



Northern Virginia Hiking Club, Inc.

Hiker Guide

Following is intended to enhance your safety and comfort during your hike with the club.

HIKE RATING GUIDE

Hikes are rated to provide you with an approximate gauge of the hike's difficulty. *Linear distance* and *elevation gain* are used to compute the rating. *Elevation gain* (in feet) is divided by 400 and added to *linear distance* (in miles). Hike is rated **D (Easy)** if the total is less than 7; **C (Moderate)** if between 7 and 10; **B (Moderately Difficult)** if between 10 and 13; **A (Difficult)** if more than 13.

SAFETY MESSAGE

We recommend that you **DO NOT HIKE** if you answer **NO** to **any** of the five following questions:

1. **MEDICAL FITNESS:** *Are you medically fit to participate in this event?*

2. **EXPERIENCE:** *Have you done a hike of similar difficulty in recent past?*

The hike rating may not always be accurate! Also, different people react differently to elevation change. Therefore the rating is to be used only as a guide, along with other information, such as the actual distance and the amount of climbing, terrain, stream crossings, rock scrambles, and so on. If you have not hiked in the recent past, try an easy hike (rated **D**) first, and gradually work your way up. *We recommend that you do not try a hike of a given rating unless you are comfortable with hikes one rating lower* (except for hikes rated **D**). For instance, do not attempt a **B** hike unless you have done some **C** hikes and feel confident of tackling something more challenging.

3. **FOOD AND WATER:** *Have you enough food and water?*

We recommend that you carry two quarts of water. If the weather is hot, you will need even more water. Drink plenty of water: it helps you stay cool in summer and warm in winter! We recommend that you bring sufficient food depending on the length of the hike. Bring more than you need, just in case!!

4. **FOOTWEAR:** *Have you proper footwear?*

We recommend hiking boots on all our hikes. The boots should be *well broken in*, and should preferably be waterproof. Here are some tips for buying new boots: Buy from a well-known outfitter. While considering size, remember that feet expand after hiking; also, you may wear two layers of socks during winter. We suggest waterproof boots. Try them before buying, with the socks you intend to wear during the hike. Consider gaiters for snowy hikes.

5. **CLOTHING:** *Have you proper clothing?*

For **wet weather** we recommend appropriate rain gear. For **cold weather** we recommend *layered clothing*. Cold weather clothing should *exclude cotton* and include the following:

- Long underwear that “wicks” moisture from body such as silk, polypropylene, or polyester
- Wool or fleece sweater or jacket
- Two pairs of socks: synthetic inner layer, and wool or blend for the outer layer - avoid cotton
- Waterproof gloves or mittens
- Wool or fleece hat, preferably with flaps to cover your ears.
- Wind shell

OTHER ITEMS TO BRING

Following items will enhance your comfort on a hike. **Bring any other items you may need.** Keep the season in mind and use your judgment.

- Cap with visor to prevent sunburn and glare
- Sunscreen
- Sun glasses
- Insect repellent spray
- Flash light with batteries
- Matches, kept in a dry bag
- First aid kit
- Extra shirt and socks stored in a dry bag
- Map to enable driving to the trail head
- Trail map, preferably a topographical map
- Compass, with a knowledge of how to use one
- Whistle
- Toilet paper
- Extra set of car keys

GENERAL

1. If you have any questions about the hike, *ask the leader*.
2. Listen carefully to the announcements made by the leader prior to and during the hike. Follow the leader's advice closely.
3. When hiking, keep track of fellow hikers. Try to know who is ahead of you and behind you.
4. Be prepared for all exigencies - expect the unexpected. Mother Nature can be a difficult and unforgiving adversary!

LIABILITY DISCLAIMER

You are responsible for your own safety! As unpaid volunteers, the hike leaders should not be relied on for any special skills. Bear in mind the liability disclaimer which you will sign:

I do hereby agree to assume all risks and liability related to or resulting from any and all Club functions. I will not hold any of the Club's leaders, officers, or representatives liable for any injury, loss, or damage to my own person or any members of my family, children, pets, or property, arising directly or as a consequence of a Club hike or other activity.