

Field Trips General Information

Individuals planning to participate in a field trip are encouraged to contact the trip leader in advance so the leader knows who is planning to come. Please do not call trip leaders after 9 pm.

Some trips require pre-registration with the trip leader. **The leader may establish a deadline to register for a trip; this allows screening of participants, especially for more strenuous trips or for those where a limit on group size is needed, and also provides for arranging carpooling beforehand. If there is a deadline to sign up, please make sure you contact the leader before the deadline or you may be out of luck. It is the leader's decision who to accept or not on any trip, and anyone who arrives unannounced may be refused participation.**

Please note that:

An adult must accompany any children under 15 on every field trip.

On trips to the United States, a valid passport or enhanced drivers licence is required. Keep your passport with you in the car (not in your pack in the trunk). It is advisable to have additional medical insurance as the BC Medical Plan covers only a small portion of any medical costs in the US. For information on food products you can bring into the U.S., see this link.

Our liability insurance coverage only applies to members in good standing.

All trips can involve hazards and risk of injury. Those who participate do so at their own risk. Each individual is responsible for his or her own health and safety.

Participants will be required to sign a "Release of Liability" form at the start of all field trips. It is recommended that members read this form before the day of the trip to save time at the start of the field trip. On day trips, the form is completed at the beginning of the trip; on overnight trips and backpacking trips, the participant may complete the form in advance to give to the trip leader.

The liability waiver is available on the field trips page.

Trip Difficulty Ratings

Nature Vancouver uses a field trip classification system by rating the level of difficulty and adding an estimate of the time to be spent on the trail. The trip leader is responsible for deciding on the appropriate classification in conjunction with the Field Trip Coordinator.

The difficulty rating system is as follows:

- A. Easy: easy path or road with minimal elevation change and minimal hazards. Examples: Lost Lagoon, Reifel Bird Sanctuary.

B. Moderate: trail with possible rocks, roots or other hazards. Moderate grade, occasional steep but short sections. Up to 100m elevation change. Examples: Norvan Falls, Pacific Spirit Park.

C. Strenuous: moderately steep gradient. 100 m to 500 m elevation change. Examples: Hollyburn Peak, Mount Galiano.

D. Very strenuous: constant steep gradient. 500 m to 1,000 m elevation change. Examples: Elk Mountain, Rainbow Lake.

The expected duration of the field trip is added to the letter category to obtain a combined letter/figure rating. Example: A C6 hike will be a C hike, as described above, with an estimated time on the trail of 6 hours.

The estimated time spent during a field trip does not include driving or other travel times.

Please note that that these ratings are based on good weather and trail conditions. Wind, rain, snow, ice and deadfall on trails can make a trail much more difficult than it would normally be in good conditions.

Please consider your own abilities and experience, especially with more strenuous hikes. Recall the most difficult hike you've done in the past year or two and compare it to the hike you're considering. If in doubt, check with the trip leader before committing yourself to the trip.

We are a naturalist club and not just a hiking group; if you want a fast hike to a destination, you may want to go with someone else. However, on many hikes we do have a goal in mind, and especially on hikes with significant distance and elevation gain there is often a need to move at a steady pace so we can complete the trip in reasonable time.

Safety Tips for Participants

Stay together and stay on the trails during all field trips. Ensure that the trip leader and the tail person (if there is one) know where you are at all times.

If you carry hiking poles, please observe proper pole etiquette at all times. Other trip participants do not want to have a close call with your poles or pole tips.

Please inform the trip leader of any medications you are taking that could impact first aid treatment (such as blood thinners). Also please inform the trip leader if you carry an inhaler or an epi-pen for allergies and where you store these items. While Nature Vancouver tries to ensure that someone on the trip will have first aid training, this cannot be guaranteed.

Preparation and Essential Items for all field trips

Consider the weather in the trip location as it is often very different from home, and elevation and geography will play a role in the weather and temperature. Bring appropriate clothing and footwear. Remember that it may be hot and sunny at home, but cold and wet on the trip no matter what the time of year.

Ensure your clothing consists of fabric suitable for the field trip, especially if you are going on a long day hike or a multi-day trip. Jeans and cotton clothing may be alright for easy walks, but they are not suitable for hiking, especially in cold, damp or wet conditions. Remember that layered clothing works better than one large bulky item.

Recommended items to bring:

- Fleece or wool sweater
- Waterproof and wind-resistant jacket or poncho
- Gloves for wet or cold weather
- Sun hat
- Warm hat
- Extra socks
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Hiking poles, if you use them
- Any needed medicines or treatments for allergies, etc.
- Toilet paper

For long day hikes and backpacking trips also bring:

- Headlamp with extra batteries
- Whistle
- Emergency blanket
- For a complete list of suggested equipment for backpacking trips, contact the Hiking and Backpacking Team Leader.

Hike leaders generally bring first aid kits, but all participants are encouraged to if they have them.

Footwear:

For "A" rated trips, wear comfortable walking shoes.

For "B" rated trips, wear hiking shoes or light hiking boots with good tread.

For "C" and "D" rated trips, wear broken-in good hiking boots with good tread.

Sandals, flip-flops, dress shoes, construction boots and high heels are not permitted on any field trips.

Always bring a plastic bag for your hiking boots and wear street shoes in the car.

Food and Hydration

Hydration:

For short trips, bring at least one litre of liquid, more in summer and late spring. For half to full day trips, bring AT LEAST two litres of water, more on hot summer days. Water, iced tea, sports drinks, and drinks made with drink crystals are good year-round, while hot chocolate, tea or soup in a thermos are good in winter.

Soft drinks, energy drinks, and alcohol are NOT recommended.

Carry liquids in resealable containers, not cans or glass bottles. Hydration systems are a handy way to carry water. A water filter or purification system can be useful (and is essential on overnight hikes) for treating water found on the trail, but note that many trails are dry, especially in late summer and early fall.

Food:

Bring more food and water than you think you will need. Bring at least a snack or light lunch for trips less than 4 hours. Bring a full lunch and snacks for longer trips. Avoid foods that are messy and strong-smelling. Fish like tuna, salmon and sardines are not recommended as the smell can attract bears and can be off-putting to other trip participants.

Good snack foods include trail mix, lightly salted nuts or snack mixes, and vegetables or fresh fruit. When weight is an issue, fruit bars, granola bars and protein bars are good snacks.

Avoid foods that will make you thirsty, such as potato chips, and foods that can be easily crushed.

Always consider the weather when packing your food. On hot days, be careful to bring foods that will keep in the heat.

In berry season, please use discretion when picking, and do not pick in parks and protected areas. Watch for bears - you are trespassing in *their* berry patch. Never pick and eat any berries, mushrooms or plants unless you know they are edible. Do not feed wildlife unless the site encourages it, such as at Reifel. Never feed any wildlife in the backcountry.

Make sure that you pack out EVERYTHING, including apple cores, orange peels etc.

Please have everything prepared the night before, and do not depend on stopping to pick up water and food enroute.

Exceptions:

On US trips we occasionally stop and pick up lunch after crossing the border, to avoid worrying about what kind of food is currently prohibited. For information on travel to the United States, including restricted or prohibited food items, see https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/travelers-int/ct_canadian_products. Please arrange with your driver/passengers before leaving the meeting location if you plan to stop for food after crossing the border and make sure the trip leader knows.

On the main BC Ferries routes to Vancouver Island, you can usually get something at the snack bar or cafeteria. However, do not count on a snack bar or cafeteria being available on the Bowen Island or Gulf Islands ferry routes.

Travel and Carpooling

Meeting Locations:

Meeting and carpool locations will be provided in individual trip descriptions. Trip leaders try to ensure that meeting and carpool locations are accessible by transit.

Public Transit:

For public transit information in the Lower Mainland, see [Translink](#). For ferry information, see [BC Ferries](#).

Do not forget when ferry travel is involved, that you will have to pay on the return trip, except for Bowen Island.

Carpooling:

Nature Vancouver encourages members to carpool as much as possible for field trips. This reduces the environmental impact of the trip and helps to spread the cost around. Many locations have limited parking available.

On all trips, passengers should contribute to gas expenses. The suggested cost of carpooling is \$5 per person, per hour of driving on regular roads. On gravel roads, the suggested cost is \$8 per person, per hour of driving. **The actual amount is at the discretion of the driver. As a passenger, please make sure you bring cash with you to contribute to the driver for gas sharing. Do not plan on giving your driver a cheque, stopping at an ATM, paying later etc.**

Carpooling Tips:

If you plan to drive, try and have your car gassed up the night before.

If you have specific plans or deadlines for after the trip, please clear them with your travelling companions and the trip leader BEFORE leaving the meeting location in the morning. Please note that on long day hikes, especially to distant locations such as Whistler, Manning Park or Mount Baker, we frequently do not return to Vancouver until early evening or later.

DO NOT eat or drink in someone's vehicle without asking their permission first.

In consideration for others' vehicles, store your hiking boots in a plastic bag and wear street shoes in the vehicle.

Have a garbage bag or something similar to sit on to protect the car seats, in case of getting wet and/or muddy on a trip.

Want to be a Field Trip leader?

Nature Vancouver is always looking for more field trip leaders. Leaders do not need to be especially knowledgeable about birds, plants, or other aspects of nature as the primary role of the trip leaders is to organize and facilitate the trip. Contact the Field Trip Coordinator, Cynthia Crampton, or Hiking and Backpacking Team Leader, Bill Kinkaid, for more information about becoming a Nature Vancouver field trip leader.

Guidelines for Field Trip leaders

It is important that field trip leaders are familiar with the Nature Vancouver Guidelines for Field Trip Leaders. Please read them carefully.