



By **MARIO RUSSELL**

Exploring Hidden T&T

Getting lost and the dangers of hiking alone

As much as it is fun to take a stroll in nature and explore its hidden treasures, there are unforeseen risks and many

times people get lost.

The golden rule of hiking is never to go on an adventure by oneself. Simple as it may seem, the forest is full of unsuspected moments which can occur in the twinkle of an eye.

Our curiosity as explorers makes us want to step into the unknown and see what the great outdoors has to offer.

We all feel the burning desire to reach the end of a trail or discover what's on top of a mountain peak.

However, the forest is not a place to take for granted and before one set off on an exploration, preparation is required.

Just like the nation's roads, where there are safety guidelines to follow similarly, there are rules regarding safety in the forest.

Ironically, it may be the experienced hiker that may run into difficulty since most newcomers know their limits and are not as adventurous. It is important to be aware of some of the unforeseen dangers that can occur while hiking.

Firstly, in the Northern Range as well as the Tobago Main Ridge, there are no defined maps to show a person where is suitable for hiking.

Unlike in other countries, there is no proper signage showing directions to waterfalls and nature spots etc.

And if there is a sign it is usually dilapidated and needs to be replaced. As a country, we talk about the development of tourism and no doubt Trinidad and Tobago hidden gems are exceptional.

However, the lack of signs to show directions means it is very easy for a person to get lost.

One must ask are we as a people ready for eco-tourism? As much as we love going to nature spots and bringing visitors there.

Many times, we are embarrassed by the garbage left at waterfalls. Trinidadians especially seem to think that they are not responsible to take out their garbage and that is the job of the authorities.

We all know there are ripple effects to leaving leftover



Rescue Groups in action



food in nature. Apart from endangerment to wildlife, it can also attract snakes who see wildlife as prey.

A look at some of the unforeseen dangers one must be aware that there are poisonous snakes in the forest. Although the risk of being bitten is rare one should be able to identify what is poisonous and what is not.

Most people seem to think that all snakes are harmful which is far from the truth. The Mapepire Balsain is the most common snake and it is usually seen sleeping on the trail.

Note that most snakes are non-venomous and will usually run when they spot humans. However, the balsain is a sleeper and wouldn't strike unless you step on him.

Imagine being bitten by a snake with a few hours to live

and you are alone in the jungle with no one to assist. A safety precaution while hiking is to always keep your eyes on the ground.

Then there is always the risk of sliding on a rock or kicking the root of a tree which can cause one to slip and seriously damage oneself.

With the uncertainty of the rainy season, there is the possibility

of rivers flooding and landslides. An attack by bees can send a hiker into panic and by frantically running from them he may injure himself.

Sometimes hikers lose focus on where they are going and take the wrong path.

The first thing to do is try to retrace your footsteps to a familiar path rather than walk further from the trail. Another golden rule is if lost "stand your ground" or remain where you are. Staying put makes it easier for you to be found.

In a recent rescue attempt the lost hiker sent his location, it took six hours to reach him only to find out he had moved from his previous spot.

A lost person causes stress to their loved ones and may also endanger the lives of those rescuing him. Search-

ing for them in a canyon or an area with treacherous terrain also puts the rescuer at risk.

Before stepping out on the trail advance preparation is needed. Firstly, if you are familiar with your destination you will know how to prepare.

Going by rivers and gorges requires safety equipment like lifejackets, rope etc. Finding out the details of a hike and its rating is important.

If you are not accustomed to walking steep hills, you may find yourself in a situation where you can't continue. Simple as it may seem your unpreparedness can cause endangerment to you and others in the group.

In these modern times, your cell phone is a handy tool. In emergency situations, you can send your location so others can see your position.

A backup power supply is a must for every exploration. A waterproof pouch is needed to secure your electronic devices. Popular apps like Strava can show in real time where you walking and where you started.

It records your footsteps so, if lost, you will know your return route. It is important to learn these Apps which can be beneficial to you and others.

Carrying extra water on the trail will always come in handy and can be a lifesaver.

Over the years we have learnt to respect the forest. Experience has thought us that there is always the risk of unforeseen accidents.

By following the golden rule of "never hiking alone" these risks can be minimized.

PRESS PLAY TOP 40 TRENDING SOCA

1. DRINK AND PARTY VIKING DING DONG
2. LONG LIVE SOCA VOICE
3. SHELL WAY SHAL MARSHALL
4. NEVER AGAIN (HAPPY DAZE RIDDIM) MACHIEL MONTANO
5. POSITION BUNJI GARLIN
6. MENTAL DAY (THE SPIRIT OF CARNIVAL RIDDIM) KES
7. UMBRELLA (THE SPIRIT OF CARNIVAL RIDDIM) BUNJI GARLIN
8. AM BAD SACKIE AND MELICK
9. THE STAGE AGAIN (STRANGE THINGS RIDDIM) BUNJI GARLIN
10. STAGE IS YUH NAME (STRANGE THINGS RIDDIM) FAYANN LYONS
11. HEY CHOPPI BLIND
12. NO REGRETS PREEDY
13. WANT IT BACK FARMER NAPPY
14. SOCA CAPITAL (TRIBUTE TO PORT-OF-SPAIN) SEKON STA
15. GYAL LIKE RAIN (PORT OF SPAIN RIDDIM) FARMER NAPPY & CHRISTOPHER MARTIN
16. SPIRIT ERPHAAN ALVES
17. FREAK IMANI RAY AND PATRICE ROBERTS
18. THE PEOPLE AND IWER IWER GEORGE
19. PERFECT (THE BACCANAL RIDDIM) YUNG BREDDA X NAILAH BLACKMAN
20. SOKAWAVE KMC
21. PARTY PEOPLE (OYE RIDDIM) SWAPPI
22. CORN AND PIG TAIL (The Bacchanal Riddim) TRINIDAD KILLA
23. ENGINE ROOM OLATUNJI
24. TANTRUM KERNEL ROBERTS AND ZAN
25. NOTHING BETTER NADIA BATSON AND ROMAIN VIRGO
26. NO BEHAVIOUR FAYANN LYONS FEAT BABY CHAM
27. HEAVY (RECTLESS RIDDIM) SACKIE
28. WEATHER MAN TRINIDAD KILLA
29. BRING BACK AH VIBE TERRY LYONS
30. NO RELATIONSHIP (Monkey Trix Riddim) SKINNY FABULOUS
31. FEELIN IT (DRIVE-IN RIDDIM) KES AND PATRICE ROBERTS
32. COME OUT TO JAM M1
33. EASY DESTRA
34. FIRE WATER RAVI B
35. HALL OF FAME MICAL TEJA X FREETOWN COLLECTOR
36. WHIP WHAPOLATUNJI
37. DYAM TING NESSA PREPPY X SUPER BLUE
38. WE LOVE SOCA TURNER
39. COME HOME Nailah Blackman and Skinny Fabulous
40. MOOD SHAGGY AND KES