

## HIKING 101

Desert Trails Hiking Club publishes a quarterly Hiking Schedule during the Fall/Winter/Spring [high season in the Coachella Valley] on this website. This Schedule is updated frequently to accommodate changes in weather and trail conditions.

Each hike lists the day and date of the hike, name and general location of the hike, degree of difficulty [easy, moderate or strenuous], distance, elevation gain and brief description of the hike. It also lists the Hike Leader's name, phone number and email address.

### **How can I tell if a hike is for me?**

- Read the hike description thoroughly. Hikes rated as "Easy" are those of 5 miles or less with an elevation gain of no more than 500'. Easy hikes have few complicating terrain issues, but will have some. Issues include: Steep sections, loose rock, boulder fields, and water crossings.
- If you have questions or concerns about the hike description, call the hike leader to discuss them. This is also the time to inquire about the leader's pace.
- If you and the hike leader are both confident you can do the hike, the leader will sign you up for it and tell you when and where the hikers are meeting. Ensure you are clear on directions to the meeting site.
- Remember that it is best to start slowly such as with an Easy hike. Build confidence, ability, and judgment of your capabilities. Set yourself up for success and enjoyment, not for the risks of overexertion or injury.

### **What shape do I need to be in?**

- DTHC Easy hikes are usually paced at approximately 2 – 2.3 mph which means, with rest stops factored in, hikers cover about 2 miles an hour. You should be able to maintain this pace. Good balance is also important, especially if rock scrambling is involved. Remember that hiking is not walking – the biggest differences are pace and terrain. Almost all hikes involve terrain that is not flat and groomed. Start with hikes that you are absolutely confident that you can do.

### **What clothing and gear do I need?**

- Boots should be properly fitted, with good tread, and large enough to accommodate hiking socks.

- Gear for weather protection is essential. Sunscreen and a sun hat are necessities in the desert. Clothing that provides sun protection and wicks moisture is the optimum for desert hiking. A windbreaker is often needed, especially in the high desert (where a fleece or other layer may also be needed). Rain gear is required infrequently.
- A basic, comfortable pack (waist or back) is needed to carry water, extra clothing, nutritious snacks, tissues, etc., leaving hands free. Although leaders carry first aid supplies, include some basic items such as band-aids and tape in your own pack.
- Hiking poles are useful especially in crossing water and in hiking downhill. They help with balance, provide stability, and may relieve pressure on the knees.
- Be sure to bring and carry with you emergency contact information.

### **I've signed up – now what should I do?**

- Assemble everything you will need to be comfortable and safe on the trail, as detailed above. Most importantly, take plenty of water. Also hydrate before the hike – drink at least ½ liter of water.
- For Easy hikes of 4-5 miles, the minimum amount of water to bring is one liter. Two liters are recommended, however, to allow for increased needs due to higher temperatures and/or elevation gain.
- Try out your boots and loaded pack on an easy walk to assure comfort with your gear.

### **What will happen at the meeting place?**

- Arrive 10-15 minutes early for sign in. The published time is the time the group is scheduled to leave for the trailhead.
- The hike leader will have you sign in. The sign-in sheet/waiver reiterates that safety is your personal responsibility, and that you will not hold DTHC or the hike leader responsible for any mishap that happens to you on or as a result of the hike.
- You may want to introduce yourself to the other hikers – a group introduction will be made when all hikers have assembled.

- If people are carpooling from the meeting place to and from the trailhead, carpools will be set up. Carpool fees (10 cents a mile) should be paid now.
- Listen carefully to all hike descriptions and information about the route to the trailhead.

### **What happens on the hike?**

- A hiker will be designated as "sweep" to bring up the rear of the group. The sweep's job is to ensure that no hiker is lost/left behind.
- Periodic short stops will be made to drink and put on or take off clothing dependent upon weather. As there are generally no rest room facilities, bushes and rocks serve in their stead. At about the midpoint of the hike, a longer "snack stop" will be taken.

### **What should I do to have a safe and pleasurable hiking experience?**

- Follow the hike leader's directions. Ask for advice/clarification if you are uncertain.
- Stay behind the leader and ahead of the sweep. Do not allow yourself to get behind the sweep. If you are a beginning hiker, take photos only at rest stops. Inform the sweep before stepping off the trails for a "restroom" break; never leave the trail without telling the sweep.
- Take only memories, leave only footprints. Leave nothing behind.
- Stick to the trail. Do not cut trail even if others have.
- Respect other hikers and the group. Do your part to assure that everyone has a good, safe experience. Do not use devices with earphones. Turn off your cell phone. When conversing on the trail, turn down your volume and avoid controversial subjects. Keep in mind that some hikers are on the trail for the exposure to nature not social exchanges.
- Also keep in mind that the leader may choose to change the length or route of the hike or the pace of the group dependent upon weather or physical conditions.
- Remember: "Blessed are the flexible for they shall not get bent out of shape." Have fun!