

## Answering New Member's Frequently Asked Questions

### What should I bring to a SJOE Event?

Being prepared and bringing the proper equipment and supplies in your day pack, during a hike, will add greatly to your enjoyment and safety as well as the enjoyment and safety of the group.

The following is a check list of items that you should pack for a hike:

- Your completed ICE ( In Case of an Emergency) card, which will provide important information and contacts in the event you have an accident or a medical incident.
- Car keys
- Water ( Bring extra in hotter weather and for hikes with lots of elevation gain - Consider up to .5 litres per hour)
- Sturdy footwear with good grip/ tread
- Good moisture wicking hiking socks to keep your feet comfortable and prevent blisters. Bring an extra pair in the event that you may get your feet wet.
- Lunch/Snacks (e.g. sandwich, nuts, energy bars, trail mix, fruit)
- A foam pad or a small towel in a ziplock bag to sit on while having lunch to stay warm and dry.
- Personal first aid kit with band aids, along with any meds that you may require. E.g. meds for allergic reactions to insect stings
- Personal hygiene supplies (e.g. hand sanitizer, hand wipes, towel, kleenex, paper towel, plastic zip lock bag)
- Rain gear or poncho no matter what the weather forecast.
- Cell phone for communication, camera and trail/GPS apps
- Sun Screen
- Insect Repellent unscented if possible as other hikers may have allergic reactions to strong scents)
- Sun glasses
- Hat or cap
- Head lamp or small flashlight
- Extra clothing, besides socks perhaps a long sleeve shirt. In winter you may wish to bring extra insulation layers, a hat and gloves/ mitts. Avoid buying cotton garments for hiking. Synthetic materials like spandex or nylon are ideal as they are lightweight and dry quickly. Wool is also an excellent choice because it retains warmth even when wet and resists odours. These synthetic materials manage moisture, avoid chafing and stay warm while cotton retains moisture and can lead to discomfort and potential hypothermia in colder weather.
- Crampons in the winter when trails are icy.
- Other miscellaneous items that you may wish to consider are as follows: trekking poles, whistle, knife/multi-tool, large plastic bag, nylon chord, space blanket, matches or lighter, small pair of binoculars.

### What should I look for when purchasing a backpack?

If you purchase a backpack from a reputable sporting goods store, the staff will fit you to your backpack once you decide how large of a pack you want. A sturdy, well fitted backpack will make your hike much more enjoyable especially when doing longer hikes.

- Fitting your pack to your correct torso and hip size will optimize the weight distribution of the pack. The most important measurement is the length of your torso (not your height) followed by the circumference of your hips (not your waist). With these measurements it can be determined what pack size will fit you best. ( XS, S, M, L, XL) The hips should carry 75 to 80

percent of the pack weight and it is the hip belt that transfers this load. Once you find a pack with the appropriate volume and fit to your body, there are a few standard features that all desirable packs will have - load- adjuster straps above the shoulders, a sternum strap, hip belts and compression belts to help carry the load.

- If a backpack is carried too low, this improper positioning can lead to uneven weight distribution causing strain on the lower back and shoulders. It can also affect balance and increase the risk of falls, particularly on uneven terrain if the pack tends to sway from side to side.
- You do not need to buy a custom fitted backpack in order to hike, especially if you enjoy shorter hikes, but adjust your backpack so that it sits higher on your back with the weight primarily on your hips. Hip belts should be snug around the top of the hips and the shoulder straps should be adjusted to keep the pack close to your body without pulling you backward.

### **Should I use Trekking Poles?**

The use of hiking poles is an individual's preference. Some hikers do not use poles, some use poles only on certain trails, some use one pole while others use two poles for every hike they do.

Trekking poles do provide additional stability and support on uneven trails, reduce the impact on your knees during descents, and help with pacing. Hiking sticks can also be invaluable for testing the depth of streams, or the stability of rocks before stepping. Hiking sticks help to conserve energy, maintain balance and allow you to navigate safely through challenging sections of a hike.

To determine the best height of your trekking poles, you need to stand up and make a 90 degree bend with your elbow. In that position, your hands should grip comfortably on the handles of the poles. On steep uphill hikes you may want to shorten the poles 5 to 10 cms to help propel you forward. On steep descents, lengthen the poles and place them in front of you to help with stability and comfort by keeping your body more upright.

### **How do I know if I am capable of doing a scheduled hike?**

If you aren't familiar with an event or the area where you will be going, discuss the details with the event leader.

An obvious potential hurdle to participating in a hike, relates to how fit you need to be to enjoy the particular SJOE activity. There is no single answer, so consider these notes and assess your condition as best you can.

If you have not been physically active for some time, some training may be needed so that you can enjoy yourself. You need good cardiovascular fitness, leg strength, some upper body and core strength for the best outcomes. Recently we have added weekly summer evening one hour hikes to our schedules to help members increase their fitness level and prepare them for longer scheduled hikes.

The majority of our events can last from two hours ( 5-7 kms) to six hours ( 8-15 kms) in a day. We typically take several brief stops and enjoy a lunch break. Expect some hilly, rugged trails when we are not in groomed trails or parks.

You should discuss your situation with each event leader so that they can help you understand how easy or difficult the event might be and whether or not there are options to stop sooner, take alternate routes etc.

Other important questions to ask the leader of a hike are as follows:

- Are there any water crossings? (if so, you may need water shoes, if your balance is poor you may not be ready to try a water crossing)
- How hilly and strenuous is it? (The leader will be able to rate the difficulty of the hike for you. You may need to bring more water or bring a light pair of gloves if you will be scrambling over rocks)
- Would walking sticks/ trekking poles be advisable? (Some members use them on all hikes to improve their balance over rough terrain or if they have a knee or hip issue as the poles will reduce the strain on these joints. Some members use them on only certain trails. Some use none or only one pole so that they have a free hand and others use two poles at all times)
- How long is the hike? (Do you have the endurance for the hike length? You may need to pack a lunch and bring extra snacks for long hikes while you may need only a light snack and some water for shorter hikes).

### **How can I assess my own fitness level?**

A simple way to assess your own fitness level is to load up your backpack and head out on a half-day (3-4 hours) hike on a trail familiar to you.

Assess how you feel during the hike:

- Are you out of breath?
- Do you need frequent rest stops?
- Is the weight of your pack bothering you?
- Are your legs tired/sore?
- How is your balance?
- What is the difficulty level of the hike you are doing?

See how you feel the next morning. If you are very sore or tired, then maybe you should keep training before trying full day hikes. Generally it is felt that if you can not comfortably hike at least 8 kms, then you should choose to participate in less strenuous events until you feel stronger.

Most importantly, continue to work on increasing your strength and endurance, have fun and don't ever give up! You may not be able to do the harder hikes today but with hard work and determination you may be able to do them sooner than you think!!