

# Planning a backpack trip

## 1. Pick a place and time

- a. How much time do you have?
- b. What area are you interested in?
- c. What do you like to do – swim, climb peaks, relax beside a lake, explore, hike lots of miles?
- d. Weather, water availability, bugs, water crossings, snow?
- e. Potential for risky wildlife encounters?

## 2. Get maps and detailed information

- a. Topo maps:
  - i. Tom Harrison, National Geographic Trails Illustrated, USGS 7.5 Minute
  - ii. Apps: Gaia, Topo Maps
  - iii. Online: CalTopo, MyTopo
- b. Guide books
- c. Websites
- d. Land agency websites:
  - i. Trail conditions
  - ii. Camping restrictions
  - iii. Permit required?
  - iv. Bear proof food container requirements
  - v. Campfires allowed?

## 3. Plan your transportation

- a. Loop or shuttle?
- b. Road conditions
- c. Parking

## 4. Map the trip

- a. Trail type, off trail
- b. Terrain
- c. Distance
- d. Elevation gain and loss
- e. Overall trip difficulty
  - i. Naismith's rule
  - ii. 2 miles per hour, 1000 feet elevation gain or loss per hour, add time for rest and lunch breaks
  - iii. Backpack Rating Worksheet

## 5. Take care of the paperwork

- a. Wilderness permit: land agency website, Recreation.gov
- b. Campground reservation: land agency website, Recreation.gov

# Designing the Trip

## Fun and Safe

Design a trip that is within the comfort range of everyone who plans to go. The most common mistake is to design a trip that is too difficult.

## First things first

- Where do you want to go?
- When do you want to go?
- Who do you want to go with?

## Where do you want to go?

- How many days for the trip?
- Loop, shuttle, or out and back trip?
- Layover days?
- Campsites?
- Elevation gain and loss each day
- Mileage each day
- Off-trail travel

## When do you want to go?

- Weather
- Water availability
- Safety issues such as snow, high water crossings, fire potential
- Annoyances such as bugs

## Who are you going with?

- Who is going and how well do you know them?
- What is their backpacking experience?
- What is their level of physical fitness?
- What is their experience with high altitude and/or symptoms of altitude sickness?
- Do they have any health or medical concerns that could affect their ability to complete the trip safely?
- Do they have any special diet considerations that would be difficult to accommodate?
- What equipment do they have and is it appropriate for the trip?

## Do you need a wilderness permit?

- Which land agencies govern the areas you will travel through?
- In which jurisdiction is the entry trailhead?
- Which land agency will you apply to?
- When will you apply for it?
- How much will it cost?
- Any restrictions on group size?
- Any camping restrictions?
- Any campfire restrictions?
- Food storage regulations?
- Pets allowed?

## Researching your route

- Get maps
- Trail guide publications
- Land agency websites
- Internet
- Climber.org and backpacking blogs

## **Packing and preparation**

- Use a list
- Share group gear
- Who is going to bring what?
- Communicate trip information with all trip members in writing
- Check all gear – give it a trial run before the trip
- Weigh all gear pieces individually
- Medical form for each trip member
- Emergency phone numbers

## **Getting to the trailhead**

- Make reservations for campground or place to stay, if needed
- Write driving directions, meeting time, meeting location, cell phone numbers and ranger Station addresses, and give a copy to each trip member
- Get trip member's travel plans
- Check in at Ranger Station
  - a. Pick up permit
  - b. Peruse the publications and notices
  - c. Check the current conditions
  - d. Back country ranger locations
  - e. Trail crew or research team locations

## **Trailhead Parking**

- Bears
- Food storage
- Marmots
- People

**HAVE A GREAT TRIP!**