



HIKING SAFETY

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO STAY SAFE ON THE TRAILS

Ten Hiking Essentials

1. Hiking Boots or Athletic Shoes

Make sure to choose footwear that will keep you safe on the trail. No sandals.

2. Water

Always carry water with you while hiking. Keep in mind that fluid loss is heightened in winter and summer.

3. Navigation

Bring a map and a compass. Learn how to use both these tools to determine where you are or where you're going.

4. Food

Depending on the length of your trip, pack a sandwich, trail mix, fruit, seeds, or chocolate for when you get hungry.

5. Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

Apply regularly to protect yourself even on cloudy days. SPF 50 is recommended for children.

6. Rain Gear and Extra Clothing

Be prepared for changing weather, even if it's not in the forecast. Take a rain jacket and consider dressing in layers so you can pull on or remove items as the weather changes. Avoid cotton base layers. Cotton traps water against your skin and is slow to dry. Choose synthetic shirts, sweaters and/or vests.

7. First Aid Kit

Choose a compact and weatherproof first aid kit. Know how to use each item in it.

8. Headlamp or Flashlight

A small headlamp or flashlight will be useful if you find yourself on the trail after sunset. Carry an extra set of batteries in your pack.

9. Matches or Lighter

In an emergency, you may need to keep yourself or someone else warm until help arrives. Carry matches in a waterproof container.



10. Tools

A knife is an important tool to carry while hiking. A physical list of emergency numbers for the area and a lightweight emergency blanket can also be useful additions to your pack.

Hiking Tips

No one ever plans to get lost, but it does sometimes happen. Each year, park rangers spend numerous hours searching for hikers who did not return on time, slipped on waterfalls, got off the trail or encountered other problems. Follow these tips from the pros for a fun and safe hike.

- Avoid hiking alone because the “buddy system” is safer during any type of activity. If traveling with a group, never stray from the group.
- Tell someone where you are going and when you will return. Don’t forget to check in with them when you get back.
- Stay on marked trails. Making shortcuts and “bushwhacking” causes erosion and greatly increases your chance of becoming lost. As you hike, pay attention to trail blazes (paint marks on trees) and landmarks.
- Never climb on waterfalls.
- Always carry quality rain gear and turn back in bad weather. If you become wet or cold, it is important to get dry and warm as quickly as possible, avoiding hypothermia.
- Dress in layers and avoid cotton. Today’s hikers can choose from numerous fabrics that wick moisture, dry quickly or conserve heat.
- All hikers (especially children and older adults) should carry a whistle, which can be heard far away and takes less energy than yelling. Three short blasts is a sign of distress.
- Carry plenty of drinking water and never assume stream water is safe to drink.
- Wear bright colors. Don’t dress children in camouflage.

Carry an Emergency Kit

Each hiker should have these items:

- Water
- First Aid Kit (band-aids, tweezers, burn pads, antiseptic towelette, blister cream)
- Whistle
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Energy food
- Brightly colored bandana
- Trash bag (preferably a bright color, such as “pumpkin bags” sold in autumn). Poke a hole for your head and wear it as a poncho to stay warm and dry