

Checklist: Select a Hike

Introduction

A successful hike depends on meeting the expectations you have as well as those of the hikers who join the hike. The best way to assure that expectations are met is to pick a hike that you can describe accurately in terms of difficulty, physical effort involved, length, logistics, etc. This checklist provides a basic approach to achieving this goal.

Define factors

- ☐ How much time should the hike last? (This will help set distance and speed)
- ☐ How much time should be required to reach trailheads or set up shuttles?
- ☐ What is the total time commitment you are aiming at for the hike? (door to door)
- ☐ What kind of challenges do you want on the trail/route? (e.g.: rock scrambling)
- ☐ What special activities do you want to support on the hike? (e.g.: photography, yoga)
- ☐ What level of fitness would be appropriate?
- ☐ Which hikes do you know well?
- ☐ What will the climate allow (i.e.: temperature)?
- ☐ Is the trail/route open for use?

At times, some factors will conflict. For example, if you want a short, out & back hike, without significant challenges or fitness requirements, Carrizo Canyon might be a good choice, but only if the Canyon is open (Open from Oct 1 to Dec 31). Or, you might want to hike Art Smith to the first oasis, but the temperature will hit 105 by 09:00. When immutable factors conflict with factors you can control, you must re-define the factors you can control.

Review Hike Options

- ☐ Which regions/locations can you support? For example, can you drive to the trailhead? (e.g.: drive to Idyllwild, Whitewater, La Quinta Cove)
- ☐ Which hikes (trails, routes) do you already know?
- ☐ Is there a hike in the web site archive that matches your idea?
- ☐ Is the hike described in Phil Ferranti's book or another credible trail guide?
- ☐ If you have not hiked the trail recently, is there another Hike Leader who hiked the trail recently who can share current trail conditions with you?

Pick one or more hikes and compare them to the factors you have defined. Select the one that best matches your factors and, most importantly, would be fun to lead. In general, it is best to

lead hikes on trails that you have previously scouted or hiked. In some cases you can offer an 'exploratory' hike for a trail you have not hiked, but make this clear to members in the hike description that you post.

Hike Requirements

Now that you have a hike selected, you need to check if your selected hike forces any special tasks or requirements.

- ☐ Is a shuttle required?
- ☐ Are special permits required to park near the trailhead? (e.g.: Humber Park parking)
- ☐ Do you need a Hiking Permit?
- ☐ Will each hiker (including you) need a permit to access the hike? (e.g.: a National Park Pass for JTNP)
- ☐ Will each hiker have to pay for a Tram ride?

These issues do not prohibit you from selecting the hike, but, as the Hike Leader, you need to be aware of these issues and communicate them to the club members before they commit to the hike. Be aware that some of these issues may diminish the number of hikers who sign up.

Final Selection

Now that you have a specific hike in mind and you have captured all of the requirements and factors discussed above, you are ready to make the final decisions that will help you post the hike.

- ☐ When should the hike begin and end (approximate end time)?
- ☐ Should the hike be on a weekday or weekend? (note that weekends are more available to club members who work)
- ☐ What calendar date can you support? (It is good practice to post a hike at least two weeks before the date of the hike. Also, the Devil's Slide trail in Idyllwild supports a restricted number of weekend hiking permits from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Permits can be obtained in advance.)