

CAMPING SAFETY TIPS

Whether you're roughing it in a tent or planning a family outing to a national park, there are many ways to make sure your experience is fun and safe.

Consider the following safety tips:

- Pack a first aid kit. Your kit can prove invaluable if you or a member of your group suffers a cut, bee sting or allergic reaction. Pack antiseptics for cuts and scrapes, tweezers, insect repellent, bug spray, a snake bite kit, pain relievers, and sunscreen.
- Bring emergency supplies. In addition to a first aid kit, this includes: a map, compass, flashlight, knife, waterproof fire starter, personal shelter, whistle, warm clothing, high energy food, water, and insect protection.
- Learn the ABC's of treating emergencies. Recognizing serious injuries will enable you to attend to a victim until medical help arrives.
- Before you leave, find out the weather report. In inclement weather, find shelter until the worse passes. Stay dry - wet clothes contribute to heat loss. Also, keep sleeping bags and important gear, dry at all times.
- Arrive early. Plan your trip so that you arrive at your actual campsite with enough daylight to check over the entire site and to set-up camp.

- Check for potential hazards. Be sure to check the site thoroughly for glass, sharp objects, branches, large ant beds, poison ivy, bees, and hazardous terrain.
- Avoid areas of natural hazards. Check the contour of the land and look for potential trouble due to rain. Areas that could flood or become extremely muddy can pose a problem.
- Inspect the site. Look for a level site with enough room to spread out all your gear. Also, a site that has trees or shrubs on the side of prevailing winds will help block strong, unexpected gusts.
- Build fires in a safe area. Your open fires and fuel-burning appliances must be far enough away from the tent to prevent ignition from sparks, flames, and heat. Never use a flame or any other heating device inside a tent. Use a flashlight or battery-powered light instead.
- Make sure your fires are always attended. Be sure you have an area for a fire that cannot spread laterally or vertically - a grill or stone surface is ideal. When putting the fire out, drown it with water, making sure all embers, coals and sticks are wet. Embers buried deep within the pile have a tendency to re-unite later.
- Pitch your tent in a safe spot. Make sure your tent is made of a flame-retardant fabric, and set up far enough away from the campfire. Keep insects out of your tent by closing the entrance quickly when entering or leaving.

- Dispose of trash properly. Remember to recycle - use the proper recycling bins if available.
- Be cautious when using a propane stove. Use the stove as a cooking appliance only - never leave it unattended while it's burning.
- Beware when encountering wildlife. To ward off bears, keep your campsite clean, and do not leave food, garbage, coolers, cooking equipment or utensils out in the open. Remember that bears are potentially dangerous and unpredictable - never feed or approach a bear. Use a flashlight at night - many animals feed at night and the use of a flashlight may warn them away.

TIPS FOR THE TRAIL

- Before starting out, do warm-up exercises. Stretching gradually increases heart rate, temperature and circulation to your muscles. Also, after a night's rest, your muscles need warming. Stretching gets the body going and increases your flexibility.
- Start out slowly, gradually increasing your pace and distance traveled.
- Let the slowest person in your hiking, paddling, and biking or cross-country skiing party set the pace. This is especially important when children are a part of your group.
- Plan the trip ahead of time and assign tasks that people enjoy. If someone doesn't cook, don't force him or her. The goal is to have a good time outdoors.
- Take turns leading the group and sharing decision-making responsibilities.
- Hike, bike, or ski only on marked trails in wilderness areas unless bushwhacking is allowed and you have excellent navigation skills.
- Hike and travel in groups as much as possible, especially during winter and in hazardous terrain.

- Leave your itinerary with a friend or family member and check in with them upon your return.
- Learn basic repair skills for changing a bike tire, fixing a backpack or mending a snowshoe. Remember to take repair kits on your trail.
- Mountain weather is generally cooler, cloudier, and windier than in lowland areas. For every 1,000 feet of elevation, the temperature often drops three to five degrees. Thus, it's best to dress in layers. Polyester clothing worn closest to your skin will trap warm air next to the skin and transfer or wick body moisture away.
- Wear sunglasses and a hat or visor when you hike, ski or paddle. Snow blindness, caused by the sun's glare on snow, can also be caused by sunlight reflecting off water and boulders. Keep your eyes and face covered especially during your first few days outdoors.
- Bring sunscreen no matter the season. You can get painful sunburn even in subfreezing temperatures.
- Bring a customized first aid kit tailored to your outing.
- Develop an emergency plan before you start your trip. Make sure everyone knows what to do if they become lost or a medical emergency arises. Give children whistles with the instructions

to "stop and blow" if they become lost.

- Take frequent rests or vary your pace to recover from strenuous activity spurts. A steady pace will get you there with less discomfort than the sprint-and-catch-your-breath approach.
- Drink plenty of water. Water is heavy to carry, but thirst on the trail is a hazard. Take a tip from athletes: before a hike, drink some water so you're well hydrated and energized. Never drink your total supply between refills.