

# Hiking Checklist

By Nicole Nichols-West

## Preparation

- Break in your shoes** Hiking shoes feel different than regular shoes or sneakers. Wear them for a few days to accustom your feet so you don't get blisters.
- Practice carrying a load** Take a few walks with your backpack. Having a heavy load on your back takes getting used to.
- Warm up** Hiking is not like walking, it is far more demanding on your legs and back. Your calves and hamstrings need preparation for this vigorous exercise.
- Get experience** If you have never hiked before, you might come to regret taking on a long demanding trail, so start off easy. If you are planning on taking a walking stick with you, learn how to handle the stick to your benefit.

## Gear / Equipment

- Hiking shoes or boots** Without the right shoes your feet will suffer. It is best to select shoes with a thick sole for stability and comfort, and check for proper ankle support. Boots are best for mountain climbing or water crossings.
- Backpack** For a day-trip you will need a place to store essentials.
- Food and water** Hiking will make you hungry and thirsty. Be sure to pack some fruit, nuts, and energy bars.
- Walking stick** Not really necessary, but handy to have, if you know how to use it effectively.
- Rope** You never know when you may need it.
- Matches** If you end up needing a fire, you will need a way to start it. Store these in a waterproof case.

## Things to Pack

- Personal identification** It's always good to have ID on you with the name and phone number of a contact person.
- Sunscreen.** Regardless of the season, in the outdoors your skin needs protection
- Bug repellent.** If you wear short sleeves or shorts, you really need this item!
- Extra clothes and socks** An extra T-shirt and socks weigh nothing but can come in handy.
- First Aid** Scrapes and cuts are common in the outdoors.
- Communication** Take your cell phone with you. If anything were to happen, you can call for help.
- Camera** There will be lots to see during your hike. Preserve the memories.
- Map of the trail or surrounding areas** This can be invaluable in case you get lost.
- Compass** Sometimes you need a little extra direction.
- GPS** A navigational tool may be for sissies - but it could save your life.

## Safety Tips

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- Respect your boundaries** If you get tired, take a break; you don't want to wear yourself out. It takes time to be an experienced hiker.
- Don't wander off the trail** Those trails are laid out for a reason. They are designed to keep you safe. Random hiking in the wilderness is for the experienced.
- Stay together** If you hike in company, stay with the group.
- Familiarize yourself with danger** Know which plants and bugs are poisonous.
- Know your enemy** Find out what wildlife might be in the area (rattlesnakes, bear, wild cats, elk or boar) and how to react appropriately.