

Group Hiking Guidelines

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It's Always Winter in the Mountains
<http://alwayswinterinthemountains.blogspot.ca/>

This document may be reproduced and adjusted for any non commercial hiking group.
Be safe, have fun!

Hiking Plan

Date:

Meeting time and place:

Expected duration (including time allowance for photos and lunch/snack stops):

Link to Trail map and hike description:

Distance:

Elevation gain:

Difficulty level:

Sunset time:

Link to weather forecast for hike area:

Dear Hiker,

Welcome to our group hike! A group hike often has hikers with a broad range of experience and abilities. Due to this range, it is likely that we will spread out a bit over the trail. However, the organizers will frequently encourage the group to come back together and maintain a moderate pace. This is important for the purpose of our hike and general safety. One of our hiking mottos is: don't hike alone. This means *never* leaving a group member behind, but also not getting so far ahead that you lose track of the group.

We'd like to offer some planning tips and a packing list to make sure everybody is safe and comfortable and enjoys the hike. Those of you who are experienced hikers will already know most of this stuff, but please read it anyway.

Hiking Route & Navigation

Our other hiking mottos are "hike the hike you planned" and "safety before speed". This means the organizers have investigated and planned our route beforehand, allowed us lots of time, and left the hiking route and itinerary with a responsible adult who is not coming on this hike, in case something happens and we don't return on schedule. The organizers will always carry a map of the hike area and a compass. Best practice is for everybody to have their own map and compass. (Nobody *plans* to get separated from their group, but it does happen sometimes.)

Short Packing List

- Clothing layers suitable to the conditions
- Hiking suitable shoes or boots
- Water
- On-trail snacks and lunch
- Picnic contribution (if picnic hike)
- Light
- Whistle
- Sunscreen
- Bug repellent
- Knife
- Big orange garbage bag
- A couple of bandages or moleskin
- A backpack to carry whatever you aren't wearing.

Optional

- Sunglasses
- Hat
- Gloves
- Camera
- First aid kit
- Whatever else you feel like carrying in and out.

Detailed Packing List

Here are details about, and reasons behind, each of the packing list items, so you can pack the most appropriate things given what you actually have.

1) What to wear

Your footwear should be a comfortable running shoe or hiking boot, which (if it's new) you have walked in for more than a few hours already, and which (if it's old) has a decent amount of tread left on the sole. You don't want to wear a brand new shoe for the first time on a hike; that way lies blisters. You also don't want to wear an old shoe whose tread is worn smooth on a hike; that way lies slips and falls.

While hiking, pay attention to your feet, specifically spots that are rubbing or chafing. Put on a bandaid or some moleskin before that rubbed spot turns painful, because the pain will not go down once a blister starts. Do not try to tough it out. Much better to hike with a bandaid over undamaged skin than to get a blister and have to painfully finish the hike with it.

Your clothing should be non-cotton and consist of layers. Cotton holds on to moisture and gets cold and clammy. Polyester wicking fabrics or wool do not, and can keep you from getting chilled if you get wet -- including from sweat, which will happen. If you only have cotton shirts, please pack a second shirt and keep it dry on the way up. In addition to sweat, even if it's not raining during the hike, the plants that you brush against while hiking can be wet, whether from rain prior to the hike or dew.

So, layers! You will need a few layers to control your comfort levels during different parts of the hike. Each layer should not be extremely warm individually, so that you can easily adjust the warmth and insulation you're wearing by combining them in different ways. The basic principle is to have layers for moving (lightest), layers to put over that for rest breaks (warmer), and one layer more than you think you'll need, to combine with all the others in case something bad happens and you're stuck on the mountain overnight (warmest). What you should bring/wear for a summer, temperate climate hike on a mountain with no snow cap is:

- Lightweight shirt, non-cotton (or with a spare in your pack if you have only cotton).
- Mid-weight sweater, non-cotton. A thin polyester fleece or a wool shirt is ideal. If you know you are easily chilled then a heavier sweater, or (better) a long-sleeved shirt to wear under the mid-weight sweater would be a good idea.
- Windbreaker. Your basic nylon shell.
- Pants or shorts should be non-cotton as well, but again, if all you have is cotton, you work with what you have. Please, no jeans: the heavy cotton gets even heavier when wet and takes forever to dry, while being cold and clammy and utterly not wind-resistant the whole while.
- Socks should also be non-cotton. Wool, wool blends, or synthetic hiking (or running) socks are best. Sweaty cotton socks rub blisters where sweaty wool socks will not. Yes, wool socks are good in hot weather too!
- Optional: hat, gloves, sunglasses. You should make this call depending on the weather forecast closer to the date of the hike and how you handle cool weather or bright sunlight.

At the trailhead, wear whatever combination of layers you're comfortable in, biasing toward slightly cool (but not cold) instead of slightly warm. As we hike up the mountain, you will warm up from the exertion and will probably want to take off layers, possibly down to just a t-shirt, with your sweater and windbreaker in your pack. At breaks, unless it is a hot day, it is wise to put on one layer more than you were wearing while moving, to retain heat while stopped. This layer can be taken off just before we start moving again, or once you warm up again, depending on whether you got cold during the break. At the top, put on your layers before you get cold, because it can be hard to regain lost heat when you're not under way. If it's a warm day just your shell will often be enough. If you are wearing a cotton shirt, change into the dry one then put your other layer(s) on as soon as we get to the top.

(Organizers: If the weather or climate relevant to your hike is different, adjust layer descriptions accordingly.)

2) Food and water

It's a good idea to pack whatever food you bring in a ziploc bag or equivalent, which you then use as a garbage bag to pack out any waste. Don't leave anything behind, even if you think it's biodegradable.

You will need:

- Water - a rough guideline is 0.5 L per hour. If your body type sweats more or it's a hot day, bring more; if your body type sweats less or it's a cool day, less is needed. If your body type sweats a lot, it would be to your benefit for some of that water to be gatorade or equivalent electrolyte replacement.
- Snacks which are easy to eat on the move for the trail up and down. This will be stuff like granola bars or trail mix. It's a good idea to have a small snack break before tackling particularly tricky sections of trail, because doing tricky things while hungry just makes them harder.
- Lunch or picnic contribution. Lunch can be sandwiches, or anything that can be eaten with your hands while sitting or standing. If the hike is a picnic hike, bring your picnic contribution, which can be a bit more fussy and may involve cutting and serving but should not require a plate and fork to eat. (A napkin and fingers is fine, however.) Bring everything you need to serve your dish, including spoons or knives for portioning or cutting or spreading. If you are bringing a sharp knife, make sure it has a protective sheath which you are willing to put a dirty knife in.

3) Safety essentials

There are things that should be carried on every hike, some of which you hope to never use, and some of which, such as the food, water, and appropriate clothing and footwear described above, you will definitely use. Hikers refer to all these together as "the ten essentials". The 10 essentials are per person, but some items are often per group. On this trip, the organizers will have the map, compass, and first aid kit, but if you have your own you are encouraged to bring them. If you do not own some of the items on the list below, please let the group know and somebody will most likely have a spare they can loan you for the hike.

The safety essentials you need to carry on this hike:

- Light source. Headlamp preferred, small flashlight also perfectly reasonable. Make sure it works before leaving home!
- Whistle, in case you get separated from the group. The distress signal is groups of 3 blasts, repeated until help arrives.
- Sunscreen & bug repellent. This should be applied at the trailhead, and may or may not be carried up; if you burn easily it's a good idea to carry up a small bottle of sunscreen.
- Pocket knife or multitool.
- Big orange garbage bag. Yes, the giant ones, and yes, the orange ones. They can be used as ponchos or sleeping bags or lean-to roofs or signal flags, depending on what you need.

4) Backpack

To carry all that stuff, you will need a backpack. The backpack should have waist and chest straps, to stop it from shifting around and throwing you off balance while climbing trickier parts of the trail.

Anything sensitive to water (such as your cell phone if you're packing it along) is best stored in a ziploc bag to protect it. On hikes in general, it's good practice to assume you will have zero cell service the entire time. Do not rely on your phone's map and GPS for navigation; shut it off to conserve battery power for attempting an emergency call for help if that becomes necessary.

It is common on popular hiking trails to see lots of wildly unprepared people. Of the people who need Search and Rescue help, most of them are wildly unprepared. Let's set a good example.

Useful links

MEC guide to layering your clothing:

<https://www.mec.ca/.../dressingforth.../layeringyourclothing.jsp>

North Shore Search and Rescue 10 essentials list:

<http://www.northshorerescue.com/education/what-to-bring/>

Club Tread has a large database of trails searchable by region:

<http://www.clubtread.com/Routes/>

Vancouver Trails offers a local to Vancouver BC data set, which includes transit accessible trails. Its trail difficulty rating system is consistent and the trails are well described:

<https://www.vancouvertrails.com>



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Original document:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ds6tTsELfXoD3vleevtKU8qUPsef8vFjPDAMw2XP8p4/>

How to use this document (for hike organizers):

<http://alwayswinterinthemountains.blogspot.ca/2017/05/how...plan-successful.html>

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