



PENINSULA RAMBLERS

Guidelines for hike leaders

These guidelines are meant to assist hike leaders, both as a 'refresher' for our more experienced leaders and as a more comprehensive guide for our newer leaders. The Committee wants to sincerely thank all those dedicated individuals who are willing to give their time to helping introduce others to the satisfaction and pleasure of a good day's hike.

Preparing for the hike

- The leader should recce the hike route so that he / she knows it thoroughly, including any problem areas (rock scrambles, exposure to height, river crossings, escape routes) as well as tea and lunch spots and expected completion time. By estimating arrival at these fixed points, the progress of the party can be checked. If possible arrange safe parking at the start / end of the hike. If it is impossible to recce the trail, especially remote areas, the leader should study the maps and literature available, and consult with a hiker who knows the route.
- Arrange for permits / permission, if applicable.
- Check that your first aid kit is in order.
- For emergencies, carry a torch, a whistle and cell phone. Be aware that there are areas in the mountains where cell phones do not work.
- Be aware that some areas of the Peninsula are mugging 'hot spots', e.g. Lion's Head and Skeleton Gorge. However, muggings have occurred everywhere in the Table Mountain National Park. Make hikers aware of this and stress the need to stick together, not wear obvious jewellery and to be on the lookout for suspicious people on the mountain.
- Programme the emergency numbers into your cell phone before the hike, in particular 10111.
- If required: map of the area, and suitable length of rope for rock pitches.
- Note the weather conditions and use good judgement. Obtain a detailed weather forecast beforehand if necessary.
- For country hikes, the meeting place should be in town and not at the start of the hike. Transport can be shared and, if the weather is bad on the day, the leader has easy access to all hikers to let them know that the hike has been cancelled.
- Visitors: When non-members phone to enquire about the hike, try to establish whether they are able to manage the route. Describe the hike, especially difficult areas they may encounter. Do not ask if they are 'fit' as fitness is a subjective concept. Ask what other routes they have done, who they've hiked with and if they take regular exercise. Ask them about their health and equipment. If you feel they will not cope / enjoy the hike, suggest an upcoming hike more suited to their capabilities. Take their name and phone number to keep in touch. If you feel they are acceptable, remind them about water bottles, food, warm clothing, raingear, etc. Bear in mind the restrictions regarding children and dogs.

At the meet

- Introduce yourself, describe the intended route, mentioning any difficult areas, and ensure everybody signs the indemnity form. Warn them of any dangers they may encounter.
- For safety reasons, the leader may cancel the hike if there are less than four people at the meet.

- Check that everyone is properly equipped: correct shoes, clothing, hat, jersey, raingear, sunscreen, water and food. On long trails, check that packs are not too heavy (maximum approximately 15kg for a man, 11kg for a woman).
- Check that all look fit and capable of completing the hike. The leader has the right to turn anyone away at the start of the hike. Explain that this is in the interests of the individual and of the party as a whole.
- Explain that they will not be allowed to leave the party during the course of the hike, except in extreme circumstances. If somebody is obviously battling, that person can be sent back to the start if accompanied by another hiker and if it is considered safe.
- Ensure that everyone knows the basic rules: no littering, picking of plants, making fires, taking short cuts. The party starts, stays and finishes with the leader. Hikers are not allowed to leave the party to walk on their own. The leader is in charge at all times.
- Appoint a back marker. This person must remain at the rear at all times (including waiting for 'pit stops').
- Appoint someone to write a brief report of the hike for the newsletter.
- Immediately prior to setting off, count the number in the party.

On the hike

- Be in control, even if not in front. You should be watching: hikers' performance and behaviour, the terrain (where are we?), weather (any sudden changes likely?), and the time (is the hike progressing as planned?).
- Stick to paths.
- Try to ensure that the party does not become too strung out. Stop every now and again to regroup. Check on the weaker hikers at the back. Go back and speak to them and look for signs of distress: abnormal skin colour, excessive panting, shivering, nausea, dizziness, stumbling or incoherence.
- If terrain becomes difficult, make sure that everyone manages, instructing those up ahead to wait for you.
- Stop between official breaks for a drink. To avoid dehydration, one should not wait until feeling thirsty before drinking some water.
- Make frequent short stops. Research has shown that hikers do better if you oblige them to stop before they feel tired. Stop also at special views or other interesting spots.
- At tea and lunch breaks, give 5 minutes warning before setting off again.
- Everyone (but particularly the leader and committee members) should make visitors welcome and encourage them to come again.
- The leader has the right to change the route, or even cancel the meeting if necessary, due to poor hiking conditions, failing ability of hikers.
- When hiking in mist or darkness, stress that each person must be able to see the person ahead as well as behind. If lost, stay where you are until it is safe to move or help has arrived.

After the hike

- Ensure that everybody's car has started (including yours) before you leave.
- Write up the technical report on page 2 of the hiking form. The purpose of this report is to assist the Committee in planning future outings. It should detail time taken, weather conditions, state of the route.

What makes a good leader

- A good leader is not only aware, but also friendly, approachable and consistent, showing equal concern for all in the party, but special attention for the weak and timid. The good leader maintains law and order, but does not, within reason, limit the freedom of the party.
- Hiking provides people with the opportunity to grow physically, intellectually and psychologically, whilst still enjoying a great day in the open air. A good leader encourages this and ensures the safety of the party. She / he is able to answer questions about the route and environment and encourages participation and social exchange.