

Essential items for day hikers

Participants in SWI activities are expected to be self-sufficient and responsible for their own well-being. The items listed below are highly recommended to meet that goal.

General

- Back-pack; to keep contents dry line the pack with a large plastic bag
- Suitable clothing including waterproof boots
- Rain gear; it is good practice to always carry this even if the forecast is good
- Warm sweater, warm hat, gloves, spare socks
- Water; at least 1 litre
- Hearty lunch
- High energy snacks like granola bars, nuts, dried fruit, etc.
- Sun hat and sunscreen
- Sun glasses
- Bug spray
- Personal medications
- Toilet paper
- Personal first aid kit; MEC or local sports stores carry good handy kits

Emergency Kit

- Flash light and spare batteries
- Whistle
- Pocket knife
- Space blanket
- Duct tape
- Small length of stainless steel wire
- Flagging tape
- Waterproof matches or lighter
- Fire starter
- Sheet of plastic to make an emergency shelter, e.g. lightweight drop sheet about 3m x 3m
- 6m length of cord
- Pack these items in a plastic zip-lock bag and leave in the bottom of your pack

Other useful items

- walking poles
- topographical map
- compass
- GPS
- cell phone
- camera

Guidelines for participants

- **Remember that all SWI trips are voluntary activities.** You are responsible for managing your own safety. SWI is not responsible for your safety.
- **Safety is the prime consideration.** Follow the instructions of the volunteer leader and respect his/her responsibilities. Be concerned for and considerate of fellow hikers.
- **Communicate.** Let the leader know if the pace is too fast, or if you need to adjust clothing, or tend to personal matters. Inform the leader if you are injured or feeling unwell.
- **Stay with the group.** It creates difficulties for the leader if you surge ahead of the group. If you want to deviate you must inform the leader.
- **Members are expected to be self-sufficient.** You are responsible for providing all your own gear and supplies, including a first-aid kit that contains everything you would wish to be available if you were injured. Have an emergency kit in case you have to stay overnight (see equipment list). Please note that leaders do **not** necessarily have any special training in First-Aid or Rescue.
- Hikers should know their own physical limitations. Do not attempt trips that exceed your fitness level as it will spoil the trip for others. If you are uncomfortable in any situation it is up to you to let the trip organizer know immediately. Inform the leader if you feel unsafe at any time and do not attempt something that is beyond your comfort level or capability. Make sure you have a clear idea of the trip's goals & what will be required of you to achieve those goals.
- Obtain a relevant map & know where you are going, the type of terrain, the gear you will need & knowledge of how to use it.
- Contact the trip organizer as soon as you are confident that you want to go on the trip & be honest with your trip organizer about your level of experience. Accept that the trip organizer might not accept you on the trip if they think you are not experienced enough. If you discover that you cannot go on the trip then let the trip organizer know as soon as possible so that another person can take your place.
- Read, understand & return the signed copy of the SWI waiver form to the trip organizer.
- Wear strong sports clothing and sturdy boots. As a courtesy when carpooling have an extra pair of shoes so that trail debris does not soil the vehicle.
- Be prepared for weather changes; always have good rain gear, a warm hat and a warm sweater with you.
- Always bring plenty of water, minimum 1 litre. It is recommended that all wilderness water be treated.
- Bring an adequate lunch and some extra food for delays or emergencies.
- Keep your backpack with you at all times, even when returning by the same route. Keep some dry clothes in your pack.
- Dogs are not permitted on trips for safety reasons unless explicitly stated in the trip description.
- **Carry out ALL your garbage** including any organic litter. Practice no-trace hiking and camping. Be scrupulous about sanitation in the back-country.
- **No campfires on SWI trips** except in official park or forestry campfire rings when fire bans allow.
- Be prepared to drive or pay transport costs. Return with the same car pool. Drivers should know the route to the trailhead and account for all passengers on return trip. Do not leave until instructed by the leader who will make sure that all vehicles are running and free to return.

Guidelines for leaders

Trip Planning

- Aim to help trip participants make their own informed decisions about the proposed trip, both before & during the trip.
- Use another leader to co-lead the trip. The co-leader can help new leaders; can help with large groups; or can take over from the leader if necessary.
- Choose a realistic goal for the time available & give prospective group members an idea of the amount of effort required to achieve the stated goal. Set a group size limit based on your experience, the goal, time available, and group fitness & experience.
- Plan your journey with particular attention to hazards and difficulty.
- Let the group know what skills & equipment are needed when they sign up, so that everyone is prepared. Provide the trip participants with a copy of the SWI waiver form & have them understand, sign & return it to you in advance of the trip.
- Arrange to have a cell phone or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) taken on the trip in case an emergency evacuation is required.
- If there is a need, for example backcountry or off-trail trips, take suitable equipment such as maps & compass, GPS, two-way radios, cell phone, ropes etc.
- Be flexible if conditions change; check weather reports or other conditions that may affect the trip.
- Organize travel arrangements at the earliest opportunity. Suggest an amount participants give to their driver to help offset fuel and wear costs. We suggest 10c per paved km, 20c per gravel km, and 25c per 4-wheel drive road.
- Prepare & leave trip intentions with at least one responsible individual. Intentions should include a latest return date/time that would trigger a search initiated by the responsible individual(s) and involving the relevant authorities (police, SAR, etc)
- You have the right not to lead your trip for any personal reason. If you cannot lead it try to find an alternate leader. If unsuccessful, advise that the trip has been canceled, on the web and phone the few who are not connected. If the trip is canceled at the last minute (miserable weather, for example) arrange for someone to go to the meeting place to inform any participants that may show up. If someone on the trip voices their concern about a situation, it is up to you (with the help of the group) to find a solution, where possible. This might sometimes involve everyone turning around.

Meeting place

- Introduce yourself.
- Have everyone read and sign the waiver sheet.
- Arrange car pooling. Ensure that all drivers know the way to the trail head or can be led there.
- Ask drivers to account for their passengers for the return journey.
- Screen participants if you consider that they are not suitably prepared (fitness or clothing for example). You have the right to refuse anyone for legitimate reasons in the interest of the group.

Trail Head

- Ensure that every one has arrived.
- Have a brief meeting. Introduce and welcome new members and if necessary arrange for a buddy to accompany new members. Have this meeting a few meters up the trail head and away from vehicles.
- Outline the trip with brief review of the route, destination and possible hazards.
- Emphasize the importance of staying together or where to re-group.
- Emphasize that no one leaves the group without notifying the leader.
- Appoint a sweep person if group is large or, if preferred, split the large group in two, each with a leader. If possible, use radios to keep in contact.
- Indicate desired pace and frequency of rest stops.
- Ask for and answer any questions.

On the Trail

- Try to keep the group together and under control.
- Re-group often, particularly at junctions and hazards.
- Assess the group dynamics and adjust the speed and route if necessary.
- Be aware that some members might be unwilling to speak up if they are having difficulties.
- Stragglers (individuals going unreasonably slow for the planned trip):
 - Continue with a sub group of slower hikers with an experienced leader.
 - Have them wait at a suitable site for the main group to return (preferably at least 2 people).
 - Arrange for them to return to cars with suitable escort, bearing in mind the car pool arrangements.
 - Shorten or modify the trip.
- Jackrabbits (individuals that want to surge ahead of the group):
 - Try to discourage.
 - Appoint a sub-group leader and arrange a forward regrouping site.

Return to Trail Head

- Make sure that all members make it out.
- Ensure that all vehicles are running and free to leave before leaving.

Safety Notes

- If you feel that a person is not suitable to participate and could possibly jeopardize the trip, you have the right to refuse that person.
- Regroup at hazardous spots, assess conditions and group dynamics before proceeding or deciding to detour. Consult with the group to assess comfort level.
- In case of an accident give first aid if necessary. For more serious injury or illness the following actions may be necessary:
 - Designate an experienced/qualified member to take charge of the situation.
 - The whole group returns with the injured person.
 - At least two people escort the injured/ill person out, including the ride back to town.

- If professional rescue is required call 911. Maintain positive communications. This includes feed back from persons leaving the group to make this call so that you know help is on its way.
- In case of a serious incident write up an incident report.

Discipline

- Talk to any irresponsible participants expressing your concerns and, if deemed necessary, report the problem to the Trips Director.

Final Word

- **It is so important to maintain good communications with the group at all times.**