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Enjoying the Great Alaskan Outdoors

June 2009 Newsletter
Part One

Finally, the weather is turning warmer in all areas of Alaska and it is time to explore and enjoy the outdoors. There are so many activities to choose from. In order to be safe and have fun, you must use the correct gear and be in the proper physical condition. This month, we begin a two-part series discussing popular activities and tips to keep you healthy when enjoying the great outdoors.



HIKING:

Hiking in Alaska is truly a humbling and awe-inspiring experience. The terrain can vary from mountain ranges, forests and streams to groomed paths. The weather and wildlife can be unpredictable. Follow these few simple rules and make the most out of your Alaska experience:

1. **Hike with a friend or family member.** The companionship in the great outdoors is fun and you can encourage one another to meet your fitness goals. When

you go with a group, your chance of making a wrong decision decreases. In addition, your chance of encountering bear decreases dramatically.

2. **Take plenty of water.**

Bring plenty of water along (try to drink 4 oz. of water for every 15-20 minutes of continuous activity). If you're hiking for longer than a day, buying a purification system may make more sense so you don't have to carry extra weight in your backpack. Never drink untreated water. Leave stream, river, and lake water for the park wildlife. Although it looks clean and refreshing, mountain stream water can make you ill.

3. **Let someone back at camp or at home know where you are going and when you plan on returning.**

Take a mobile phone for emergencies only or to let them know you have returned safely.

4. **Don't walk off the trail.** Cutting across switchbacks erodes the hillside and eventually destroys the trail. Plus, walking off-trail in-

creases your chance of suffering an injury or getting lost. Wandering away from the marked trails can put you into direct contact with surprised wildlife and other dangerous animals.

5. **Wildlife thrives in Alaska.** Whenever you encounter wildlife on the trail, keep your distance, back away slowly, and do not run. Report your sightings to a State Park Ranger.

6. **Wear the right gear.** Make sure you have rain gear and are dressed in layers, so you can adjust to the surrounding temperatures as they change. Wearing sturdy hiking boots with ankle support is especially important when hiking on uneven terrain. For those wet Alaskan summers, consider a waterproof boot.

7. **Train your body.** If you are not used to long-distance hiking, start training by walking on flat terrain, then inclines and declines. Increase your mileage slowly until you reach your goals.

Even if you are in top physical condition, don't overexert yourself. If you need a break, take it. If the hike becomes more than you can handle, turn back. If you feel sick, exhausted, or suspect an injury, take measures to address the issue and return to base if you have to.



Keep your distance from wild animals!



Remember to know your surroundings!