

TRISTATE RAMBLERS

HIKE PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

Both experienced and new hikers are welcome and valued.

Summary

SAFETY IS THE TOP PRIORITY

In Advance:

1. Choose a hike whose pace and level of difficulty matches your abilities. Contact the leader if you have any questions.
2. Register for the hike using SignUpGenius, unless the hike is posted as a Show and Go.
3. Be mindful of how long the hike could take. Realize that any planned appointments after the hike could be in jeopardy due to unforeseen circumstances.
4. Check that you have your gear and TSR Emergency Contact Card.
5. If requesting to bring a guest, get advance approval from the leader.

Just Before:

1. Check your email for any updates, changes, or cancellations.
2. If you are a late/last-minute cancellation, notify the leader by phone or text of your change in plans.
3. Check your travel time; plan to arrive 15-30 minutes early for an on-time start.
4. Consult with the leader if you have questions about your preparedness or any other concerns or issues. If bringing a guest, show the signed waiver form, complete with emergency contact information, to the leader.

During:

1. Stay on the trail between the leader and the sweep.
2. When necessary, ask the leader for separations (bio breaks) and stops for clothing adjustments, rest, drink, and food.
3. Notify the leader of any issues that impact your ability to stay with the group such as injury, early out, etc.
4. Be flexible in dealing with unanticipated situations.
5. Be helpful to your fellow hikers.

After:

1. Check out with the leader.
2. If bringing a guest, submit the signed waiver form; follow the instructions on the form.

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Details

In Advance of the Hike

1. **Study the trip description and choose a hike you can enjoy with the group:** The description often provides distance, elevation, and sometimes pace, duration, and difficulty (or comments like “not for beginners,” “flat,” or “with scrambles”). When in doubt, it may be more enjoyable to choose an easier hike. There are day-of-the-week standards of difficulty: Monday is relaxed, Thursday is vigorous, and alternate Thursdays and other days are somewhere in between. (For types of hike roughly by day of the week, see the [About Us/Our Activities page](#) of our website.) Contact the leader directly with any questions.
2. **Make sure that you are clear regarding the starting location:** Refer to the [TSR Directions document](#) and read the trip description for any specific instructions. There can be multiple meeting locations for the same park, so make sure you are at the right one. The TSR Calendar has the location helpfully pinned for your GPS reference.
3. **Register for the hike:** Advance registration is required. Remember that members who are not registered for the hike cannot participate (unless it is a Show and Go). Follow the rules for signing up. Helpful links are in the weekly email and on the [Members Only](#) page of the website.
4. **Be mindful of your personal schedule:** At times a hike may take longer than planned. It is wise not to schedule an appointment too close to the expected finish time.
5. **Check your equipment and be prepared for possible emergencies:** A TriState Ramblers Emergency Contact Card is required (available online at www.tristateramblers.org/forms). Consider a personal first aid kit and whistle.
6. **Consider other equipment:** Food, water, poles, proper footwear. As temperatures and conditions dictate: layered clothing, sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, bug net, traction devices, snow shoes, extra water/electrolytes.
7. **Weather/Trail Condition Considerations:** Keep in mind that schedules are created months in advance. Leaders may cancel or modify a hike based on current conditions or they may not. Regardless of their decision, you should always use your own judgement to determine what you are comfortable with and capable of. Contact the leader directly with any questions.
8. **Bringing a guest:** Guests are allowed in limited situations. Review and follow the policy (found on the [Members Only](#) page of the website), including obtaining prior approval from the leader and printing out the waiver form.

Just Before the Hike:

1. **Change of schedule:** Check your email for updates (such as on a different day, at a different location, or with a different leader) or cancellations.
2. **Your change of schedule:** Notify the leader by phone or text of your change in plans, especially for late or last-minute cancellations, even if you take your name off the registration list.
3. **Leave early to arrive early:** Allow extra time for traffic delays. Build in time for getting situated with your equipment and using the facilities, if available. Have the leader's phone number accessible and communicate if you are delayed, though the leader is not obligated to wait. Be aware that cell service in some locations is poor or non-existent.

4. **Assess your ability:** Listen to the leader's description of the day's activity, including the level of difficulty. Common problems are footing, elevation, and a fast group pace. If in doubt, listen to the leader's advice and remember that a range of hikes are available every week. TSR wants trips to be safe and enjoyable for everyone. The leader has full discretion in not allowing a participant to join the group for safety reasons.
5. **Communicate with the leader:** If you have questions or concerns, discuss them with the leader. Introduce your guest (if any) and show the leader the signed waiver form, complete with emergency contact information.
6. **Be ready to start on time:** While the leader has some discretion, he or she is encouraged to start on time out of courtesy to hikers who are ready. The leader is responsible only for hikers in the group.

During the Hike:

1. **Enjoy the trip:** If you are having a good time, others will, too! Going together has a substantial advantage in terms of safety and friendship.
2. **Stay on the trail with the group:** Stay between the leader and the sweep. If you need to temporarily drop behind or go ahead, communicate with the leader or sweep. Leaders should be permitted to lead, followers are expected to follow, and explorers should plot their own trips. The leader is responsible only for hikers in the group between him/her and the sweep.
3. **Road crossings:** The prescribed route may require walking on or crossing a road. Hikers should walk in single file against traffic and cross the road only upon the leader's direction.
4. **Compatibility:** Early in the trip (possibly in the first 10 minutes), gauge your compatibility with the group's pace and abilities. Express any concerns to the leader, who may be able to allay them or may judge it appropriate for you to drop out. If you need to leave the group, you are no longer the leader's responsibility.
5. **Breaks:** The leader will plan stops for water, rest, separation, wardrobe changes, viewpoints, or other breaks. Participants can also ask for stops. Be sure to properly hydrate and separate when given the opportunity.
6. **Enjoy lunch breaks:** For breaks on the trail, clean up and check for items that might be left behind (trash, gloves, poles, etc.). Listen for the 5-minute warning and be ready to depart with the group. Occasionally, a group may plan to dine together after the trip.
7. **Other considerations:** If interested in becoming a leader, join the leader at the front of the line for a real-time introduction to leading. Keep phone calls to a minimum. Don't text and hike. Don't smoke.
8. **Listen for options:** The leader may point out options to shorten the trip (early out). If you leave the group, you are no longer the leader's responsibility. There may also be unexpected changes or modifications (for example, due to bad weather or lightning).
9. **Leaving early:** If you leave the group (by going ahead or departing early), let the leader and sweep know. You are no longer the leader's responsibility.
10. **Accidents:** Club members who volunteer to lead claim no special qualifications. Each participant assumes full responsibility for his or her own safety. Basic first aid is often sufficient. If there is a more serious situation, listen to the leader's instructions and assist as able. The safety of the group is the leader's primary responsibility.

After the Hike:

1. Check out with the leader.
2. If bringing a guest, submit the signed waiver form after the hike; follow the instructions on the form.

Thanks for participating!