



Backpacking involves certain risks. This activity takes place in natural settings, which are, as a consequence, farther away from emergency services. This can cause delays in the event of incidents requiring immediate care or an evacuation.

Be sure you have the necessary skills and abilities and the appropriate equipment for practising this activity. Hikers must be aware of the potential risks, which include the possibility of material damages and injuries. We advise you to read this document attentively.

You should always choose an excursion based on your abilities, fitness level in relation to outdoor activities as well as the area's topography. A trail's level of difficulty is classified in three levels: Easy, Intermediate and Difficult. Hikers must take these classifications into consideration when choosing a hike.

For general information about the trails and maps, call 1 800 665-6527. For tips on preparing for a backcountry excursion, you can contact the Fédération québécoise de la marche (FQM), at 514 252-3157, toll-free at 1 866 252-2065, or visit their Web site at www.fqmarche.qc.ca.

It is important to note that backcountry hiking is not a guided activity, and that you are responsible for your own safety. There are no patrols on the backcountry hiking trails. Expenses for search and rescue operations are your responsibility (make sure that your insurance covers these risks before leaving on your trip).

We suggest that you read the *Careful by Nature* brochure, available at our reception offices, and give a friend or relative a copy of your itinerary, making sure to let this person know your return date, with instructions to call emergency services (911) if you do not arrive on the expected date. To prevent false alarms, call this person as soon as you get back.

FORMALITIES

Before deciding to reserve a backcountry hiking trip, get information about the characteristics of your hiking project (length, vertical drop, services).

Read the documentation that comes with your reservation to become familiar with the details about the activity.

You must register at the establishment's reception office and have your park entry fee pass and stay authorization on hand when you arrive for your trip. The circuit you take must respect the itinerary indicated on the reservation confirmation.

If you plan on fishing, first make sure that fishing is allowed. If so, bring along your fishing licence and find out how many catches are allowed per day.

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION

You must carry your backpack wherever you go. For safety reasons and to protect the natural environment, it is important to stay on the marked trails.

Tip

- *The isolation of the areas and the topography of certain valleys limits the use of cell phones or satellite phones. Despite this fact, we recommend that you bring a communications device with you.*

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Even during the summer, weather conditions can change quickly from fair to difficult, especially in mountainous areas where it can get very windy. Temperatures can vary greatly in the same day.

Wet weather and temperatures close to the freezing point can increase the risk of hypothermia and death.

Tip

- *Before your departure, it is important to check the weather forecast for the area you will be visiting.*

CLOTHING

Make sure to wear appropriate clothing. Keep some dry clothing on hand for rest periods and for when you arrive at your nighttime destination. The first indicator of hypothermia is trembling. Heed the warning signs! Dry clothing, a warm, non-alcoholic beverage and food are effective remedies.

Tips

- *Take the multi-layer approach and avoid cotton clothing.*
- *Be sure that the wrists of your undergarments and your socks are not too tight to avoid restricting blood circulation in your hands or feet.*
- *Choose loose-fitting clothing that offers good protection for your lower back.*
- *Don't tie your shoes too tight, because physical effort can make your feet swell, and as a consequence they can get cold more quickly.*
- *Wearing gaiters not only protects the bottom of your pants, but also prevents water or mud from getting into your shoes.*
- *In spring and fall, a tuque and gloves are often very much appreciated.*
- *If your glasses get fogged up, this is usually a good indication that you are too hot or that your body temperature is changing quickly. If this happens, you can reduce your walking speed, the number of layers of clothing, or simply ventilate your clothing to let some cool air in.*

WHILE HIKING

Itineraries of several days require solid preparation. The hiker must be ready to go in all kinds of conditions. A change in weather conditions or your physical condition can greatly affect the level of difficulty and your hiking speed. In ideal conditions, an experienced group rarely progresses faster than 2 km/h, including rest periods for meals, etc.

Hiking itineraries are usually indicated with signs or markers. However, vegetation can make them less visible and hikers can easily lose their way. It is therefore essential for one person in the group to be familiar with reading topographical maps and using a compass and/or GPS.

Tips

- *Be sure to have the skills and fitness level required for the circuit you have chosen.*
- *Leave early, hike only in the daytime and with a group (min. 2 people).*
- *Stay on the trails, don't take shortcuts. If you are not sure of your route, retrace your steps.*
- *Check the map each time you come to a signalled intersection, a shelter or any spot that can be precisely located on the map.*
- *Respect your rhythm, stop or reduce your speed to appreciate your surroundings.*
- *Using one or two walking poles can reduce the amount of energy you need while hiking.*
- *Once every hour, take time to stop in a comfortable place to remove your backpack, eat and drink. Wear a fleece jacket while you snack.*
- *Designate an experienced member of the group to close the path. This person will be responsible for staying with the slower group members.*

FOOD

If you eat well and stay hydrated, it will be easier to maintain a comfortable body temperature. This way, you will have more energy for your trip and be more alert when facing the unexpected.

Tips

- *Be sure that your food and beverages are easy to reach while you are hiking.*
- *Drink a minimum of two litres of water per day.*
- *You can get water from various lakes, rivers and streams, but be aware that none of the water has been checked for purity. For your safety, we recommend that you boil, treat, or filter the water. Sometimes water that seems good can contain harmful micro-organisms, which can cause gastro-intestinal problems.*
- *Gaining access to a body of water can be hazardous. Always go with a friend.*
- *Never take or be under the influence of drugs or drink alcoholic beverages while hiking.*

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

No matter what the brand name, model or price of the different technical equipment you use during your excursion, it is important to be familiar with them before your trip.

You should choose your backpack based on the volume and weight of your baggage and your physique. Take the time to adjust your backpack, fitting it to the clothes you will be wearing on your hike.

Tips

- *A few days before you leave for your trip, simulate a departure by putting everything you are planning to take with you in your backpack. This is a good way to find out if everything fits into the backpack and how much weight you will have on your shoulders. This way, you can adjust your backpack and reduce the weight or volume if necessary.*
- *Ideally, a backpacking trip should be preceded by one or more day trips so that you can better assess your fitness level, abilities and interest in such an activity, and most importantly, to make sure your equipment is well adjusted.*
- *Don't leave with new shoes. Do a few day hikes to break them in.*

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Hikers should bring all of their garbage out with them. This rule is in effect along the trails and in the huts.

The forest environment must be preserved, so do not cut down or mutilate trees.

During your hike, you will be travelling through the habitats of a number of wildlife species. By nature, these animals are not very aggressive, but if you try to get too close to them, their survival instinct could be expressed by dangerous behaviour.

Tips

- *Avoid bringing useless packages that increase the weight and volume of your baggage.*
- *Use biodegradable soap and rechargeable batteries.*
- *Be sure to make the least possible impact on the environment during your stay.*
- *If you notice evidence that bears have recently been in the area, continue hiking and make plenty of noise (raise your voices, ring a bell, etc.).*

ACCOMMODATIONS

Huts are insulated buildings equipped with the following: beds, mattresses, tables, chairs, woodstove and firewood. When a wooden platform is available, you must install your tent directly on top of it. The tent must be self-standing. You may need to tie down the tent with rope.

An outdoor pit toilet and a water supply point can be found near the huts. The water may not be potable. For your safety, we recommend boiling (20 min), treating, or filtering it.

Fires are prohibited near huts, primitive camping platforms and along the trails.

HOW TO PREVENT...

A fracture, dislocation or a sprain

- *We suggest that you move slowly, without straddling over obstacles. On rugged or slippery surfaces, it is best to use a walking pole. Despite these precautions, if you have an accident, apply cold compresses and stabilize the injured part of the body.*

Blisters

- *Don't leave on a hike without having walked for about fifteen minutes, several times, in your new shoes. At the time of the hike, keep your feet dry and protect the areas susceptible to blisters with an elastic adhesive bandage. Despite these precautions, if you get a blister, apply a bandage so the blister won't burst in order to keep the area sterile and give the skin time to heal. If the blister bursts, disinfect the wound and cover it with antibiotic cream and a bandage.*

Snow blindness

- *Wear sunglasses with adequate UV protection, even when the sky is overcast. Despite this precaution, if you get snow blindness, keep your eyes in darkness.*

Serious or benign wounds

- *We recommend wearing simple clothing and adjusting your backpack before leaving. You should also always handle equipment such as knives, axes or stoves with care. Move slowly but surely over rugged or slippery surfaces. If an accident occurs despite these precautions, disinfect the wound with an antiseptic and protect it with a bandage. Serious wounds must be protected from infection by sterile compresses, and they require medical attention.*

Leaving a friend alone in the forest

- *We recommend going on your trek in a group of at least three people. Despite this precaution, if this happens, never abandon an injured person except in the case of a force majeure. Use your energy to comfort the injured person and make a fire to identify your location with smoke.*

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET LOST

To prevent this situation, never leave the trail and check your location regularly, using your map. If you are not sure where you are, stay calm, stop and take a few minutes to analyze the situation. Then, return to a spot that is easily identifiable on the map: a road intersection, a body of water, a bridge, a building or a direction sign. Analyse the situation again. If you are lost, stay where you are and wait for help. However, if you are absolutely sure of your route, make the decision to continue on or to turn back.

Warning! Off the trails, hikers always have a tendency to over-evaluate their hiking speed. It rarely exceeds 2 km/h.

WHAT TO BRING

FORMALITIES

Stay authorization	
Park entry fee pass	
Fishing licence (if necessary)	

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION

Sound-signalling device or appliance (whistle)	
Communication device (Cellular or satellite telephone)	

FOOD

Bring enough food for the trip	
Water filter	
Canteen for drinking water	
Thermos for hot liquid	
Camp stove and fuel (naphtha recommended)	
Kitchen utensils and mess kit	

TRAVELLING

Topographical map specific to your itinerary (in a watertight cover)	
GPS, extra batteries, instructions for use	
Compass with magnetic declination of the area visited	

ACCOMMODATIONS

Tent	
Sleeping bag	
Insulating ground mattress	
Candle lantern (hut)	

METEOROLOGY

Thermometer	
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CLOTHING

Pants and jacket (external shell)	
Practical clothing (favour synthetics and multi-layering)	
Tuques	
Shoes for the camp	
Peaked cap	
Gloves	

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

Sun glasses	
First aid kit	
Sun screen	
Survival kit	
Multi-purpose knife	
Waterproof matches	
Expedition backpack	
Personal items (toilet paper)	
Watertight flashlight or 3 flares	
Flashlight or headlamp and batteries	
Walking poles	
Insect repellent (28% DEET)	
Lip balm	
Bell (bears)	

ENVIRONMENT

Biodegradable soap	
Bags for carrying out your garbage	
Rechargeable batteries	