

## **Safety While Hiking**

A hiking trip should be a pleasant experience - a day outside and a chance to get a little exercise. It can be a dangerous situation, however, so it is imperative to take a few precautions before you leave your house, and while you are on your favorite hiking trail or out in the wilderness.

### **Be Prepared**

Before you go hiking, learn a little bit about the area you'll be visiting. Find out if you are likely to encounter hazardous terrain, poisonous plant life or wild animals. Keep in mind that when you leave the city limits you could be entering the home turf of large and dangerous creatures. If you are likely to cross paths with a potentially dangerous animal, be prepared by carrying bear pepper spray. This defense spray will temporarily take down even the largest grizzly and give you the time you need to get away safely. It's especially important to carry a non lethal weapon if you will be eating, camping or doing anything else that may attract curious wildlife.

When you go out hiking you must bring everything you need with you. That includes water, hiking boots, suntan lotion and any food you'll need while you're on the trail. It's also a good idea to take a cell phone. You may need it if you get lost or hurt, and have no choice but to call for assistance. Put together a list of items that you want to have with you, but keep it small enough to fit in a light backpack. You won't want to overburden yourself while spending a day out in the sun.

### **Expect Anything**

Although you usually go hiking to get away from cities and people, you never know who else may be out there. What would you do if you ran into a criminal while on a nature hike? Chances are you'd be much too far away to get any help, so you must be able to defend yourself.

You never know what may happen when you are out hiking, so one of the best tips to remember is to simply be aware of your surroundings at all time. Use all of your senses to watch, listen and even smell for any sign of danger. It's easy to focus on the natural beauty that surrounds you, but always stay focused, aware and ready for anything.

### **Safety First**

When you are preparing for your hiking trip, make sure to take your personal safety into consideration. Tell someone close to you where you are going, how long you'll be there and when you expect to return. Let them know that if your plans change, you'll notify them right away. That way if you aren't back when you are supposed to be, they will know that something could be wrong.

Carry even a basic first aid kit with you whenever you go hiking. Make sure it has all the supplies you need to attend to any cuts, sprains, bruises or other injuries you may have while on your trip. A good kit will still be compact and lightweight, and it could even be a life saver.

Of course the main idea is to have fun while hiking – and by doing a few simple things to ensure your safety and security you can focus on having a great time!