



FREE PRINTABLE / BEGINNER DAY HIKING

Day Hiking Safety Checklist

A compact, repeatable safety baseline for ordinary trail days that can still run late, hot, wet, cold, or confusing.

Use this before every hike.

Adapt the list to the route, forecast, local rules, group, daylight, and personal needs. A short route still deserves a late-return plan.

Before You Leave

- ☐ Share the route, trailhead, expected finish, and check-in time with a trusted contact.
- ☐ Check current local weather, route notices, access restrictions, and the daylight window.
- ☐ Set a turnaround time. Turn back for unsafe heat, storms, poor visibility, closures, or slow progress.
- ☐ Download the route for offline use and carry a simple navigation backup.
- ☐ Size water to the route, heat, humidity, refill reliability, exertion, and personal needs; carry a reserve.

Pack and Check

WATER AND FOOD

- ☐ Water for the route and conditions
- ☐ Backup treatment or verified refill plan
- ☐ Simple snacks plus emergency calories
- ☐ Electrolytes when appropriate

LIGHT AND BACKUP

- ☐ Headlamp checked before departure
- ☐ Independent backup light
- ☐ Spare power or charging plan
- ☐ Lights stored within easy reach

NAVIGATION AND COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Offline map or paper map
- ☐ Charged phone in protected storage
- ☐ Small power bank and cable
- ☐ Emergency contact card
- ☐ Whistle or signal item

FIRST AID AND FEET

- ☐ Personal medication
- ☐ Blister and small wound care
- ☐ Route-appropriate support item
- ☐ Emergency blanket or compact shelter

WEATHER AND SUN

- ☐ Rain shell or weather layer
- ☐ Warm layer for a delayed return
- ☐ Sun hat, sunscreen, eye protection
- ☐ Dry pouch for phone and essentials

ROUTE-SPECIFIC ITEMS

- ☐ ID, permit, payment, access documents
- ☐ Insect protection when needed
- ☐ Terrain-specific equipment
- ☐ Waste bag and Leave No Trace supplies

FIELD DECISIONS

Know when the plan should change.

Good gear preserves options. Good decisions keep a small problem from becoming an emergency.

HEAT

Slow down or shorten the route when heat, humidity, exposure, or personal condition makes the original plan unsafe. Stop exertion, seek shade, cool the person, and obtain emergency help for severe or worsening symptoms.

WEATHER

Use current local guidance. Do not continue toward exposed terrain when storms, wildfire restrictions, flooding, poor visibility, or unsafe trail conditions cross the cutoff set before the hike.

LATE RETURN

Use the headlamp before footing becomes difficult to see. Keep the phone for navigation and emergency contact rather than relying on its torch as the only light. Tell the trusted contact when the plan changes.

Final Trailhead Check

☐ Route shared	☐ Forecast checked
☐ Turnaround time set	☐ Water and reserve packed
☐ Phone charged and map offline	☐ Headlamp and backup tested
☐ Essential medication packed	☐ Return check-in arranged

SOURCES AND REVIEW

Reviewed by the Fopoto Field Desk

This checklist uses scenario-first planning and current public safety guidance. Review local conditions before every trip; the PDF is a planning aid, not medical, rescue, or route-specific advice.

- National Park Service: Hike Smart — nps.gov/articles/hiking-safety.htm
- National Park Service: Ten Essentials — nps.gov/thingstodo/learn-about-hiking-safety.htm
- Mountain Rescue England and Wales: Summer in the Mountains — mountain.rescue.org.uk
- National Weather Service: Outdoor Heat Safety — weather.gov/rnk/outdoorsheat

More field-ready guides

fopoto.com/hiking/ | Corrections: support@fopoto.com