

Hiking in the Mountains

A Survivor's guide

Important numbers

Please program these numbers into your cell phone – please ensure that your cell phone is kept on at all times.

Wilderness Search and Rescue: 021 937 0300
Metro Control and Mountain Rescue: 021 937 0300
West Coast Control 022 433 8700
Cell phone emergency number (Vodacom, MTN, Cell C): 112
Weather forecasts: 082 162

illness, injury, or death to any person, or any other matter arising, in any other manner, and from any other cause whatsoever, caused by negligence, any act, or omission of CapeNature, its agents, mandatory's and / or employees. Right of admission reserved.

Planning

Plan your hike thoroughly. Pay attention to:

- Permit requirements and gate times
- Time of start and expected finish
- Pace (3 km/h is average)
- Time of sunset and tides (Robberg and De Hoop nature reserves)
- Size of group (preferably three or more), never hike alone.
- Capable and responsible leader
- Availability of water
- Fitness and medical condition of group members, the slowest person determines the pace of hiking
- Inform someone of your plans and expected time of return
- Leave a message with your name, size of group, route, expected time of return and a contact person clearly visible in your car.

Weather

Weather conditions can change very quickly in the mountains, even if the weather is good at lower altitudes. Trails will be closed in the event of dangerous weather.

- Do not attempt to hike if the trail is closed - it can endanger lives.
- If the weather turns dangerous, make your way back to the start or to the nearest hut as quickly as possible. Do not attempt to complete the trail.
- Weather forecasts are available at Tel.: **082 162**. If in doubt, phone the reserve before leaving home.

Emergency Equipment

Always carry the following items:

- Headlamp /Torch (with new batteries)
- Pocket knife
- First aid kit
- Matches in a waterproof container

- Waterproof gear
- 1:50 000 contour map in Wilderness Areas
- Compass / GPS
- Cell phone
- Space blanket
- Whistle
- At least a 1, 5 l water bottle.

Clothing and Footwear

- Take a wind- and waterproof anorak and warm jersey, even in summer
- Wear two pairs of socks. Change the inner pair every few hours to prevent blisters
- Boots or shoes should be sturdy with strong non-slip soles and must be well worn in. Tennis shoes and tackies are not suitable.
- Sun hats are essential, even on cool days. Use a sun block on all exposed parts, not only your face!
- In cold weather wear a warm cap/beanie to prevent heat loss.

Food

- Packet soups, dehydrated vegetables, powdered milk and soya-bean "meats", dried fruit, raisins, cheese and chocolates are lightweight, nutritious and provide energy.
- Carbohydrates like pasta, dehydrated potatoes and rice are convenient and energy-rich.
- Tinned and bottled foods add unwanted weight.
- Glass containers break easily.
- Drink fresh water.
- Alcohol is not advisable because it may impair judgement and cause dehydration.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency or accident while hiking:

- Keep the group together.
- Keep moving if possible.
- If unable to continue due to injury or collapse, or if weather conditions become too severe, seek shelter, dress warmly and stay in your sleeping bag.
- Stay on or close to the path to be visible to a rescue party. Do not stray from a given route.
- In case of emergency notify the relevant reserve office or phone **10177** or Wilderness Search and Rescue (WSAR) **021 937 0300**. **Put these numbers in your cell phone.**

Being Lost

- Never descend via unknown kloofs or slopes. Waterfalls, loose stones and hidden cliffs can be deadly.
- Keep the group together.
- Light and weather permitting, retrace your steps until reaching a known route. Otherwise, camp where you are until rescued.
- Use bright items to reveal your position to search teams. Blow a whistle to attract attention.

Serious Accidents

- Stay calm
- Protect the casualty/ies against further injury

- Apply first-aid
- Ensure that the rest of the group is safe
- If possible, send two experienced group members to report the accident to the police. Don't abandon the casualty.
- Give the police the following information: full names and age of the casualty; the type and severity of injury; the location of the accident (preferably on a 1:50 000 map with grid references); and the details of the rest of the group.

Hypothermia (exposure)

Wet, wind and cold can cause hypothermia. It can happen very quickly. Symptoms include exhaustion, stumbling, uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, loss of memory and drowsiness. Hypothermia can kill! The following points can help to avoid hypothermia:

- Stay dry : put on rain-gear before you get wet
- Strip off wet clothing and put on dry clothes
- Beware of wind - it whips heat away from skin, and cools wet clothes
- Wear a warm cap to avoid heat loss
- Have warm, sweet drinks
- Seek shelter while you still have energy, but try to stay near the path.

Hyperthermia (heat exhaustion)

Hot weather, insufficient liquid and exhaustion can cause hyperthermia or heat exhaustion. Symptoms can include exhaustion, stumbling, dizziness, headaches and impaired vision.

The following points can help to avoid hyperthermia:

- Hike in the cool of morning and evening
- Rest in the shade during midday
- Wear a sun hat with a wide brim to protect the back of your neck
- Drink at least 150 ml (one cup) of water an hour
- Wear cool clothing

Mountain Fires

Mountain fires can be deadly.

- Stay calm and think in practical terms. Keep your group together, keep water bottles filled and, if possible, wet your equipment and clothes. Synthetic materials can melt.
- Never try to out-run a fire, especially uphill. Take note of changes in wind direction.
- Find water, rock slabs or cleared areas and stay there. Avoid thick bush, kloofs and rocky areas where you could be trapped.
- Try to keep to jeep tracks, paths or open slopes. If you are in a hut or building, stay there.
- Never try to start a back-burn; you can cause even more trouble.
- Remove gas canisters and all other fuel and inflammables from your rucksack. Store them in a safe place.
- Keep a lookout for helicopters. Wave bright items to attract attention.
- Inform the trail authorities when you reach the end of your hike.

Flooded Rivers

Try to avoid having to ford a flooded mountain stream. Rather wait until the water level has dropped before crossing at a safe place.

Lightning

If a thunderstorm seems to be brewing,

- Immediately move away from high ground (summits, exposed necks /cols and ridges), prominent trees, power lines and similar lightning conductors.
- Seek shelter in low bush or inside a dry cave or overhang.

Conservation

- Do not interfere with plants or animals, or deface rocks.
- Take all litter home with you. Do not pollute rivers and streams with soap, shampoo or any chemical substances.
- Take a small spade and bury toilet matter.
- Outdoor fires are strictly prohibited.
- Never discard cigarette butts - they cause veld fires and are unsightly.
- Stick to paths and walk in single file to avoid soil erosion.
- Leave trail huts in good condition.
- Firearms and pets are not allowed.

Remember that rescue operations are costly, difficult and could also endanger the rescuers. Relatively few rescue teams serve large mountainous areas, diminishing your chance of a speedy rescue.

Bookings

Tel.: 021 483 0190

For further info on safety protocols please see:

<http://www.capenature.co.za/docs/1181/Trail%20Hiker%20Safety.doc>