

Hiking and Climbing Wisdom

Preparing to Climb or Hike Difficult Mountains

Very Important Information for Climbing and Hiking

* Do I really need a disclaimer? * See below.

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Hiking and mountain climbing are wonderful activities that you will remember for your entire life. They are among the rare activities that provide athletic exhilaration, friendship, personal growth rewards, life change, and incredible beauty. Beginning a lifestyle that includes mountain life will benefit you in many ways far beyond the physical exertion.

Mountains have always been a beautiful attraction to me and a loved physical workout. As an adult, they became a personal friend that supports my growth. God gave me mountains as a method of navigating life and achieving personal health both physical and mental. They are part of my being. I love the mountains. I know they will never love me back, but they have always changed me for the better.

Along the way, I have learned about the mountains and about climbing. Part of my learning was simply experiencing the mountains, but I have also learned by asking questions and doing the basic research. That how life is. You need that research.

That learning lead me through the White Mountains of New Hampshire, into the Rockies of Colorado, and the Cascades. I will never forget my first 14er climb. It was Pikes Peak only one day after arrival from my home in Pennsylvania. It was a challenge and a beautiful day. Fortunately, I prepared both physically and mentally. Living in Pennsylvania does cause me to train vigorously for elevation, but it has not been a hinderance. Through training and preparation, I have completed wonderful climbs and achieved notable climbing speeds. I love the workout as well as the climb.

Here is a summary of what I have learned over the past few decades. I have learned through study, experience, and through both asking many questions and taking advice. These ideas have carried me through the wooded trails of Pennsylvania, the mountains of Vermont, New Hampshire, California, Washington, and many mountains in Colorado. Enjoy.

Three Important Introductory Pointers:

1) You cannot always wait for a friend or partners to join you or be your support. Sometimes you just have to start something that is good for you even if no one joins you. Be the odd ball. Sometimes there is no right place or time. You might have to make the time. Waiting for other people to join you or understand you could suck up your whole life.

2) Use your head. Those things we call common sense and gut feelings are often right.

3) Learn and grow. Make yourself better. Never stay the same.

*** Important message for all women at the end.

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1) Get In Shape. Condition yourself mentally and physically. Everything is more fun if you are fit and able to finish what you start. You will be able to go at the speed you choose and be able to enjoy the natural settings.

Train for what you plan to do. Or look at it his way, get fit for specific events. You are not training to get in shape for the Planet Fitness tread mill. Stress your body and body muscle, strength, and endurance for that difficult event of your dreams.

Listen to advice when someone says that you need to change your training. You may have a walking or running stride that is working against you and causing injury. It is hard to change, but find a way to force your body onto a good athletic form. We cannot all attain perfect form, but we can all make small improvements. That could take some specific exercises that mimic incorporating physical therapy.

Train with your backpack, and make yourself work hard. You will need to train beyond what you think you need. The mountain will make everything more difficult and fatiguing. Remember, the training is a big part of the fun. Enjoy the training. Train hard and enjoy the hike. Think of using poles. They can help avoid knee problems.

I found that varied training methods help. I regularly incorporate upper body and core workouts into my training. Strengthen your legs, both upper and lower.

I love power hiking that includes intervals and uphill running. Uphill hiking and running are essential. Also add running up steps. Work hard to maintain an even speed as you go up hill. You can use poles or push on your thighs if needed, but it is good to train without pushing on your thighs. Then if needed on your big climb, you can add a thigh push as needed.

Add imaginary points on your training hikes and runs as areas to push yourself. But do not slow down when you reach the end point. Continue through and a little past. That is great for both mental and physical conditioning when you can push beyond the pain.

I like to add special hard training days to attempt a PR on a measured training course. It will strengthen you and add great mental strength.

Listen to your body. Training injuries can really spoil your season.

Hike, hike, hike. Use weight training, core training and leg weight training. Squats and heel raises will help. Enjoy the training and work to enjoy life. Then you will also become better at hiking the mountains. Do it to learn and enjoy.

Train in heat, humidity, and other difficult situations. It builds both physical and mental strength.

Overcome Health Problems With Proper Training. I have asthma and have accomplished many very difficult athletic feats. Please get a medical check-up. Use your head. Know your body and its limitations.

I have asthma and have been able to get quite fit and hike rapidly at elevation. My fitness program helps, but proper medical planning and advice are essential. Stay ahead of it. Really. Stay ahead of it. Never wait until you have issues. You may have to teach your doctor about asthma since many doctors have little athletic experience. Simply put, my asthma has not stopped me.

Acid reflux is a frustrating condition that can mimic asthma and sinus problems. It can also initiate asthma. I am not a doctor, but have learned the hard way how to stay ahead of acid reflux just as I stay ahead of asthma. You can have a very successful day on the mountain and wind up with serious asthma-like problems due to a celebratory meal after the hike, while delaying your asthma treatment. Know your body.

Recovery. Many people forget that recovery is not automatic. Get off your feet. I like to elevate my legs for a while after the climb. If you go out at night and walk the town, don't be surprised if you feel like crap the next day.

You should always consider rest as an essential part of your training.

But I have also had many year of completing difficult hikes and training days with little rest in between. I do not party at night after the hikes. I get off my feet and elevate them. Take those evening seriously. Eat, rest, start your planning as soon as you return to your base.

Keep a Training Journal. A training journal will assist your training and help you reflect on injury and shoe problems.

2) Do Your Homework. There are many good websites: 14ers.com, Summit Post, The Hiking Project, and many others. I use

14ers.com the most because it gives me everything I need. I start there and end my research there. Check out personal hiking and climbing reports.

You can also find many good hiking and climbing journals posted online that give great insight for the day. It is good to read someone's personal experience ahead of the hike. Many hikers offer journal entries from previous climbers. Ask questions, and get maps. With all the great iPhone apps available you should be able to avoid many problems. It is also a good idea to carefully choose the appropriate mountain for you and your group. Know your mountain well. Some mountains may require a permit or parking reservation.

Before you touch the mountain, you should know the mountain in your head. It will be a huge advantage.

Find a Gateway Mountain or Trail. Find a mountain area that you will enjoy. I know that everyone wants to find that terrific mountain to bag your first peak. But what comes after that? And will you have the memories that you dreamed you would have? Chose a place that will provide a mountain or trail with an area that you can enjoy. Make it a place that has more than mountains. By doing that, you will become hooked, and your lifestyle will blossom.

For me, it was the Colorado Springs area and Pikes Peak, the Buena Vista area with the Collegiate Peaks, and Dillon (all in Colorado).

Learn about Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). Everyone will suffer from some level of elevation sickness. Don't be surprised when you have sleeping difficulties on your first night due to an elevated heart rate. Your body will be trying to compensate. You may experience issues while hiking ranging from feeling much more fatigued, to severe headaches and nausea. Some climbers will become less cognitively aware.

At first, you will be surprised by the early fatigue assuming you are just not in good physical condition, but it is the elevation. For some people the headaches could be fairly strong. You may need rest, hydration, or possibly head down by about 1000 feet.

Make sure you rest and recover after your hikes.

Remember to acclimate. Arrive a couple days early prior to hitting any mountains to start acclimating. Taking a day or so to hike at intermediate elevations can help, but then remember to get good sleep at a lower elevation prior to your big climb. Complete

acclimation will take a couple months, but your body will begin adjusting biochemically within a couple days. I hold off on alcohol and salt, and get plenty of sleep. Water is important. Make sure you drink water and eat during the hike. You may lose a little appetite while on the mountains, so bring foods you like.

Learn pressure breathing. You purse your lips together while you exhale and hear yourself force the air outward. You should hear it. It will help force to air into air sacs in your lungs. That may help alleviate some headaches at elevation.

Know your condition and consult your doctor. I do not take Diamox or other chemicals. I just get in the best condition I can.

Please do your own research regarding AMS and get in shape. Symptoms can happen to anyone. They may surprise you. There are also more severe conditions called HAPE and HACE. They are unlikely in the Rocky Mountains, but you should do your own research.

If you feel symptoms, pay attention. Get a little Rest, water, food, and reevaluate. The best solution is to go down 500 feet or 100 feet, if needed.

You will likely also experience some kind of symptoms when you return home. It is not well understood, but your body will continue to feel a little off for a week or so after you return to lower elevation at home. Couple that with a return to humidity and allergens, and you will likely find yourself needing a couple weeks before you can attack the local trails with the kind of speed that you expect.

* See 3) for a little more AMS related wisdom.

Prepare - Plan Your Day. Get organized and plan ahead of time. Many unexpected problems can arise. Sort your gear in advance, and then sort it again. You do not want to pack too heavy; but then again, you need to be prepared for the plethora of obstacles and problems that occur in your climbing area.

Prepare yourself with more skills and knowledge than you will need. Prepare your pack to support you in a worst-case scenario, or changes in weather. Bad days happen. Plan and do your best to avoid mistakes. *Make a note.*

Parking and Reservations. Learn the parking and trailhead. You may need a permit or reservation. Parking may fill by 5 AM, and at some mountains by 3 AM.

Take Advice. Do not be the stubborn person that thinks they know it all. Also, don't be the reason for the ambulance or mountain rescue because you did not listen to advice.

Stubbornness kills.

Level 4 Mountains and Above. When it comes to Mt Rainier and other mountains at or above level 4, utilize a guide service. Even if you have experience with winter climbing, and possibly Mt. Baker, when it comes to Mt. Rainier and other significant class 4 climbs, do not assume you complete the climb, avoid getting lost, or even avoid injury. You will find a friendly group of people and an experience guide at many services such as RMI, IMG, and through REI (plus more).

Do Not Overestimate Yourself. Train hard, enjoy it, but do not overestimate your ability or training.

3) If You Have a Problem Be Willing to Turn Back. Water leaks and food problems are serious. Live to climb another day. You may need to make a difficult decision for a friend, as I have done. Unfortunately, I had to be the person to make a difficult decision for a friend. That climber did not like it at first, but I saved their life by insisting that they stop and head down.

If you run out of water, you are done. No matter how much you want that summit, you must turn back.

If the time is late, you are done. The risks of extreme weather or getting stuck on a mountain are very real.

Remember, your stubbornness may also affect other hikers in your group. Your poor condition, preparation, or tactics will not only ruin the day for everyone in the group, but you could put lives at risk.

Take care of your friends on the hike when they are in trouble. AMS (acute mountain sickness) is very real. Headaches may only be a first sign.

Do Not Get Summit Fever. As I said, live to climb another day! If a storm is approaching, I turn back. I remember the first time I had to turn back. It was when I reached 13,400 feet on Mt. LaPlata. Storm clouds appeared on the horizon. A few minutes later I heard thunder.

At first, I did not want to turn back. It was a long fifteen seconds of arguing with myself. But I am still alive because I turned back. I also turned back on Mt. Shasta. But I was also on the mountain when people died because they did not turn back. Make wise choices.

4) Choose Good Equipment and Practice With It. Do not purchase the bargains. Saving a few dollars is just not worth the misery of an equipment failure. A few dollars more will pay off immensely in your climbing and hiking enjoyment. Plus, if you purchase cheap equipment this year, you will only re-purchase next year and wind up spending more money. Use a good day pack that is comfortable, reliable, and stable on your back. You will want to bring extra layers and rain gear. I pack an extra top shirt or fleece, and a packable rain jacket or covering. Plan carefully what you will need. Food and water should be packed for quick access, or you will not use it. Train with the pack carrying more weight than you expect to carry on your climb.

Wear Good Clothing. Avoid cotton. There are many low-cost options for polyester and nylon clothing. You will pay a painful price when chaffing develops. Cotton has a low R value and does not breathe as well as polyester (lower R value equals less insulation). Get the right clothing and you will have a better day. Plus, it will last forever, so it is cheaper in the long run. This concept is especially true for your base layers.

By the way, you do not always need the super expensive name brands. There is no mystery that some name brands will cost three to five times more simply for having a name brand listed on it. Sometimes you cannot avoid it. But if you can get good clothing at a discount, take it. I have found tons of great clothing for discount.

You may find me with a polo shirt on the trails.

Nevertheless, there are certain types of equipment such as climbing gear, back packs, hiking shoes, and hiking poles in which you never want to purchase by price.

But dress for what you need during the hike, not for how you feel in the parking lot. You can use that extra layer if needed at the summit.

Use Good Hiking Poles. Use that upper body. Hiking poles will also get you into a breathing rhythm. On the way down you will experience far less knee trouble. You can use the poles to brace against the large down steps. I like collapsible poles. They are worth the money.

Learn to Use Your Hiking Poles. Many people use hiking poles incorrectly. Your poles are likely too long. Personally, I do not like my arms to be at 90 degrees when the pole lands. I adjust my poles

so that my arm is bent slightly downward (I am 5'9" and adjust my poles to about 105 cm or less depending on the upward angle of ascent). These are not ski poles. You want the pole to land behind your foot or beside your hip while you walk, not in front of you. Landing in front of you will cause you to hike through the pole and use more energy. It will also become unsafe on mountains and uneven terrain. Your pole should permit your arms to assist you. Get your arms involved with a small push assist in every step.

Learn the correct way to hold your poles. It is difficult to explain only with words, but you should bring your hand up through the strap not downward. Bringing your hand downward through the strap can lead to injuries. And you will get much better grip by bringing your hand upward into the strap and then down onto the strap and pole. It will permit you to hold both the strap and the pole giving you mechanical advantage.

On the way down the mountain, you may want to slightly lengthen the pole for support and to take the weight off the knees. You can also hold the pole from the top to give the effect of a longer pole.

Bring Gloves. Gloves are great for scrambling near the summit. You will never regret gloves. Not only will they keep you warm, and help with scrambling, but they will make using the trekking poles much easier.

5) Pack Suggestions. This is primarily for hiking and climbing at elevation. Back packers and technical climbers will next more information.

Bring gloves and use them. Protect yourself from the sun with sunscreen. Bring first aid, fire starter, and a knife.

Keep your camera and phone secure. If you need to use them, put them in a handy location but also secure. People lose things far too often.

Mandatory/Minimum Suggestions for Hiking and Climbing Back Packs. This is not an all-inclusive list or an overnight camping list. I am sure many of you will have other suggestions. Here is my list of absolute, safety, must-haves: Cell Phone, Down-Loadable Maps, Paper Map, Battery Pack and Cord, Extra Socks, Emergency Blanket, Emergency Poncho, Plastic Trowel for Poop (or poop bags), Plenty of Water (possible water filter), Food That You Like, Sunscreen, Lip

Balm, Extra Shirt Layer, a hat, Inhalers and Medicines, Pocket Knife, Small Rope or Extra Shoelaces, Hiking Gloves, Whistle, And Plenty of Knowledge.

Think safety: I always bring a whistle, cell phone, paper and pen, pepper spray, and a map.

Pack correctly, but over packing can be a big problem. Unfortunately, everyone will need to learn that on their own.

** Lay your equipment and food out to double check before you hit the sack the night before your climb.

I'll say it again, make a note or you'll be sorry.

6) Take Care of Your Feet. You will notice that many hikers have switched from boots to hiking shoes. I have and I am very happy with the change. For most hiking I wear either low-cut shoes or trail runners. I recommend going with lighter shoes. Old wisdom was to use boots or heavy shoes. Lighter but durable shoes will get you to the top with far fewer problems. You will be more comfortable, hike faster, have far fewer blisters, and enjoy the day. I like low-cut hiking shoes for nearly all my hikes and climbs. There are a few occasions in which I use a mid-hiker. Use good quality shoes and don't cut cost with your feet. You need your feet to be happy. Wear your shoes at least a dozen miles prior to any important hike or climb.

Use Good Merino Wool Socks. Do not cut costs when purchasing socks. Try a number of brands and discover what works for you. Do not wear cotton! People would often try liner socks under the merino wool to avoid blisters, but I have found that counterproductive. I am a blister king and have found that great socks can solve many issues. I found a brand that I like and have stayed with it for about twenty years. Some people like to preemptively tape certain blister areas to avoid problems.

Shoes, Blisters, Shoe Adjustments. When hot spots develop on your feet, shoulders, or other areas, stop immediately. Let it cool and fix the problem or it will make the remainder of your day miserable.

Make your shoes snug but not overly tight on the way up (snug, never flopping). That will allow for good control and slight movement which may help avoid few blister problems. **On the way down, tighten your shoes,** but do not cut off your circulation or impede any nerves (you may feel numbness) but tight enough to prevent your feet from

sliding front. When your feet slide front on the downhill you will develop blisters and painful toe sores. You will figure it out.

7) Breathe. Quiet breathing is not necessarily good breathing. Try this: Breathe in full, then purse your lips together as you push the air out. This is often called “pressure breathing,” though I have heard it called, “locomotive breath.” If your mouth is wide open when you exhale, the air will not completely be absorbed into the blood. It will escape too quickly. Pressure breathing might feel uncomfortable at first, so practice it. It will work. When you feel tired or lightheaded, over breathe (and do it all by pressure breathing), and you will find relief. When I hike or climb any mountain, I always use pressure breathing. Train with pressure breathing. You should see me go; and I am from sea-level in PA.

Let your Arms Move Freely. Get them out of your pack straps. If your straps are rubbing, fix the problem. But remember, you need to breathe.

8) Take Breaks, But Use Caution on How to Take Breaks. I tend to take twenty to thirty second breaks, to regroup the breathing. It works better for me than longer breaks. Water, food, and rest are needed. You must stop to energize, but don't lose your momentum. A long break will also slow your heart. Then when you restart you might feel miserable or even lightheaded briefly for about a minute or two. After breaks of a couple minutes, I like to over breathe for my first thirty seconds of hiking when I restart (or hit a sudden uphill). That seems to help to avoid that restart problem. If you don't over breathe at the re-start you may actually need to take a brief (five to ten second) mini break to re-establish your heart and breathing. Again, use pressure breathing. If you need a drink or food break, keep it short. Five or ten minutes is plenty.

Take periodic ten to twenty second breaks to stabilize the heart and breathing. I restate this because it is important. It can be more effective than longer breaks.

9) Food and Drink.

Drink water. Drink more than you think you need. Your body is 70% water. Withhold water and you will pay a big price. Some people like

water bladders. I have used one, but always took a back-up water supply. Bladders can fail, and they are sometimes cumbersome. But if used correctly, bladders can give you a good water intake. I have a hard time estimating my water intake when using a hydration bladder. Therefore, I have gone to using bottles. I have found over the counter bottles work excellently.

On a recent climb of Mount Yale, I took two liters. For Longs Peak I took a little over two and a half liters. Do not underestimate your need for water.

Eat Food. Sounds ridiculous, right? You might find yourself under eating on a hike or climb. You need fuel. And don't bring only healthy food. On the hike or climb give yourself food that you enjoy. You eat healthy all year to get ready. Remember, in the climb you need food that you will like and eat. Imagine hiking or climbing all day and only looking forward to health food bars. That is not good. I like high, quick energy food on the way up. It will help the day move. But you do not need to eat too much until you summit. Bagels, cold pizza, cookies, sandwiches are good. I like to take mixed nuts. I enjoy them, plus they give the nutrition and low salt content I need.

Electrolytes. Yes, you will need a little more of the electrolytes, but not tremendously more. I carry water since it can be used for drinking, cleaning, and dowsing my head. We all need to drink water and add electrolytes.

Hyponatremia. By drinking water only, you can give yourself a problem called **hyponatremia** if you have too much water with too little electrolytes. There are good electrolyte tablets that can be added to water if needed.

And be careful with Gatorade and similar products, because they do not always have the right balance. You need water. Sometimes, when I use additives like Gatorade, I dilute it to reduce the strength.

Recovery Drink and Food During and After the Hike. You need to drink liquids and eat food during and immediately after any stressful physical activity. "Generally," it is taught that water and anything you will eat is good. But that is not a complete answer and can be dangerous. Think about your specific activity, the heat, duration, your overall health, and your personal body reactions.

You will need some electrolytes. Again, be careful to not heavily overdo the water due to the possibility of **hyponatremia** (do some research on that). Watch out for electrolyte drinks that are way over

the top with added sugar. It will not feel very good when your gut is full of sugar. Also, the extreme sugar is never good for your system.

It is generally a good idea to take more water than you think you will need.

My Preferences. Here a short list of our preferences for liquids and what we have found useful during and immediately after the hike. Water, Gatorlyte (not Gatorade for a better balance of electrolytes with a lower and more sensible sugar amount), Pickle Juice, Yellow Mustard, Potato Chips (The salt balance is great - In my opinion, they are a superfood.), Atkins drinks and bars, and just about anything you will want to eat. You have to want to eat the food. Some people report altered appetites at elevation. I love a piece of pizza or a bagel at the summit. We avoid many of the so-called healthy bars due to the sugar and price.

Coffee. I love coffee and I do not hike without it. Coffee is nearly all water. Though it can increase the urination slightly, it is not so much that you should be concerned. Go ahead and have that cup in the morning before a climb.

Alcohol. Avoid more than small amounts before and right after the climb. You came to climb the mountain, not get drunk. Alcohol will do nothing good for your activity.

10) Start early. It will give you time for adventure and to deal with unforeseen issues. It will also get you down before the storms develop. Be firm with yourself. If you cannot summit by a predetermined time, turn back. You will also need to get a parking spot and use the facilities, if there are any. Many 14er parking lots in Colorado will fill by 5 AM, and some will fill earlier.

Get up early. I love to wake extra early so I can eat, relax, and check the weather.

Take care of yourself. And be relaxed.

Caution: some mountains have facilities, and some do not. Be prepared. I like to bring paper and bags, just in case.

11) Weather - Check the Weather Forecast. Make it an almost religious part of your planning. Mountain weather can change quickly. You do not want to get caught. There are very good weather sites online where you can get weather forecasts for specific mountains and approximate elevations. Apple Weather is good, but more

specific information can be found at MountainWeather.com, local news and weather television stations.

In more mountainous states such as Colorado and New Hampshire, those weather changes can be life threatening. Afternoon storms do and will roll in. In the Northeast, those weather changes can become quite cold and windy. In Colorado, expect thunderstorms. Mornings will generally bring beautiful weather conditions, but between noon and 2 PM clouds tend to build. Often thunderstorms can arrive over you before you are able to move to safety.

I have personally been forced to run downhill as an approaching storm moved toward me. Getting below tree line was a welcome sight. I have also personally warned uphill hikers on my way down Mt. Yale when an apparent storm was building. Unfortunately, some people did not listen, and deaths did occur that day.

Talk to locals about your plans. You can also check local weather service forecasts for elevation specific forecasts.

12) Learn About the Local Animals and Plants. Especially learn about the problem animals. Learn how to avoid problems. Learn to correctly use a bear-bag. Learn to spot those three shiny leaves (poison ivy). If you get into that nasty stuff, don't panic. Keep from touching any other parts of your body, and clean the area thoroughly.

I live in an area where rattle snakes and copperhead snakes are common. Yes, I said common. But I know about them, so I have generally do not have problems.

In some states there have been changes in the animal populations of the last decade. It is not uncommon to read of mountain lion sightings in Colorado. In the future, people in Colorado will likely mention wolf sightings (that is not without controversy).

13) Communicate. Tell people your plans, talk to locals, register at Trailheads when possible and check in with people when you return. Have people check on you when you do not make predetermined communications.

Share Your Plans. Leave a plan or itinerary with other people. Make sure you agree on a check-in time.

Carry personal Identification information.

Are you aware that you can now use satellite messaging with smart phones if you are out of cellular range? Learn about it.

14) Solo Hiking and Climbing Can Be a Serious Risk. There are many things that can go wrong. Just imagine for a few minutes. It is not just you. It is about the people who are anxiously concerned about you.

But I am a hypocrite on this. I have often hiked solo. Let me correct my. I love solo hiking. But I am very prepared for the day and the chosen trail.

I always bring a whistle, cell phone, paper and pen, pepper spray, and a map.

Things can go wrong. Think it through and prepare. What if you need to stay overnight? Will you be prepared?

15) Have Fun. Meet people and enjoy the outdoors. I know, we all try to check our time to register a new PR on the mountain. But don't forget why you climb and hike. Look around and enjoy it. Yes, I am talking to myself.

Enjoy The Area. Take time to casually enjoy the towns and environment near those mountains. You will make great memories.

16) Do You Have Insurance? Yes. Did you purchase trip insurance? Trip insurance will not only cover the unfortunate cancellation of your trip due to illness, but it will also cover your unforeseen problems. Your personal insurance will likely not cover that \$60,000 medical helicopter flight. Rescue costs can be extreme.

17) Have Manners - Trail Etiquette. Courtesy goes a long way. **Leave No Trace.** Leave it as good as you found it. Respect the property of others. Do the right thing.

Bring extra food and water and leave it in your car. It is great to have food waiting. And it is even better when you can offer something to a friend.

Brief Summary of Hiking Etiquette:

- Again, Leave No Trace (at least try).
- Pack out all trash.
- Uphill hikers have right of way. Bikes yield to hikers. Everyone yields to horse.

- Nobody else wants to listen to your music. Those blue tooth speakers are a big no-no. Personally, I really hate them.
- If you use earbuds, make sure you can hear the noise around you. Consider wearing only one earbud.
- Be friendly. But conversely, some strangers are strangers.
- Do not cut the trail. Save the trail and stop erosion. You do not own the land.
- Put a leash on your dog. Too many situations have occurred because overly optimistic dog owners left their dogs off the leash.
- Clean up after your dogs, and pack it out.
- Nobody likes your cigarette smoke. It carries and stinks.
- Have some modesty. Not everyone wants to watch your body.
- Communicate your plans.
- Do not feed the wildlife. They should not eat your food. They could also start expecting it. Also, remember, a fed bear is a dead bear (think about that).
- Having an attitude and attempting to correct someone for poor trail etiquette will likely go poorly.
- Don't be the problem in your group. Be courteous, prepared, and supportive. Listen to the leader.
- Know the rules for the area.

18) You May Love the Mountain, But the Mountain Will Not Love You Back.

19) At The Summit - Reflect and Be Thankful. Make friends. Enjoy some friendship at the summit. Enjoy the views and company at the summit.

Be Thankful. It is a wonderful world that we have been given. God gave us something beautiful. Remember that. Before I head down, I always pause to reflect and thank God.

20) Hiking Down Is Still Hiking. The downward hike or climb can be more difficult than on the way up. Hiking down can be dangerous. Slow down. The downhill can lead to knee issues. Be careful.

Of course, you do not want to head down too late. Make sure there is plenty of daylight.

You need to be aware of weather situation. Do not tempt the weather. It is a merciless killer.

21) Keep a Log or Journal of Your Travels. Pictures are great. However, a personal journal of your trip is priceless. Share your stories. You loved it - so will others.

22) Who Do You Climb For? Many people cannot hike or climb. Many people have served in the military and would love to climb, but they gave their bodies so could. Remember them. Always be thankful. Always climb with some else in mind.

*** Especially for Women

There is no doubt that women deal with particular and significant issues while active that seldom concern men. Most importantly, men need to pause and consider the needs and concerns for the women in the group hikes. Let's work to make the path more friendly and not ignore the concerns of other people.

Guys, imagine going on hikes and always being concerned for your safety. Imagine not being able to pee for your entire hiking time. We must all be cognizant of the needs of everyone in the group. Plan ahead. Make special arrangements for every need. The hiking group is not ready to hike until everyone is completely ready for the entire day. Do not wait until you arrive at the trail head to start thinking about parking, safety, and bathroom needs. Do a little homework, and preparation.

In regard to bathroom needs, there is a reasonable solution (reasonable for some). My wife, Carolyn, and I have looked into various ideas, and she has personally tested a few products. She has found a device on Amazon called "pStyle" to work the best. It is a simple urination funnel, and it really works (some products will not work at all). It has made our hikes much more enjoyable. Ladies, with the pStyle you can now pee standing behind a tree and keep the hike going. Needless to say, you need to be willing.

It is also a good idea to bring those famous blue bags and a plastic trowel. Think about it.

More ideas are to come, but the best idea is to use your head.

** This article will help with hiking and climbing at elevation, but more extensive information to assist with back packing was not included. Back packers will benefit from this article, but will obviously need more in-depth information specific to your activity.

*** Do I need to make a disclaimer?** I wish everyone would just use their heads..., think a little. This is risky stuff. Think ahead. Nothing that I state can eliminate risks or make your day problem free. Hiking and climbing includes your good judgment and condition. We never know what may occur. You take that risk. I cannot take your risk. The information in this site may or may not necessarily be accurate. So, do not view this as a textbook. Nothing I share can reduce your need to prepare, train, learn, and obtain the correct and operable equipment. This is not a warranty or guarantee. You are on your own. This is only friendly advice. I do not know you. It may not even be good for you to try any of this stuff at all. You are responsible for your own actions and results.

Also, make sure you are fully aware of your mental and physical health.