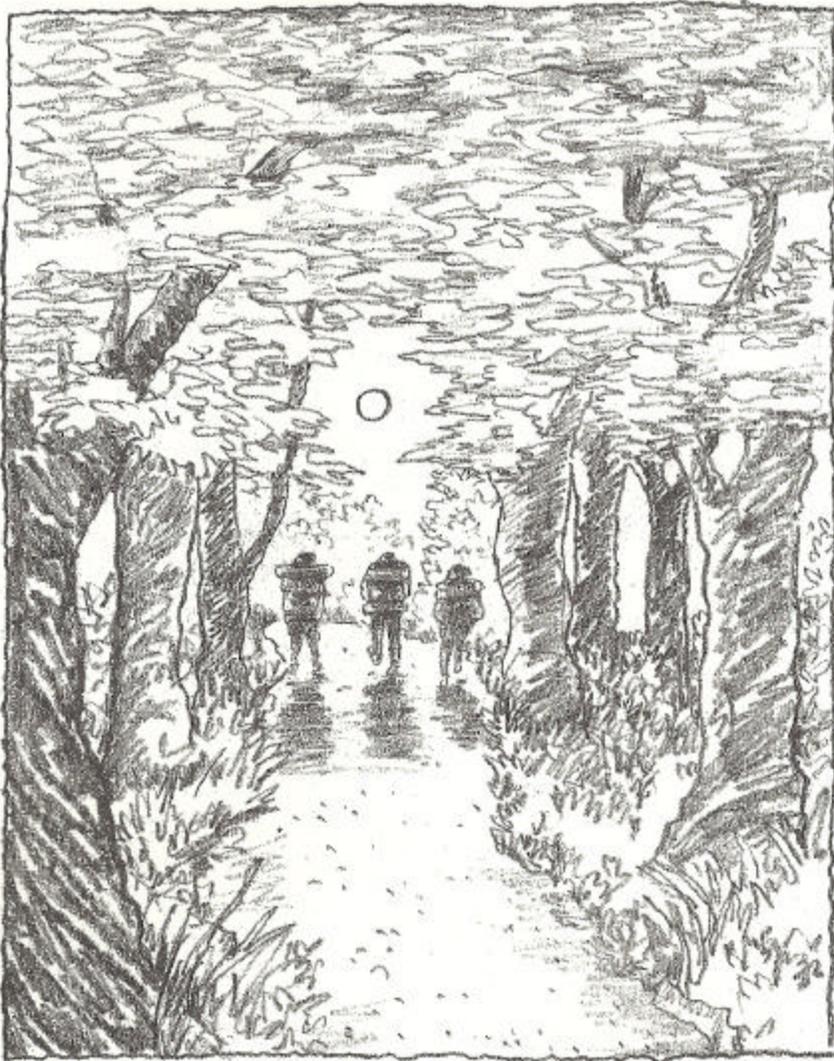


Basics of Day Hiking

Reasons for Hiking

People's reasons for hiking vary with the individual; some will say "it's to get away from it all", others because it's so much fun, while others will profess to love the sights of nature that are not generally seen in one's backyard. Those people who have not hiked have various reasons for not hiking. They don't want to leave the comforts of home, the possibility of encountering wild animals, not having a bathroom, getting poison ivy – the list goes on. But if you're patient and you talk to enough hikers, you'll discover that these fears as well as many others are easily overcome.



Illustration#1

Getting In Shape

There are many different kinds of hikes from short, easy hikes to long, tough hikes for people who are in better shape. People who have not walked much and aren't in good shape can start hiking on shorter easier hikes and then work up to the longer, harder hikes if they continue to hike and exercise. There are many ways to get in shape for hiking. Start by walking more. Other exercises besides walking may increase your strength and endurance. Some examples of these exercises include bicycling, roller skating, swimming, playing tennis, jogging and dancing. It's important to remember that you need to get your whole body in shape, not just your legs.

Planning for hikes

Hiking should include some planning prior to your actual hike. Here are ten things you should check before starting your hike. 1. Be clear about the goal you have set for yourself. 2. Discuss expectations with your fellow hikers. 3. Make sure you research the terrain, climate and challenges of the hike. 4. Physically prepare by working out. 5. Break in and check equipment. 6. Set realistic distance goals. 7. Make sure your skills are adequate and that you have the necessary equipment. 8. Check the local weather report. 9. Remember to keep any permits, credit cards, keys and identification in a safe place in your pack. 10. Tell a friend where you are going and when you will be back.

Speed and Distance

In general there are three speeds at which hikers go. For leisurely hikers the average speed averages about 2 miles an hour so the hiker should plan a 3-5 mile hike for a day hike. The moderate pace yields about 2 1/2 miles per hour, so here the hiker should plan on about 4-6 miles. The strenuous hiker should plan on attaining about 3 miles per hour and may plan on a hike of 6 miles or more.

Equipment

There is a wide assortment of equipment available on the market today. This should not be a discouraging factor as the equipment doesn't necessarily have to be expensive. Day hiking is not a lengthy expedition. The equipment listed below all contribute towards the hiker's comfort, adaptability to changing conditions, health, and safety.

The Day Pack

The day pack is a necessity to provide space in order to carry all your equipment and to free up your hands and arms. It should be large enough to easily hold what you are bringing. Nobody should be obliged to carry other people's belongings simply because they don't have enough room in their pack. When you are considering the size of the pack, remember the weather conditions of late fall and winter hiking may require extra space for supplemental clothing. In general soft packs are preferable for day hikes. There are also available on the market light day packs with internal frames which allow the weight to rest comfortably on the hips. Fifteen to twenty pounds are about as much as anyone can comfortably

carry all day. If possible, carry less. For those times when you are considering attaching gear such as snowshoes lashing points on the pack are important. It may be a good idea to take a few short hikes with the new pack to make sure it doesn't chafe or rub. .

There are many styles of day packs. Please make sure the one you choose is comfortable for you and has the features that will fit your future needs



Illustration#2

Food and Water

Select food which provides salts (important for rehydration, sugars (which provide a quick energy boost), and proteins and fats (for long term energy). Examples that food that provide these nutrients and are portable are fresh and dried fruit, whole grain bread, cheese, peanut butter, nuts, dried meats and energy bars. Some day hikers like to nibble all through the day to maintain their energy, rather than having a midday meal. Water and or sports drinks are very important. Usually a hiker should

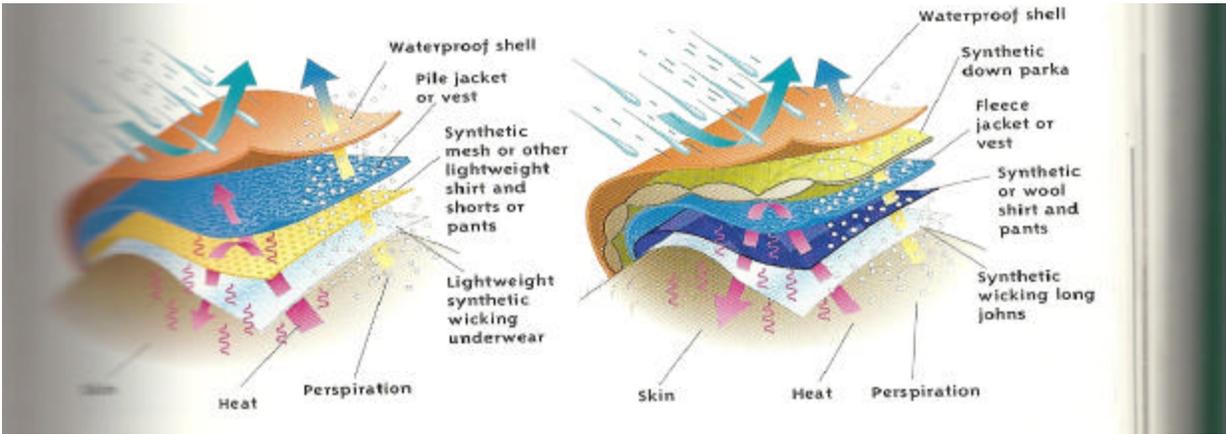
have about a quart of water for every five miles they plan to hike. Plan on carrying more liquids for very hot or very cold days. Without proper hydration serious health issues may arise.

Useful Equipment

A whistle may be important as a means of identifying your location should you become separated from your group or become lost. Hiking poles and hiking sticks may help prevent the aches and pains that may affect many hikers especially those who are older and overweight. They reduce the pressure on the back, legs and especially the knees. One pole may be used but two poles provide the best level of support. Poles may be bought as traditional wooden sticks or telescoping poles. Knowledge of the basics of the map and compass may be learned through courses taught at local high schools, community colleges or by reading the instruction material that accompanies the compass. Make sure your compass is a modern orienteering compass with at least a magnetic needle, revolving compass housing, and the base plate. Moleskin is important as an adjunct to blister prevention. If you are hiking and feel some warmth or heat from anywhere on your feet, the application of moleskin may help prevent any blisters from forming. However, if a blister is formed moleskin may also be used to prevent the formed blister from becoming further inflamed. Hikers should bring a map of the hiking area to help orient them as to their location. Hikers should bring a head light or a flashlight, pocket knife and waterproof matches or fire starter. These items may be useful if one is unable for some reason to get back to the trailhead by dark. With the possibility of this kind of emergency, some hikers pack a space blanket in case one has to remain in the wilderness overnight. A first aid kit should be included in case of injuries. For a list of what may be included in your first aid kit, please refer to the How-To Section of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Hudson Mohawk Chapter's website at <http://www.amcmohawkhudson.org/howto.asp> . Also included there is a listing of essential items needed for a day hike.

Clothing

A layer of clothing next to the skin should keep the skin dry. This inner layer should be made of a newer fast drying synthetic. Polypropylene is an example of this kind of material. It wicks moisture away from the skin and also allows for heat to escape. The next layer may be a synthetic mesh or other light weight shirt. Depending on weather conditions, a hiker may add other layers, the middle layer usually being made of fleece or woolen material. The outer layer of material would be made of either nylon or Gore-Tex which provides wind and rain protection. Layering is an important concept that allows the individual to control his or her body temperature. Hikers are discouraged from wearing cotton clothing as the perspiration caused by the cotton may be contraindicated for manageable body temperature control. Most hikers wear two pairs of socks. The inner sock is made of a material that can easily wick the sweat away from your foot. The next sock may be a part wool nylon blend for the summer. There is a thicker sock sometimes called trekking socks which are thicker and add cushioning to prevent blistering. Winter socks, of course, are the thicker sock and again should be worn with a wicking inner sock.

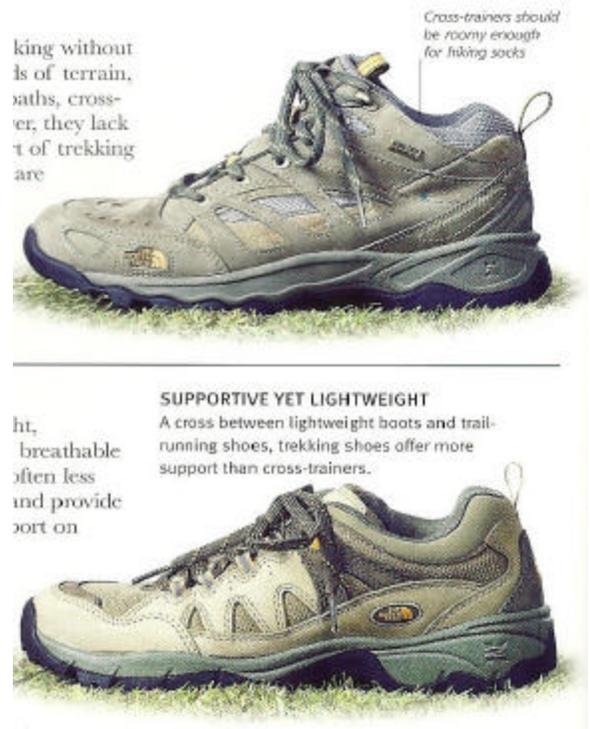
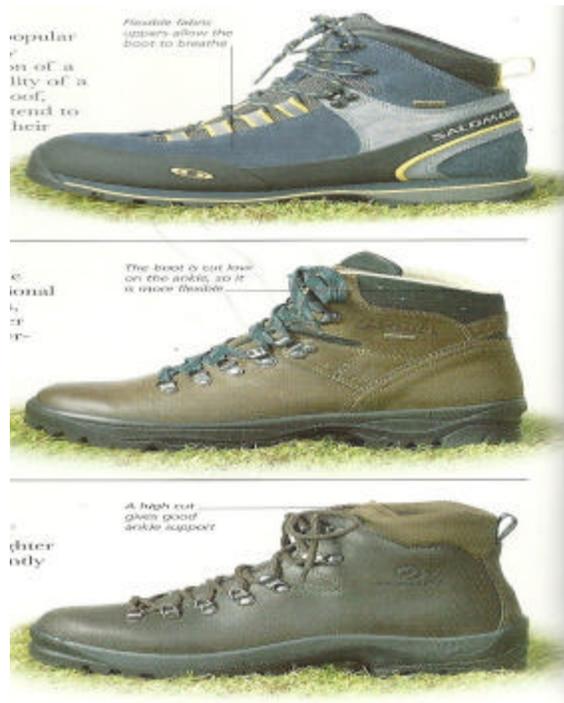


The picture at the left represents the layering that should be considered for warmer weather, while the picture on the right represents the layering that would be good for colder weather.

Illustration#3

Footwear

Sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes are very important also. Hikers should choose footwear that provides good traction, and gives good ankle support. New boots should be broken in. There are many types of boots. For day hikes on well maintained footpaths consider either cross trainers or trekking shoes. A cross trainer may be adequate for well maintained footpaths. They, however, lack the traction and ankle support of trekking shoes or hiking boots. A trekking shoe, again, is lightweight and is usually made of breathable material. Going up in weight, lightweight boots provide more support and traction than a cross trainer or a trekking shoe yet still provides the flexibility of the sports shoes mentioned previously. As one goes further up in weight, a hiker may consider a middleweight boot, which represents a good compromise between a lightweight boot and the traditional heavy leather boot. The middleweight boot is cut lower on the ankle and thus allows for greater flexibility than the traditional leather boot. The heavyweight boots have fallen somewhat out of favor, but are preferred by hikers carrying heavy loads in rough terrain. For winter hiking, the hiker may consider a snowshoeing boot which is lined with a thick felt and has weatherproof leather uppers and rubber outsoles.



The above pictures on the left represent the three traditional types of hiking boots from lightweight on the top, to the heavyweight leather boot on the bottom.

The above pictures on the right represent two kinds of shoes that may be considered for day hiking on well-maintained footpaths. The top pair are considered "cross trainers" and provide a little less traction and lateral support than the "trekking" shoes on the bottom.

Illustration#4

Leave No Trace

Hikers should stay on the trail as much as possible. Wandering off the trail can destroy the vegetation growing next to the trail. Respecting the environment means that the responsible hiker should take any trash that they create out with them. Another phrase in connection with this concept is "Take Only Pictures, Leave Only Footprints." Unless authorized, do not make any trail markings on your own.



Illustration#5

Personal Interest

You are out to enjoy yourself. According to your interest, bring a camera, a field identification guide, or a small pair of binoculars for views and bird identification.

Suggestions of Resources for Information about More Preplanned Hikes

There are several hiking clubs in the , in the Capital Region area. Besides the Mohawk Hudson Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club there are: the Adirondack Mountain Club (<http://www.adk.org/>); the Taconic Mountain Club (<http://taconichikingclub.blogspot.com/>); and the Long Path North Hiking Club (<http://www.schoharie-conservation.org/memberclubs/lpn/index.html>). With each club the degree of

difficulty for each hike will be outlined on their web site as well as other information that may be pertinent to the individual hike. Keep in mind that what one hiker may consider easy, may in fact be hard for you.

Picture Credits.

1. Facing Title Page "Take A Hike" by Lynn Foster Little Brown & Co. 1991.
2. pp. 28 & 29 LL Bean Outdoor Catalog Spring 2011.
3. P. 51 "Hiking and Backpacking" by Karen Berger W.W. Norton & Co. 1995.
4. pp. 64 & 68 "Backpacking and Hiking" by Karen Berger DK Publishing Inc. 2005
5. p. 51 "Take a Hike" by Lynn Foster Little Brown & Co. 1991.