

# 5 pro tips

## ANDREW SKURKA

PROFESSIONAL BACKPACKER; AUTHOR OF *THE ULTIMATE HIKER'S GEAR GUIDE*

### 1. Make Your Own Meals

A lot of fancy premade meals are overrated. When I look at the cost I balk, because I can put together a great meal of instant rice or beans and ramen noodles, add some spices, cheese, and oil, and I've got a killer meal that cost me about 50 cents.

### 2. Snack Simply

My go-to food is chocolate. About two-thirds of my daytime food can be some sort of chocolate, and my body performs just fine on it. The other one-third is heavier on protein—beef jerky, protein bars, or nuts—and that tends to do the trick.

### 3. Soak Your Feet

If I think my feet are going to get wet the next day, I'll put on Bonnie's Balm (\$12; [bonniesbalm.com](http://bonniesbalm.com)) the night before and let it soak in. The next morning, I'll get up and apply another coating. The wax helps minimize the amount of water absorbed by my feet and also keeps them moisturized.

### 4. Repack Every Day

I empty my pack every night. That way I get a fresh repack every day, and that redistributes the pack perfectly. Over the course of a day I may lose a few pounds of food or water, and that can change the weight distribution dramatically.

### 5. Drink Smart

The closer you are to a water source, like right below a snowfield or at the mouth of a spring, the less likely it is to be contaminated, because it just hasn't had as many opportunities. A really large body of water will dilute contaminants, so the odds are lower of catching something. But if there are cattle or sheep around, I purify all my water.  
—AS TOLD TO SCOTT YORKO

Skurka plotting his next move along Alaska's Chitina River