

## **STAYING SAFE WHILE ROUGHING IT**

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**Many people in this area have a love for nature and the great outdoors. Popular summer-time activities include hiking and camping. Some of you will go away to areas such as Gatlinburg and others will stay locally at areas such as Spring Mill or Delaney Park while hiking and camping. Let's briefly look at safety precautions you should follow no matter where your summer roadtrips take you. Remember that preparing for the unexpected may save your life or the life of someone else:**

**#1. If you have medical problems, discuss your activity with your doctor before departing.**

**#2. Before departure consider what emergencies could arise and how you would deal with those situations. What if you got lost, or were unexpectedly confronted by an animal? What if someone became ill or injured? What kind of weather might you encounter? Get professional answers to any questions that you are unsure of the appropriate response. Most parks have ranger stations where these types of questions could be answered.**

**#3. Make sure you have the skills you need for camping or hiking. You may need to know how to read a compass, erect a temporary shelter or give first aid. Practice these skills in advance. Always allow for bad weather and for the possibility that you may be forced to spend a night outdoors unexpectedly.**

**#4. If your trip will be strenuous, get into good physical condition before setting out. If you plan to climb or travel to high altitudes, make plans for proper acclimatization to the altitude. Before setting out on a trail check to see what the length of the trail is and what level it is rated, to ensure you will be able to physically handle the challenge. Most trails are marked easy, moderate or strenuous. If you are a beginning hiker a strenuous trail is not likely indicated.**

**#5. When hiking or camping it is best to at least have one companion with you. If you'll be entering an outback or remote area, your group should have a minimum of four people; that way, if someone is injured, one person can stay with the victim while the other two go for help. If you'll be going into an area that is unfamiliar to you, take along someone who knows the area or at least speak with someone who knows the area before setting out.**

**#6. Some areas require you to have reservations or permits. If an area is closed, do not go there. Stay on the main trail and do not enter areas where you are not authorized to be. Find out in advance about any rules there may be about campfires or wildlife.**

**#7. Pack emergency signaling devices, and know ahead of time the location of the nearest telephone or ranger station in the event of an emergency.**

**#8. Leave a copy of your itinerary with a responsible person. Some parks require that a copy of your itinerary be left at the ranger station. The itinerary should include details such as the make, year and license plate number of your car, the equipment you are bringing, the weather you've anticipated, the members of your party and when you plan to return.**

**#9. When packing your backpack take into consideration the length of time you plan to be away and plan for at least one additional night in the wild:**

**Candle and waterproof matches or matches in a waterproof tin**

**Cell phone (keep in mind however that this phone may not be functional)**

**Clothing (always bring something warm, extra socks, hat and rain gear)**

**Trash bag (makes an adequate poncho)**

**Compass, map of the area, flashlight and radio with batteries**

**First aid kit, insect repellent, sunscreen and sunglasses**

**Any prescription medications (including an epi-pen if you have severe allergies)**

**Extra pair of contact lens and glasses**

**Food, water and water purification tablets**

**Foil or pocket mirror (to use as a signaling device, foil may also be used as a cup)**

**Whistle (to scare off animals or to use as a signaling device)**

**Nylon filament and pocket knife**

**Space blanket or a piece of plastic (to use for warmth or shelter)**

**#10. Each hiker should have a "survival pack" with them at all times: In a small waterproof container place a pocket knife, compass, whistle, space blanket, nylon filament, water purification tablets, matches and candle. These items greatly improve the chances of someone being able to survive in the wild.**

**Information from this article was obtained in part from the American Red Cross website, [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).**

