WATER & OUTDOORS

Camping & Hiking Safety Checklist

Choose a trip that matches the abilities of everyone in your group, then prepare for a delayed return.

A tent is not a safe lightning shelter. Plan access to a substantial building or enclosed, hard-topped vehicle before storms arrive.

Plan before leaving

- Check the route, forecast, alerts, trail closures, daylight, and fire restrictions. Set a turnaround time and realistic backup plan; an easier route is a valid choice.
- Leave your route, group details, vehicle location, and expected return time with a trusted person. Agree when they should report an overdue return.

Pack and check

- Carry a physical map and navigation method you know, a light with spare power, sun protection, extra clothing, first-aid supplies, food, water, and emergency shelter.
- Add equipment for the terrain and overnight conditions. Inspect gear before departure. Carry appropriate water-treatment equipment if your plan depends on collecting water.

On the trail and at camp

- Stay together and let the slowest person set the pace. Eat, drink, and rest as needed. Watch footing, steep edges, slippery rocks, and changing weather.
- Do not enter floodwater or attempt an uncertain stream crossing. Use authorized campsites, store food as required, secure trash, and follow campfire rules.

If plans change

- Turn around before fatigue, darkness, or severe weather removes safe options. A phone may have no service; consider an appropriate emergency communication device for remote trips.
- If lost or injured, stop in a safe place, call for help if possible, and give your location and trip details. Avoid unnecessary wandering, climbing, or hazardous attempts to signal.

Sources & further guidance

National Park Service: Hike smart | www.nps.gov
National Park Service: Ten essentials | www.nps.gov
National Weather Service: Lightning safety outdoors | www.weather.gov