



Richmond Centre for Disability

Duke of Edinburgh Challenge Expedition Information Hiking Safety

Hiking is a very enjoyable and healthy activity, however trails can pose many dangers for people who are not properly prepared. Each year, local volunteer run rescue groups respond to dozens of hikers who become lost in the woods, many more receive injuries, and, unfortunately, some even lose their lives. It is very important that you read the following safety tips as well as educate yourself about the environment, terrain, wildlife, and weather conditions that you may run into.

Bring enough water and food

Make sure to bring lots of water on your hike. A lot of trails are longer than 3 hours with steep, uphill climbs and on a hot day, that may mean your body requires several liters of water. Also, contrary to what most believe, the running rivers, including those from glaciers, do not provide fresh water and you can become sick from various bacteria that breed in these waters. Also, make sure to pack extra food for the day including a meal and several power bars or other snacks. Choose snacks that will help keep your energy level high and your mind alert.

Ensure good physical conditioning

The trails around Vancouver can be very difficult and physically demanding. It is therefore important that you are in good physical shape and you know and respect your physical limits.

Never hike by yourself

Always hike with a friend or, preferably in a group. If something goes wrong or you become injured, your hiking partner(s) can help get you to safety. The wilderness area is vast and it is possible that you may be the only person on that trail that day. Therefore, hike with a friend and group. Besides, hiking with a group of people is more fun and can be a really sociable way to spend the day with friends.

Check the weather conditions the day of your hike

Always watch the weather conditions on the days leading up to your planned hike. Although it is possible to hike in the rain, some of the steeper and rockier trails can be very slippery posing great dangers to anyone attempting to hike them.

Tell someone where you are going

Always tell someone what trail you will be hiking, where that trail is, and when you expect to be back, that way if you become injured or do not make it back, rescuers will know where to begin their search.

Most wilderness and remote areas of British Columbia do not have cell phone access including forest and mountain areas that may only be a few kilometers from urban and populated areas. Never rely on your cell phone in case of emergencies.

Bears

Bears live in British Columbia and it is possible to come across them along the trails. Black bears are much more common than Grizzly bears, however both can pose a real danger if they feel threatened. Make noise while you are hiking to alert the bears of your presence. If you should come across a bear, calmly turn in the other direction and slowly walk away. There are some protective products you can buy for bears including special bear mace. Bear spray can be purchased at most outdoor sports stores located in British Columbia.

Wear good, comfortable shoes

Some of the terrain on the trails can be very rugged, rocky, or even muddy so it is important to wear shoes that are comfortable and sturdy enough to endure these kinds of elements.

Bring a change of clothes

The weather in British Columbia is notorious for rain or sudden changes that are different from the conditions predicted by weather forecasters. It is therefore a good idea to pack a change of dry clothes to change into after your hike.

Other things to bring

- A map of the area
- A compass or GPS unit
- Sunscreen
- A hat
- A backpack to put everything into
- A camera
- A watch

Stay alert

Watch for signs or markers along the trail, keep an eye on the time to ensure you are able to complete your hike before darkness, and be careful of potential dangers like unsafe terrain or sudden changes in weather. Staying alert is important as you can run into unexpected conditions along the trail.