

Overnight Hiking Trip Guidelines

Background:

In order to access special places that are not within easy one-day roundtrip driving distance of Pebble Creek, hike coordinators and leaders sometimes plan a 2 or more days hiking trip and make it available for sign up by members. The hike leader informs members of the hiking opportunity and sets a maximum number of hikers that will be allowed. The hikers generally sign up with the leader, and then seek their own lodging and make their driving arrangements. Hiking several days in a row, along with variable terrain and signage, elevation, temperature, and distance can be challenges on these trips, so the leader may set additional requirements to those general protocols listed below. These protocols are recommended for all trips with multiple days of hiking in a row. Hike leaders may choose to follow these guidelines or set alternate requirements for the trip.

Issues and Protocols:

- A key ingredient to being able to hike safely is proper physical conditioning. To this end, in order to participate in an overnight hiking trip, a hiker must have safely completed with the club, the number of hikes determined necessary by the leader. For example, for spring trips some leaders require at least 3 hikes in the immediate 4 weeks prior to departure and a total of 10 hikes during the current season. As another example, for a trip near the beginning of the hiking season in fall, the leader will want to determine that each hiker has enough hikes completed at the level expected on the trip and will set the appropriate expectation. All of the hikes meeting requirements for spring and fall trips must be at or above the level of hike the participant requests on the trip. An advantage of completing club hikes is that these hikes facilitate a relationship with the leader who is usually a regular leader or member of hikes at the determined level. The hike leader will inform the persons signed up for the trip by 45 days before departure about pre-hikes required and predicted challenges, such as high mileage for the level of hike, hiking several days in a row, elevation gain, and terrain. It is the responsibility of hikers to plan their pre-hikes to provide experience with challenges such as hiking at higher elevation than usual, increased mileage, and differences in terrain/trail conditions.
- Effective communication with other club members and a commitment to follow all protocols are essential to safety and smooth operation on the trip. Each hiker must be sure to carry all mandatory and recommended items in the backpack, including the File of Life. The hike leader usually asks for each hiker's phone number, and contact information for someone to contact in case of emergency. Hikers should be on time for departures and be ready to assist the leader as needed by readily serving as sweep, carrying a walkie talkie, or performing other duties. Any changes in an individual hiker's plans must be communicated clearly as soon as possible with the leader. The leader may have a required gathering of hikers prior to departure from Pebble Creek, and again at the area of the hike; all participants must attend such events.