consumption reduces dehydration issues. If you already have a day-pack consider turning it into a hydration pack by adding a Platypus Hydration Bladder. *Price Range: \$25—\$60.*



**#8—Sleeping Bag:** Troop 1257 camps year-round and in a wide range of conditions that include cabin-camping, car-camping, wilderness canoe camping and backpacking. A reliable sleeping bag does wonders to ensure scout comfort on cool nights. Synthetic fibers like PolarGuard are best for mid-Atlantic campers like Troop 1257 scouts that regularly encounter rain throughout most of the year. PolarGuard retains its warmth when wet and dries quickly. A mummy-style bag provides the greatest warmth. Aim for a temperature rating of 20 degrees F for three-season versatility and make sure it includes a stuff-sack. *Remember that lighter is better!* All the major outdoor retailers can provide a wide -ranging selection. Pay close attention to weight if your scout aims to participate in backpacking trips!

We’ve been impressed by the sleeping bag lineup at LL Bean, REI, Galyans and CampMor. This is one piece of gear where it does not pay to skimp on quality. Avoid bags filled with generic polyester and “re-claimed Kleenex fiber.” *Price Range: \$50—\$90.*



## #9—Hiking Boots or Trail Shoes:

Dark Brown



Dark Khaki/Stone



Few items will make or break a hiking experience like foot-ware. Our scouts wear traditional hiking boots, trail shoes and a variety of hybrids. *However, the scouts that enjoy extended multi-mile hiking trips rarely wear tennis shoes.* Tennis shoes simply do not provide sufficient support for hiking on the rocky trails that characterize our region. A good pair of hiking shoes or boots will improve traction, resist moisture and enhance support (enabling more comfortable hiking and reducing twisted ankles).

Whatever you choose, pay close attention to fit. An experienced boot-fitter at LL Bean, REI, Hudson Trail Outfitters or EMS can provide huge value to unfamiliar buyers. On this point we show our personal bias. LL Bean stocks a wide range of hiking foot-ware for all ages and in a variety of widths. Bean's liberal return policies allow you to easily recover from purchases that end up not fitting once you hit the trail. We both wear Bean hiking boots! *Price Range: \$60—\$125.*

**#10—Backpacks:** For those scouts that want to get involved in backpacking, a well-fitted backpack is a must-have item. The industry is leaning heavily towards internal frame packs, but the traditional external frame pack remains a staple of the scout hiker. A sleeping bag compartment is a desirable feature that helps avoid problems securing the sleeping bag to the pack—a frequent challenge that we observe on hikes. Plan to spend some time visiting an outdoor store that knows how to fit a backpack. We've had good experiences with REI, Hudson Trail Outfitters and Galyans. For boys that are still growing, consider a pack that can adjust as your son grows. Plan on 3200—4800 cubic inches capacity. *Price Range: \$60—\$125.*

Whatever you choose for your scout this Holiday Season, your gift will enhance his camping and scouting experiences.

## Resources

L.L. Bean	<a href="http://www.llbean.com">www.llbean.com</a>	Store in Tysons Corner
Campmor	<a href="http://www.campmor.com">www.campmor.com</a>	
Galyans	<a href="http://www.galyans.com">www.galyans.com</a>	Store in Fair Lakes
REI	<a href="http://www.rei.com">www.rei.com</a>	Store in Fair Oaks
EastBay	<a href="http://www.eastbay.com">www.eastbay.com</a>	
EMS	<a href="http://www.ems.com">www.ems.com</a>	

Hudson Trail Outfitters, Fairfax Circle and Fair Oaks Mall, Virginia  
Sonny's, Manassas, VA