

Backpacking Trip Planning

Presenters:

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Agenda

- New to planning trips?
 - Location and physical trail
 - Common terminology
 - Trip selection & research
- The Trip Flow Plan
 - What is it made up of?
 - What does it mean?
- Trip Resources
- Activities during days leading up to trip
- Activities day of trip
- Activities post trip

Trip Planning Considerations

(Location and Physical Trail)

- New to leading trips?
 - Keep local
 - Start with:
 - Shorter distances
 - Easier, well marked trails
 - Easier topography
 - Larger safety margins (Less obstacles)
 - Easy resources
 - Shelter/camping /break locations
 - Road access and parking

Trip Planning Considerations

(Location and Physical Trail)

- **New** (Continued)
 - Keep backpacks to one night
 - Have reasonable expectations
 - Keep logistics simple
 - Build in high level of flexibility/options
 - Build in fun, have some planned high points
 - Plan your trip – you know where you're going, does someone else know?
 - Use a planning check list for every trip!

Trip Planning

(Location and Physical Trail)

Where do I want to go? What do I have to consider?

- **Distance:** How far is it to your destination? How much time do I need to get there? How fast will I be able to travel on the trip?
- **Terrain:** Easy, moderate, difficult? Add to your time estimate for difficult terrain. You'll go slower if it is steep, rough, rocky or water hazards, etc.
- **Potential Hazards:** Difficult water crossings? Above tree line sections? Potential for bad weather? Steep sections or Rock Scrambles?

Trip Planning

(Location and Physical Trail)

Where do I want to go? What do I have to consider?

- **Water:** Is it available along the way? How far is it between sources? Make sure you carry enough to be safe.
- **Alternate or Bail Out Routes:** Be flexible, plan for emergencies. What will you do if you or someone else gets hurt? What will you do if you can't make it to your destination due to a storm, unexpected obstacles or you're moving too slow?
- **Time Management:** Includes everything from traveling to your trip, to getting home afterwards. How many hours will you spend hiking, resting, preparing meals, setting up camp - etc.
- **Emergency Action Plan:** You won't be calling 911. Know what search and rescue resources are available where you are hiking, and how to contact them.

Trip Planning (cont'd)

Where do I want to go? What do I have to consider?

- **Regulations, Permits, Reservations:** Do you need permits or reservations for where you are going? Do you need a parking permit for your car? Investigate early just in case
- **Food and Equipment:** Depends on the trip, but plan well and provide for a margin of safety. Carry emergency food and spare parts/repair kits for critical equipment. Don't carry things you don't need
- **Keeping your family informed:** Leave a detailed itinerary with someone at home in case of emergency
- **Use a check list for every trip!**
- **Observe the 7 P's!** (Proper Prior Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance)

Trip Planning Considerations

(Location and Physical Trail)

- As you gain experience...
 - Increase trip remoteness
 - Increase overall difficulty
 - More miles (daily and total)
 - Harder trails
 - More elevation change
 - Increased number of days
 - Higher adventure (more challenging obstacles)
 - More challenging resources (water & resupply)
 - More difficult trip logistics (end to end & shuttles)

Trip Planning Considerations

(Location and Physical Trail)

- Always know and plan for:
 - Parking- be sure available for overnight
 - Scout out, Google Maps/Earth, local authorities & on on-line
 - Drive time and logistics
 - Available daylight hours
 - Weather (leading up to and day of trip)
 - Hazards – water crossings and possible high or fast moving water, rock climbs, escarpments, busy roadways
 - Hiking mph, calculate both distance & elevation change (up and down)
 - Water and shelter/camping & break locations
 - Reservations, regulations, restrictions and permits
 - IE: Group sites, bear canisters, back country permits, group size LNT), fires & camping
 - Safety, emergency services and contact information

Trip Planning

Common Hiking Terminology

- Blaze – A painted mark denoting the trail (size, shape and color are important)
 - Single = trail direction
 - Double = trail turning
 - Blue blazes typically denote a side trail
 - Three X's = Danger
- Cairn – A man made pile of stones denoting the trail
- Col, Gap, Notch or Saddle – A pass (low point) between two peaks
- Puncheons /Bog Bridges– A series of elevated boards for the purpose of traversing a wet or environmentally sensitive areas
- Switch Back – zigzags to reduce effort in changing elevation
- Lean-to or (Adirondack) Shelter – A three sided wilderness structure
- Lodge or Cabin – A fully enclosed structure

Trip Planning

Trail Selection

- When to go where? Consider weather, trail conditions, insects, water sources and crowds:
 - Go North to VT, NH, up-state NY or ME...
 - After late June/early July or there after
 - » After mud season
 - » Black flies “less” of an issue
 - » River and stream levels lower (winter run-off)
 - Go South to MA, CT, NY/NJ or PA...
 - Early spring or there after
 - » Early season = less issues with snow or bugs
 - » Water availability is less of an issue
 - Consider what flora and fauna you will likely see
 - Consider the geology and vistas

Trip Planning

Trail selection

– Do your Research!

- On-line – blogs, trail web sites, forums etc.
- Guidebooks
- Maps
- Magazines (Backpacker Magazine)
- Tap on others that have experience in activity
- Hiking clubs and organizations
- Your own experience
- Local authorities (PD, FD, Ranger station etc)
- Resources hand-out

Trip Planning

Creating a Flow Plan

- Create a flow plan using map and trail guide
 - Grid out distances showing
 - Start and finish points
 - Waypoints
 - Water sources
 - Vistas or other key features
 - Side trails/intersections/portages/exit routes
 - Shelters/camping areas
 - Other resources
 - Calculate elevation change – gain and loss
 - Note alternative routes – ALWAYS have a plan “B”

Trip Planning

Creating a flow plan (Example of LT trip in VT)

SOUTH BOUND						
DISTANCE FROM PREVIOUS WAYPOINT	CUMULATIVE DISTANCE	DAILY MILES	V. Feet from last noted waypoint/Cum for day	CAMP Y/N	WAYPOINT	RESOURCES
0	0			START	VT 17 APPALACHIAN GAP	PARKING
1.8	1.8		1000		THERON DEAN SHELTER	SHELTER
1.3	3.1				STARKS NEST	SHELTER/VIEWPOINT
0.6	3.7				GENERAL STARK MOUNTAIN	
0.4	4.1				GLEN ELLEN SHELTER SIDE TRAIL (BARTON TRAIL)	UNRELIABLE WATER SOURCE AT INTERSECTION
0.3	4.4	4.4	600 / 1600	Y	GLEN ELLEN LODGE	ENCLOSED CABIN. SECOND INTERMITENT WATER (STREAM) SOUTH BEYOND OUTHOUSE
0.3	4.7				SIDE TRAIL BACK TO LT	
1.8	6.5				MT. ELLEN (4,083')	
1.6	8.1				NANCY HANKS PEAK	
1.3	9.4				LINCOLN PEAK	VIEW POINT - OBSERVATION PLATFORM
0.8	10.2				MOUNT ABRAHAM (4,006')	ALPINE ZONE
0.9	11.1		1700		BATELL SHELTER	SHELTER. WATER FROM SPRING 100' TO EAST
1.7	12.8				LINCOLN GAP	ROAD/PARKING
1.1	13.9				SUNSET LEDGE	VIEW POINT
2.8	16.7				MOUNT GRANT	VIEW POINT
0.8	17.5	13.1	1700 / 3400	Y	COOLEY GLEN SHELTER	SHELTER. WATER 600' WEST ON COOLEY GLEN TRAIL- Trail closed (washed out)
3.6	21.1				MT ROOSEVELT	VIEW OF MT KILLINGTON PRIOR TO SUMMIT
2.1	23.2		1500		EMILY PROCTOR SHELTER	SHELTER AND WATER
3.5	26.7	9.2	1140 / 2640	FINISH	EMILY PROCTOR TRAIL HEAD	PARKING, WATER AND CAMPING

Trip Planning

Creating a Flow Plan: Maps and Guidebooks

Brandon Gap to Cooley Glen

miles north- bound	 NORTH	elevation at Long Trail (feet/meters)	miles south- bound
22.5	Cooley Glen Trail 3.2 mi W to USFS Road 201, Cooley Glen Shelter	3130/954	0.0
22.0	Mt. Cleveland	3482/1061	0.5
20.3	Little Hans Peak	3348/1020	2.2
18.5	Clark Brook Trail to USFS Road 55, 3.0 mi E	3390/1033	4.0
17.7	Mt. Wilson	3745/1141	4.8
16.8	Emily Proctor Shelter; Emily Proctor Trail to USFS Road 201, 3.5 mi W	3460/1055	5.7

Trip Planning

Creating a flow plan: Maps and Guidebooks



Trip Planning

Creating a Flow Plan: Maps and Guidebooks

Just beyond the junction pass a spur leading west 50 ft. to Orvis Lookout, and then reach the Barton Trail (12.9 mi.), which leads east 0.3 mi. downhill to Glen Ellen Lodge. The current lodge, built by the Long Trail Patrol in 1933, is of log construction with bunks for eight. Water sources for the lodge include an unreliable spring located to the west of the Long Trail near the junction of the Barton Trail. A second intermittent water source is a brook that may be found by following the contour south beyond the lodge's composting outhouse. Wood fires are prohibited at the lodge. There are views to the east from Glen Ellen Lodge. Beyond the Mad River Valley are the Northfield Mountains, the Granite Mountains, and, on the horizon, several ridges of the White Mountains. Battell Shelter to Glen Ellen Lodge, 6.7 mi., 10.8 km., 4 hr. (SB 4 hr.).

Trip Planning

Day(s) before the trip

- Check conditions
 - Normally a week prior to a trip, try and get out to where you'll be hiking; focus on obstacles (rivers, steep climbs, etc) that would could be different if there was significant rain fall.
 - If you can not get out there yourself, call the ranger station, or who ever oversees the land you'll be hiking on to get updates on trail conditions.
- Check weather
 - Check weather daily as far as a week out from the trip, this may be the time to firm up a Plan B, C or even D as needed for your trip.
 - Weather.com
 - NWS.noaa.gov
 - Many other online sources

Trip Planning

Day(s) before the trip

- Confirm transportation
 - Make sure all vehicles needed are available, as well as a back up if someone has an emergency and can not make the trip.
- Confirm participation
 - With longer trips, about 3-4weeks prior to the trip, make sure all are still participating and if there are any gear issues.
 - Then with all trips send out an email with ALL DETAILS of trip to all participants a 7 days prior to trip. Reconfirm and set expectations for trip.

Trip Planning

Day(s) before the trip

Go, cancel or alternatives

- Dependent on weather, trail conditions, etc. confirm trip if all is a go. Cancel trip if weather or trail conditions puts the group in any dangerous situation.
- Use alternative trail routes if able to, as well as “Plan B” camp sites, bail out plans as needed.

Trip Planning

Day of Trip (trail head)

- Meet & Greet
 - Make sure to get to meeting point early and to have your paper work ready (ie- AMC waivers, emergency contact lists, etc)
- Gear Check
 - Double check your own gear, as well as that of your participants. Make sure all gear is accounted for, as well as packed properly to make for a comfortable trip.
- Health Issues
 - Know this ahead of time, speak to those effected and know where their medications are if they have any.

Trip Planning

Day of Trip(trail head)

- Trail Head Check
 - Assess for proper clothing, gear.
 - Sign liability release (AMC leaders/hikes).
 - Circle up, do introductions
 - Who's new to hiking? Who's new to the area?
 - Go over trip description one more time, distance, risks associated with trip. Confirm expectations.
 - Safety concerns, anyone else first aid trained? What safety gear is everyone carrying?

Trip Planning

Day of Trip(trail head)

- Establish Rules of Trip
 - Speed group will travel; defaulting to slowest hiker as needed.
 - The group should not become separated on the trail.
 - Everyone waits at a trail intersection (or junction) for the last person to arrive.
 - Sweep – volunteers to be the last person in line, to ensure no one is left behind. Important job.
 - Separation break - when the genders go different directions to pee in the woods. If you leave the group to pee, make sure the Sweep knows you've left.
 - Leave No Trace – take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints.

Trip Planning

Day of Trip(on trail)

During Trip on trail...

- Monitor the group
 - To get to know who you are hiking with
 - To be able to notice if something is wrong physically with someone
- Stop at all junctions
 - This is a must during all trips with a group so no one gets lost
- Watch the weather / time
 - Remember “plan b”, bail out points, and turn around times
- Know where you are.
 - Have at least two maps of the area your trip in your group (or on you)
 - When in doubt, STOP and LOOK! If it is on a map, it is big enough to see
- First and foremost, be Safe. Second, have fun. Third, attain goal.

Trip Planning

Post Trip

- Start YOUR Car First!
- Start/Check all cars.
- Thank Participants
- Get back any loaned equipment
- Post Trip Activity
 - A small celebratory meal/drinks is a great way to provide closure for the trip with everyone.
- Be the Last to Leave (AMC leaders)
- Debrief with Co-Leader
 - You can learn from ANY and ALL situations, good and bad.
- Send in Waiver Form (AMC leaders)
- Complete Any and ALL Reports that are necessary (AMC leaders)
(WM Use /Accident)