



World Trails Network - International | Guideline Series

COVID-19 AND TRAILS

**GUIDELINES FOR TRAIL USER SAFETY
AND TRAIL PROTECTION**

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GUIDELINES FOR TRAIL USER SAFETY AND TRAIL PROTECTION

According to public health officials, the risk of COVID-19 spreading through outdoor environments, where physical distancing is practiced, is currently thought to be low. Trail activities like hiking, trekking, walking or trail running present opportunities for continued recreation and fitness with few challenges for minimizing the spread of COVID-19.

With unprecedented lockdown having taken place in nearly every country in the world, our communities and families have had to endure challenging times indoors. With the opening of trails again in the last month, and no sign of the COVID-19 pandemic being eradicated, we will need to continue to take appropriate safety measures even when on trails.

Trail use has seen an incredible increase in users and new users in the past weeks. This creates a concern for carrying capacity on trails and the safety trails can offer users and visitors.

At the World Trails Network we take the accessibility of trails for all user types as essential, protecting users' health and safety while on trails is paramount. Our access to nature, the outdoors and recreation is a fundamental human need, and especially in times of stress and crisis.

We have collated the best practices for on trail safety in a time of pandemic. We have kept these guidelines simple and easy to communicate. They do not replace the existing laws and protocol of any particular country or trail agency.

Stay safe on the trail - Look out for yourself. Keep others safe. Look after the trail.



3 STEP TRAIL SAFETY

1 - Look Out for Yourself

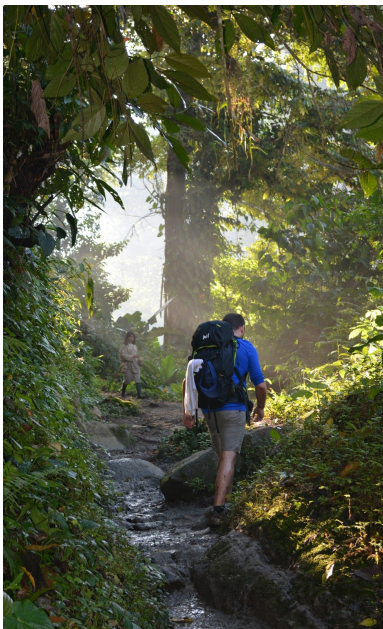
#2 - Keep Others Safe

#3 - Look After the Trails

Permission to use and distribute these guidelines

We have created simple and easy to read and interpret infographics for you to share with your trail users, or to amend and change as you require to meet your country requirements. If you wish to translate these guidelines in your own language, please feel free to do so. We can create the same graphics for you if you send the translation file to: info@worldtrailsnetwork.org.

You may share these documents on social media, on your trail website or in any brochure without additional permission required.





COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR TRAIL USER SAFETY & TRAIL PROTECTION

Step #1 Look Out for Yourself

Personal Protective Equipment and Practice

- Use a Face Mask when encountering others or at stopping points.
- Sanitization your hands regularly, and especially after being on the trail.
- Keep physical distance from all other trail users who are not from your household or family.

When On the Trail

- Choose less popular trails and the time of day you hike, to minimize your exposure to other people or groups.
- Be courteous when passing others on the trail:
 - Announce that you wish to pass if approaching another visitor from behind
 - Move to the right edge of the trail to maintain physical distance
 - Move in single file when approaching others



Step #2 Keep Others Safe

Keep Physical Distance - accordingly to the trail activity and your country regulations. For example: running is recommended at 10m, cycling at 20m and hiking distance at 2m.

- Sneeze and cough into elbow or crook of your arm.
- Limit inter-community travel.
- Protect local communities by respecting their needs to stay safe. Avoid sharing meals and pots, or other equipment.

Avoid Long Stops - keep stops and places of rest to under 15min.

Avoid Higher Risk Trail Activities - these are activities that may increase the potential for needing emergency services. Avoid dangerous routes, exposed climbs, etc.



Step #3 Look After the Trails

Choose Your Trail Carefully - select areas where it will be easier to maintain physical distancing (topography, challenge level, etc).

- Check info on limitations, closures, accessibility conditions.
- If possible select a trail that is circular and returns to your start point.
- Where possible, pass others while remaining on the trail surface.

Allow Safe Passing - if stepping off the trail try to use a durable surface that won't impact vegetation or lead to trail widening or braiding.

Using trail facilities take extra care with sanitation.

Apply Leave No Trace principles. Pack it in and pack it out.



Step #1

Look Out for Yourself

What to Pack

Update Personal Protective Equipment.

Your Trail Pack: rain protection, sun protection, spare clothes, map, mobile phone with emergency numbers, food and drinks, first-aid kit, personal medication, etc.

Disinfectant alcohol or gel.

What to Wear

Use a Face Mask when encountering others or at stopping points

What to do

Self-monitor any symptoms

Sanitization your hands regularly, and especially after the trail

Keep physical distance from all other trail users who are not from your household or family

Choose less popular trails and time of day, to minimize your exposure to other people or groups

Be courteous when passing others on the trail:

- Announce that you wish to pass if approaching another visitor from behind
- Move to the right edge of the trail to maintain physical distance
- Move in single file when approaching others



GUIDELINES FOR TRAIL USER SAFETY & TRAIL PROTECTION DURING COVID-19



Step #2

Keep Others Safe

Physical distance accordingly to the trail activity and your country regulations. For example: running is recommended at 10m, cycling at 20m and hiking at 2m.

Sneeze and cough into elbow or crook of arm.

Limit inter-community travel.

Avoid sharing meals and pots, or other equipment.

Protect local communities by respecting their needs to stay safe.

Avoid long stops - keep stops and places of rest , or lingering at view places to under 15min.

Avoid higher risk activities on the trail that increase the potential for needing emergency services, dangerous routes, exposed climbs, etc.



Step #3

Look After the Trail

Know when to go - follow Trail Manager's advice and select less busy times of day.

Choose your trail carefully and areas where it will be easier to maintain physical distancing (topography, challenge level, etc).

Choose less popular trails and the time of day you hike, to minimize your exposure to other people or groups.

Take extra care to check info on actual limitations, closures, accessibility conditions.

If possible select a trail that is circular and returns you to your start point. Such one- direction are safer.

Where possible, pass others while remaining on the trail surface.

Step off the trail to allow safe passing, try to use a durable surface that won't impact vegetation or lead to trail widening or braiding.

Using trail facilities take extra care with sanitation.

Apply Leave No Trace principles.

Dispose of waste correctly.

Homestays or camping follow the local regulations for accommodation on a long distance hike should you be overnighing.



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Guidelines for Trail Managers

General Promotion

Promote trails in general as a healthy and relatively safe outdoor space and activity.

Promoting and Offer Alternatives

- Giving info on less popular areas / spots / sections, recommend alternatives.
- Publish alternative transport opportunities.
- Establish new options for alternative trail sections that can help distribute visitors (e.g. designate unmarked paths where desirable).

Manage and Ensure Safe Visitor Flow

- Where possible, recommending or prescribing one-directional visitor flow, recommend circular trails.
- Ensure trails can be followed safely and continually, give specific attention to marking/signage.
- Maintaining trail width, brushing, removing obstacles, etc.
- Consider introducing temporary limitations on dangerous, popular or sensitive trail section, ensure visitors know about it before they get on-site.

Signage and communications

Add temporary signage for specific safety regulations & recommendations.



Guidelines for Trail Guides

Trip Safety

- Organize and promote safe trips that take into account previous recommendations.
- Lower the possibility of first aid or evacuations by appropriate difficulty level.
- Ensure difficulty level does not exceed skills and ability of guests.
- Accident and rescue operation on the trail (medical masks and disinfection necessary before rescuing).

Own equipment and protection

- Take extra care for your own safety and distancing.
- Check and update your first aid kit (e.g. gloves included).

Group and Participants

- Inform guests of safety measures - give clear communications.
- Register participants and check in again with them after 2 weeks. If there is any infection suspected notify trail authorities.
- Limit the size of the group according to local rules.
- Do not take guests who show symptoms and be extremely careful accepting guests from risk groups.
- Request guests bring their own equipment and hiking gear.



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Disclaimer

The orders, directives and guidelines for safe trail use during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, as implemented by different governments around the world, continue to evolve and change as new information on transmissibility, epidemiology and effectiveness of public health and risk mitigation measures becomes available. These guidelines reflect the currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion as provided by public health officials in various countries and is subject to change. It is the responsibility of all trail users and trail operators to ensure they are in alignment and compliant with the most recent public health and local direction in their respective regions.

These are recommendations by the World Trails Network, in addition:

- Do not break local rules and protocols put forward by the country where you are hiking.
- Recommendations by World Trails Network are specific for trail activities.
- We are not medical practitioners nor are we endorsed by WHO.
- Purpose of these guidelines are to protect trails, trail users and the environment.
- Follow your local health authority and the news on the latest coronavirus updates.
- Stay safe.

Acknowledgements

WTN wishes to thank the the Trails & Tourism Task Team members for contributing to the development and research of these guidelines. We would also like to acknowledge a list of references that helped inform some of our recommendations:

National Guidelines - Responsible Trail Operations and Visitation during the COVID-19 Pandemic by Trans Canada Trail, ATTA COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for Adventure Travel, Schweizer Wanderwege: Hiking in COVID-19 Times - Tips for Hikers, South West Coast Path Association, UK.

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