

BMTA Hiker Guidelines

CONCEPT: The BMTA Hike Director schedules one or more recreational hikes each month. An effort is made to schedule hikes of varying difficulty and in locations that are convenient to members who live along the BMT corridor. Occasional backpacking and camping trips are also scheduled. Each hike will be listed on the activity page of “bmta.org.” Although open to the public, priority of participation goes to BMTA members first. Our hikes include treks along the BMT as well as other trails in Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina.

LIABILITY: BMTA members and guests must recognize that there are risks and responsibilities involved and be willing to assume these risks. Members and guests are required to sign a waiver of liability at the beginning of each BMTA event in order to participate. If the parent does not accompany a minor, the disclaimer for minors must be signed in advance.

HEALTH: It is the personal responsibility of each participant to ensure that they are physically fit enough for the field conditions that exist and any expected conditions that may occur, and be able to keep up with their group. Be aware that hiking in the mountains is considerably more difficult than walking on roads, sidewalks, and treadmills. Each individual is responsible for their medical requirements, to include first aid and medications. You must inform the hike leader if you suffer from medical conditions which could arise on the hike. For example: Insect allergies, diabetes, hypoglycemia, heart problems, etc. In addition you must show the other hikers the location of any emergency medications you are carrying, such as an EpiPen.

PARTICIPATION: Hikers must phone or email the designated hike leader to determine if the hike is appropriate for the hiker’s level of fitness and experience. Beginning hikers, or hikers with below average fitness, should start with shorter hikes or hikes rated easy and then make transitions to more difficult hikes as they develop their hiking skills. **All should arrive at the meeting place 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the hike** to hear the hike leader’s instructions, sign the liability waiver, get directions to the trail head, and depart on time. Generally, our hikes depart on time so if you are only a few minutes late, the group may have departed without you unless you make other arrangements with the hike leader. Guests will be allowed on hikes on a space available basis and must pre-register with the hike leader. In other words, don’t surprise the hike leader by showing up with several unexpected guests that have not been vetted.

CANCELLATION: Hikes may be cancelled due to existing or forecast bad weather conditions. If in doubt, phone the hike leader before reporting to the meeting place. If the hike is cancelled, the hike leader will contact everyone via email.

WHAT TO BRING:

- ✓ Water..1 quart plus 1 quart more than you think you need
- ✓ Snacks
- ✓ Personal First Aid Kit and hand sanitizer
- ✓ Rain Gear
- ✓ Cell phone

- ✓ Sunscreen and insect repellent
- ✓ Headlamp or small flashlight
- ✓ Extra clothing (socks, hat, gloves, layers)
- ✓ Backpack, knife, plastic bag, map and compass, toilet paper, trowel.
- ✓ Hiking Poles

WHAT TO WEAR: Hiking clothes: synthetic, wool or silk materials that wick moisture and dry quickly are best. Multiple thin layers work better than fewer thick layers. Cotton is not preferred because it retains moisture, dries slowly and cotton socks may cause blisters. Comfortable, well broken in hiking boots/shoes. Street shoes and work boots are not the best choice.

RIDE SHARING: It is the policy of BMTA not to become involved in ride-sharing. The hike leader will lead the group to the trail head. Who you ride with to and from the trail head is a personal decision that does not involve the hike leader or BMTA. If you do ride with another hiker, remember to contribute for driving expenses.

HIKE MANAGEMENT: Each hike will have a designated hike leader. The hike leader may appoint co-leaders as well as sweeps for each hiking group. Hikers should stay on the trail between the leader and the sweep. By participating in the BMTA sponsored hike, you agree to accept the authority of the leader(s) and to follow their directions.

- ✓ If it is necessary for you to leave the trail for a restroom break, inform the leader or sweep and the sweep will wait on the trail until you return.
- ✓ If you decide to leave the hike altogether, the leader must be informed and physically sign you out on the sign-out sheet. This does not apply if you need assistance. The hike leader will normally ask another hiker to accompany you back to the trail head.
- ✓ If you are in doubt about your ability to complete the hike without problems, heed the advice of the leader. It is better to miss the hike than to endanger yourself and others if you encounter problems. ***The hike leader may exclude any person from a hike at his or her discretion.***
- ✓ Pets are not to be brought on any BMTA sponsored hike.

HIKE ETIQUETTE: Hiking etiquette is mostly common sense, but there are a few topics that are hiking specific:

- ✓ We hike quietly and keep talk to a conversational level.
- ✓ When hiking on a trail, the larger group yields to the smaller group and moves off the trail until they pass.
- ✓ When hiking downhill, yield to any hiker coming uphill. Yield to horses on the downhill side of the trail.
- ✓ When the group stops for any reason, move off the trail to let others pass
- ✓ Allow space so that if you fall you don't take the person in front of you down too.
- ✓ Turn your cell phone off!!!
- ✓ Bring plastic bags to put your dirty wet boots in when riding in another's vehicle

LEAVE NO TRACE: BMTA subscribes to the principles of "Leave No Trace". For more detailed information go to www.lnt.org

- ✓ Leave what you find. Take only pictures, leave only memories
- ✓ “Pack it in-Pack it out.” This applies to your lunch and snack breaks. All left over food waste and litter must be packed out and taken back. No apple cores, banana peels or any other food or litter is to be left in the forests or on trails.
- ✓ All human solid waste must be deposited at least 200 feet from water or trails. Solid waste must be deposited in cat holes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, covered and disguised. Toilet paper and other hygiene products must be packed out. This is a good use for waterproof plastic bags.
- ✓ We strive for minimal impact. When on a hike, if no one could tell that we passed through an area, that is success. We hike on durable trail surfaces and stay on the trail. As good stewards of the environment, we carry out absolutely everything we carried in, and when feasible, pick up other litter along the way.

SAFETY: *You are responsible for yourself, so be prepared:*

- **1. *With knowledge and gear.*** Become self-reliant by learning about the terrain, conditions, local weather, and your equipment before you start.
- **2. *To leave your plans.*** Tell someone the trails you are hiking, the gear you are taking, when you will return, and your emergency plans. Consider using the “Safe Return Worksheet,” on the bmta.org maintainers page.
- **3. *To stay together.*** When you start as a group hike as a group, and finish as a group. Pace your hike to the slowest person.
- **4. *To turn back.*** Weather changes quickly in the mountains. Fatigue and unexpected conditions can also affect your hike. Know your limitations and when to postpone your hike
- **5. *For emergencies,*** even if you are headed out for just an hour. An injury, severe weather, or a wrong turn could become life threatening. Don't assume you will be rescued; know how to rescue yourself.

August 5, 2016. Thanks to the Mountain High Hikers of Blairsville, GA for providing the model for these guidelines.