

## YOUR EXPERTS



**ALAN HINKES (AH)** is a mountaineer, climber, hillwalker and Yorkshireman. He is the first (and to date only) Brit to have summited all 14 of the world's mountains over 8000m. Not only that, but he's a fan of **Trail**, as **Trail** is of him.



**MAL CREASEY (MC)** is a climber and guide, and he's currently the development officer for Mountain Training. He has over 30 years of experience of operating throughout the UK, Europe, Nepal, Tanzania and Indonesia.



**SQUASH FALCONER (SF)** skis, snowboards, paraglides, rides motorbikes and climbs mountains, plus various combinations of the above, such as riding to Mont Blanc, climbing to the top and paragliding off. Oh, and she's summited Everest.



**KENTON COOL (KC)** has summited Everest 10 times (including twice in one week) and successfully guided Sir Ranulph Fiennes up the north face of the Eiger. He is director of Chamonix-based Dream Guides and a supporter of the Porters' Progress charity.



**GRAHAM THOMPSON (GT)** has been **Trail**'s technical editor for over 20 years, and he's a fountain of knowledge on all aspects of walking kit.



**TEAM TRAIL (TT)** comprises the massed brainpower of editor Simon Ingram, mountaineering editor Jeremy Ashcroft, and writers Ben Weeks and Dan Aspel.

If you've got a question about hill-walking. Get in touch and ask our team.



Post your queries to: Ask **Trail**, **Trail**, Bauer, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA.



Even better, email us: [trail@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:trail@bauermedia.co.uk) and put 'Ask **Trail**' in the subject box.

(Sorry, but we can only answer the questions that appear in the magazine.)

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## TIPS, TRICK & TECHNIQUES

**T**eam **Trail** has been up rather a lot of mountains. As such, we've amassed a fair bit of experience and a vast collection of tips to help make life easier on the hill. But we don't know everything, so it helps that we've also got a bunch of experts we can call on to offer their advice. So if you've ever wondered how to stop your glasses misting up in the morning, whether creme eggs are better than Mars bars in the cold, how good knickers can improve your day, or why Kenton Cool has wine gums rattling around in his rucksack, this is the place to find out!

■ If there's no room in your bag, zip your jacket up around the outside of your pack as if it's a little person! That way you don't have to actually wear it. **TT**

■ Bookmark the MWIS weather website on your phone. They have a fantastic mobile site that loads very quickly. **TT**

■ My philosophy is this: if your knickers are right, your day goes right! The bigger meaning goes something like: if you sort the small stuff the big stuff falls into place. Treat yourself to lovely kit that feels and looks good.

■ **Baking soda sprinkled in boots can make them smell fresher, (although it does depend how stinky they are to start with...).** **GT**



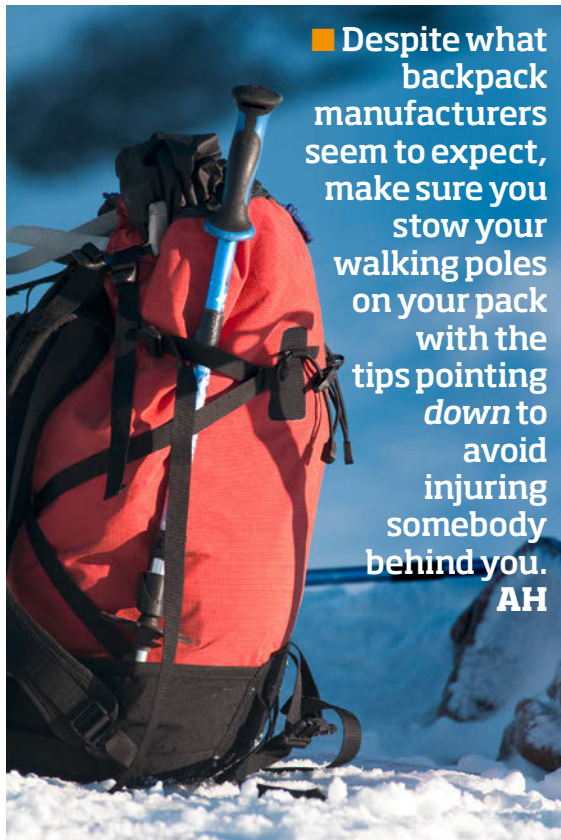
It makes a difference – I always take a pair of knickers for every day when I'm on a trip! **SF**

■ Cut your map down (but not too much) so it folds smaller. You're then more likely to keep it in your pocket instead of buried in your rucksack. Another trick is use a hole punch in the corner and tie the map onto a zip toggle. **MC**

■ Need more space? Ditch your tent bag, stuff it into a more compact dry bag and store the poles separately down the side of your backpack. **TT**

■ **Check your compass straight after purchase to ensure it points north. Compasses can be distorted by items including magnetic tags and scanners, and if it doesn't point in the right direction it is useless.** **GT**





■ Despite what backpack manufacturers seem to expect, make sure you stow your walking poles on your pack with the tips pointing down to avoid injuring somebody behind you. **AH**

■ If you are away for a few days take shampoo/wet wipes/deodorant! You can decant small amounts into travel containers and you'll feel much better for it, and being comfortable and happy will help you to achieve your goal. **SF**

■ Stuff a dry-bag or stuff-sack with a down jacket for an incredibly comfortable pillow. **TT**

■ Eat and drink *before* you need to, and choose a sheltered spot before the summit bid. The worst time to try to replenish food and drink is actually on the summit of a mountain as there is no shelter, more wind, lower temps and you'll be wanting to get off as soon as possible. **GT**

■ Keep snacks easily accessible in your pack or the pockets of your shirt, jacket or pants, so their retrieval



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■ Crush the leaves of an elderberry bush and either place them in the pockets of your clothing or rub them over your body for a natural insect repellent. **TT**



doesn't become a time-consuming ordeal when you're tired and hungry. **TT**

■ Never put your gloves or other vital bits of kit on the

ground. Even relatively gentle wind can soon send them spinning away from you. Get into the habit of stashing gloves inside your jacket and don't expect things to stay where you put them. **MC**

■ For a rough estimate of much daylight you have left, hold your hand out at arm's length and see how many fingers you can fit between the horizon and the sun. Each finger represents around 15 minutes of sunlight. **TT**

■ Use walking poles! Research shows that using a pair of poles can reduce the stress on your legs by as much as 20 per cent, so always take them - you never know when you'll need them. **TT**



■ To avoid making the inside of your waterproof trousers mucky when putting on over walking boots, put a plastic bag over your footwear before pulling the trousers on. Once your foot has poked out the other end, remove the plastic bag, stick it on the other foot and repeat. **TT**

■ To stop your glasses fogging up when it's cold, lie them on your chest for a few minutes before leaving the tent. **GT**

■ If you suffer from cold hands go for mittens instead of gloves as they keep your hands warmer. **GT**

■ Rods and stiffening in packs can produce an annoying squeak when walking. Use silicone spray so the two parts slide more easily past one another and avoid the torment of the continuous squeaks. **GT**

■ Zips on tents and rucksacks can stiffen up quicker than

■ **Carry at least four pairs of gloves in winter. Having a warm dry pair for the middle of the afternoon is not a luxury; it's a necessity.** **MC**



jackets, which are used more often. Use paraffin wax, silicone spray or a dedicated zip-lube to keep them free. **GT**

■ Add cord zip pulls to your zips to make them glove friendly and easier to operate when your hands are cold and wet. Hold a match over the cut ends to melt them and prevent the threads from unravelling. **GT**

■ Scout for the best wild camping spot with your pack off. With your pack on you will settle for anything just so you can drop your gear, but

with your pack off you can look around and enjoy the freedom before pitching your tent in the knowledge that you have had a good scout around and not just gone for the easiest option. **GT**

■ Folding gear creates lines of weakness on the fabric, but stuffing gear means you never create the same folds and so the gear does not crack along them. Folding sleeping bags places the same stress on the internal baffles each time, but stuffing spreads the load. **GT**

■ Roll a jacket into its hood for storage. **TT**



■ If like me you're rubbish at keeping count in your head, put some beads on your compass string: they will be invaluable for counting steps in bad weather. **KC**



■ **Take your comfort food with you! Tubes of condensed milk are a favourite for me. I like to get back to basics with my snacks: my favourite chocolate bar, perhaps a bag of mixed nuts, dried mangoes... SF**

■ **Mars bars will freeze solid when it's really cold, but Cadbury's creme eggs stay soft and gooey for much longer - so no need to lose that filling!** **MC**



# TRAIL SKILLS



■ Toss some grass in the air and see which way it blows to identify wind direction. Essential when pitching a tent, choosing where to cook and choosing where to pee! If no grass or foliage then wet your finger and hold it up. The cold side is where the wind is coming from. **GT**

■ Lie on the ground before you pitch your tent to find its slope, its rocks and the best angle to pitch your tent and save yourself from sliding to the side due to pitching across a slope. **GT**

■ It is an outdoor myth that the best way to stay warm in a sleeping bag is to take all your



■ I was told by a mountain rescue doctor that the most vital bit of my first aid kit as a mountain guide is my mobile phone. Take one, ensure it's charged and know the rescue number (UK 999, France 112, Italy 118, Switzerland 1414) but **ONLY** use it in a real emergency. **KC**

clothes off so your body heat can warm the insulation more efficiently. If you are cold, then add a hat, add gloves, add socks and add a base layer and insulated jacket if necessary! **GT**

■ Webbing straps on rucksacks can fly around and whack you in your face or even snag. Keep the ends tidy with neat 'webbing tidies', which you can make from a knotted elastic band that you wrap around the main strip so you can tuck the ends away. **GT**

■ Keep cool in your hard shell (waterproof). If you are too hot you will get condensation inside your jacket. The only way to overcome that is to take off layers and open vents. **GT**

■ Always 'lose' some sweets in your rucksack. Finding them 6 months later on the day that you have run out of food and snacks feels like you have won the lottery! **KC**

■ Always carry a headtorch. In the summer you can take a small emergency-type torch, but there's always the risk of becoming benighted on the hill due to an emergency. Obviously in the winter when days are shorter, the risk is



greater, so consider taking a second spare torch. **AH**

■ Keep your thumb on the map to mark your last known position. Doing this can save the infuriating situation of scouring the map every time you have to check your position. The other great bonus here is that if you are involved in some critical route-finding you can confidently get your head



■ When stopping to rest, don't lean on your trekking poles. Leaning forward compresses the lungs and makes it harder to breathe. To maximise your rest time, sit down to give your legs a break and keep your body upright to get the air into your lungs. **TT**



# TRAIL SKILLS



out of the map and use the greatest aid to navigation you'll ever have – your eyes.

**MC**

■ In low temperatures, wear some form of mask over your mouth to prevent cold air being dragged into your body, which can cause 'frozen lungs'. **GT**

■ It's no good trying to be clever in thumbing the map if it's blown away into the gloom. Use a map case to protect and control your map.

**MC**

■ Carry a small piece insulating mat to sit on for stops. You might be surprised at how much heat you can lose through conduction with a cold surface otherwise. **AH**

■ Wearing a pair of liner gloves inside waterproof shell outer gloves or mitts is more efficient and more adaptable than wearing one pair of thick gloves. **TT**



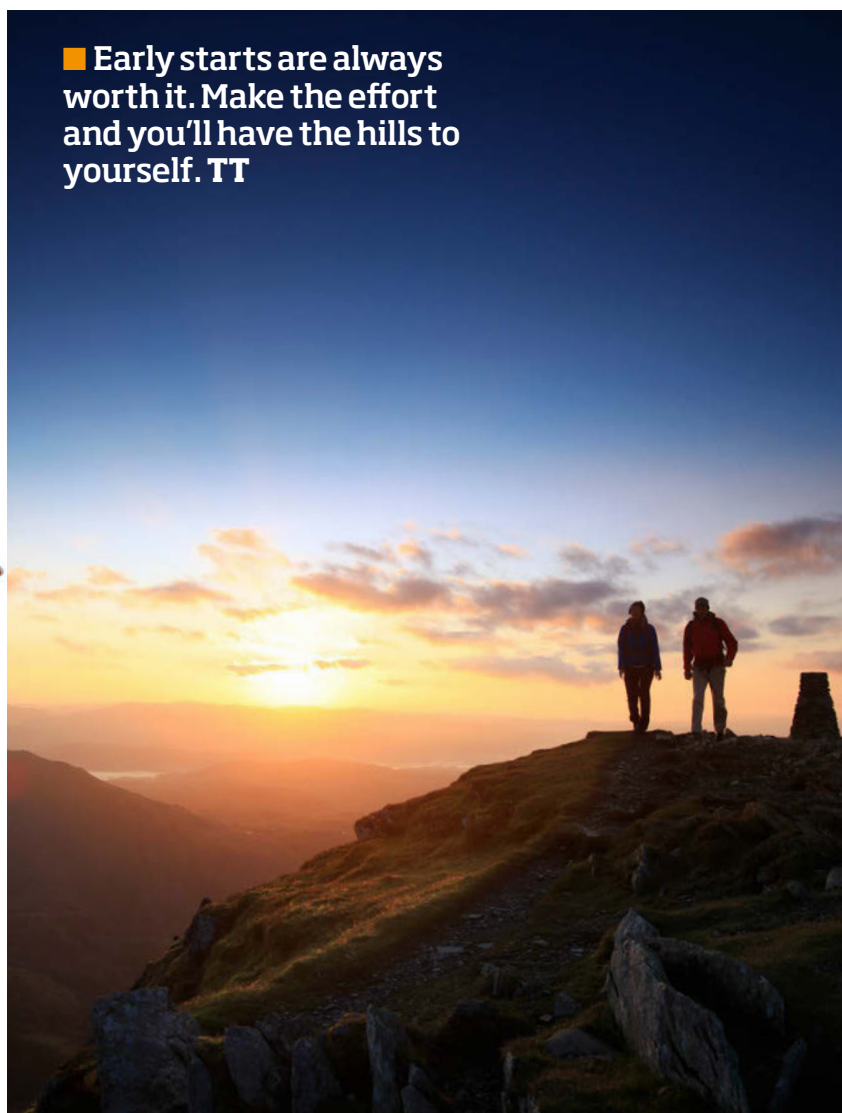
■ A good-quality synthetic baseball cap or waterproof hat with a good peak can improve the performance of a hood, which is essential when you find yourself walking into a storm to reach the summit or get to camp. **GT**

■ When packing expedition kit, fill your water bottles and boots with socks and tops. Zero wasted space! **TT**

■ Commit to doing walks/climbs/sessions with friends – then it's harder to back out and not do it. **SF**

■ Always take a spare base layer – there's no such thing as a 100 per cent waterproof jacket! **TT**

■ Early starts are always worth it. Make the effort and you'll have the hills to yourself. **TT**



■ Don't punish yourself if you don't stick to a plan. If you ate a bar of chocolate and a bag of crisps instead of doing that 30 min run, it's

not the end of the world; just get back on it the next day. **SF**

■ Any training is better than none. Remember, you're always lapping the people sitting on the couch! **SF**

■ If you are short on time, interval training is fantastic. Do 20 minutes – 1 minute sprinting flat out and 1 minute resting, 10 times – and you'll be amazed how hard you've worked and how beneficial it is. **SF**

■ Use your stove lid as a mug, to save weight. **TT**

■ Share your food. You know how dogs always seem to want what another

dog is eating? We humans can be the same! Someone else's snacks/meals can often look more interesting/appetising. So share your stuff! **SF**

■ When trekking, eat small amounts often; I try to have a mouthful of my snacks every 20 mins. Also be sure to eat and drink well before and after exercise to help your muscles recover. **SF**

■ Always compartmentalise your rucksack with dry-bags – colour coded if possible. **TT**

■ If you've lost the path and have a dog with you, wait for your four-legged friend to pick up the trail. Dogs will often follow human footprints and so even if you don't know where the path is you can be pretty sure your dog does. **GT**



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# TRAIL SKILLS

■ Supping a warm drink before bed warms you up rapidly so you don't get chilled having stripped off and sunk into your chilly sleeping bag. **GT**



■ Is your butane stove struggling in the cold? Sit it in a pot lid with 3/4 in of cool water. This will raise the temperature of the fuel to above 0 deg C, ensuring it will burn at full power. **TT**

■ Pack gear in the same place each time and develop a system so you can 'see' the item in your pack and find it blindfolded. If you can do that you will easily be able to find it in a blizzard or storm, or when tired. You'll also spot if something is missing. **GT**

■ I never, ever leave the house without sunglasses in my rucksack. I may only put them on once in a blue moon

but when I do I feel like the cat that has the cream while my friends look on with envy. **KC**

■ Learn what works for you. Not everybody responds the same to certain snacks/energy bars/drinks. Try a few different options! **SF**

■ Always be prepared for the conditions. Best to

be overdressed on a cold, snowy, windy day than underdressed. My dear old father used to tell me when I was a Boy Scout "any fool can be cold". **KC**

■ Wash plastic water bottles with baking soda and allow them to air-dry with their lids off to prevent them developing a plastic smell. **GT**

■ A definite top tip is that the day doesn't always have to go as planned for it to be a great day in the hills. **KC**



■ Sphagnum moss can be used in an emergency for dressing a wound. Indeed, there is documentary evidence that it has been used for such a purpose as far back as the 11th century. **GT**





■ You might only use them once a year, but a pair of snow goggles in your pack means you can descend into a blizzard or walk into the eye of the storm to reach the summit or descend. They are also ideal in wind, driving rain and hail ... despite their name. **GT**



■ I always take a pocket of sweets. When team morale is lagging it's amazing what a few fruit pastilles or wine gums can do! **KC**

■ Take more photos than you think you need: snap away all the time, even when the conditions are bad. In 10 years' time it makes a great record of those amazing days out. **KC**

■ When trekking I'm always amazed by how much people take. It's easy to wash clothes on a trek; share things like sun creams, shower gel and moisturisers among the group rather than taking one each. Keep it light, keep

it simple. It's better for your enjoyment in the long run! **KC**

■ Don't be shy to engage with any local staff on a trek, the porters and cooks love being part of the team. Learn some local words, ask about culture, food, families. I often eat with the staff, the food is normally great and you earn their trust and friendship. I have fond memories of late nights in cold mess tents singing and laughing with my team of Sherpas and cooks. **KC**

■ Batteries can fail when cold. Carry spares on your person to keep them warm and ensure they will work



when you need them. Wrap them with a short length of gaffer tape for added protection. **TT**

■ No matter how grim a day gets – and let's be honest we have all had them – remember this one thing: it will end. I've been known to chant this over and over again as I trek through snow storms or climb well into the dark.

There is light at the end of even the darkest tunnel. **KC**

■ Make sure your camera battery is fully charged and carry a spare when heading out in the hills. Save power by not constantly viewing your images on the camera.

It's a real bummer when there's a fantastic pic to be taken and you find the battery is dead. **AH**

■ If you don't have one, invest in a spare battery for your mobile phone. You may rely on it for your life. **AH**



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■ Carry an emergency shelter, bivvy tent or survival shelter - basically a big windproof nylon bag. Use it for lunch stops on windy, wet or cold days to shelter inside and escape the gnarly weather. Brill! **AH**

