

Asheville New Friends Hiking Guidelines

Hiking with Asheville New Friends is a great way to enjoy the wonderful outdoors of Western North Carolina with others of similar interests. In order to do this safely, read the information below and/or contact the hiking chair(s) listed in the directory, before joining a hike.

How do I know if I can safely hike with this group?

A hiker should be in sufficient physical condition in order to keep up with the group and properly equipped to complete the hike.

1. Have you hiked this area before?
2. Have you hiked for at least 4 miles?
3. Do you have any medical issues that might be a concern on a hike in the mountains?
4. Do you have the proper foot gear (sturdy hiking boots and appropriate socks)?

General Hiking Safety Guidelines

1. Every hike should have a leader and a sweep. These can change throughout the hike as long as others are aware of the changes. All other hikers should remain between the leader and the sweep.
2. A hiker who wants to take a break should inform the people closest who then get the message to the leader so that the pace can be slowed or the group can stop until the hiker has returned to the group.
3. A hiker should have proper footwear for mountain hiking over rocks and roots.
4. A hiker may find a hiking stick useful when navigating steep, rocky trails.
5. A hiker should be prepared with lunch or snacks and more water than the hiker thinks is necessary.
6. A hiker should be prepared with extra clothing and rain gear in case the weather suddenly changes and/or for the higher elevations at which we often hike.
7. A hiker should have the medical items that s/he might need. For example, an EpiPen for insect stings.
8. A hiker starting with the group stays with the group for the entire hike.

Make-up of Hiking Group

1. Every hike has a leader and a sweep.
2. Hikers may take turns being the leader and being the sweep, but all hikers should be informed of who is in which position.

Hiking with 16 or more in the group

1. The group may divide itself or a leader may divide the group into pods of 8 to 10. Each pod will have a leader and a sweep.
2. Stop about every 20 to 30 minutes for the group to reassemble. At this time folks may want to change pods. Leaders and sweeps may also change. Just be sure that others are informed of the changes.

3. Always wait at forks on the trail for the group to reassemble so everyone can follow the correct path.

Duties of Leaders of Planned Hikes

1. For planned hikes the leader should check out the trail a few weeks before the hike. Ideally, the sweep should be familiar with the trail also.
2. The leader of the planned hike sends information about the planned hike to the **Friendly Courier** editor by the middle of the month before the hike. See the last page of the last newsletter for the actual date by which the editor needs a complete write up.
3. The leader should rate the difficulty of the hike according to the group, not according to the leader, and give this rating in the description of the hike.
4. When a new hiker calls to sign up for the hike, the leader should give complete information about the hike and ascertain the caller's ability to complete the hike.
5. Before leaving the meeting site the leader will have each hiker sign a Release/Waiver of Liability Form that releases Asheville New Friends, its board, and its members for any accident, injury, illness, or personal loss that might occur while participating in the hike or while traveling in any vehicle during the trip.
6. The leader should provide good driving directions for the drivers and inform them of any stops along the way.
7. The leader should count the number of hikers before starting and should recount at every stop (about every 20 to 30 minutes).
8. The leader should set a pace that allows the group to stay together; that is, each hiker is able to see the hiker in front of him/her.
9. At the end of the hike, the leader should wait until all cars have started before leaving.
10. The leader should inform everyone about the driving distance and the amount of the gas fee (currently calculated at \$1/25 miles) that the passengers owe the drivers.

Duties of Drivers

1. A driver should carry only as many passengers as there are seatbelts.
2. A driver is responsible for getting passengers to and from the hiking site.
3. A driver is responsible for knowing how much the gas fee is for the passengers.
4. A driver is responsible for informing other drivers where they will be meeting or stopping along the way.

Courtesies

1. Since unforeseen events can arise and delay the return to the meeting site, it is advisable for hikers to leave the afternoon free of other commitments. This makes it less stressful on everyone and no one is inconvenienced.
2. Be prepared to leave the meeting site at the starting time listed in the newsletter. That means arriving a few minutes earlier to arrange car pooling, decide on the trail to take, use the nearby facilities, etc.