

GLS HIKE LEADER
GUIDE FOR
DAY OUTINGS

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GLS HIKE LEADER GUIDE

FOR DAY OUTINGS

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GLS HIKE LEADER'S GUIDE FOR DAY OUTINGS

SELECTING AN OUTING

PURPOSE: When selecting an outing, remember the Sierra Club's motto: Explore, Enjoy, Protect. What's the purpose? (Enjoy the outdoors, focus on conservation, teach an outdoor skill...)

Here are a few thoughts on what makes a good one:

- It's INTERESTING to you and others—perhaps a favorite place.
- Great scenery or beauty: views, mountains, coastline, rivers, waterfalls, woods, Headlands
- Important natural features: earthquake fault, mountain pass, meteor showers, full moon walk
- Representative or unusual flora or fauna
- Ecological interest: wetlands, tide pools
- Environmental importance: dumpsite, pollution site, new open space, freeways being demolished. Read Yodeler for areas of current interest & then lead a hike there.
- Historical interest: Black Diamond Mines ghost town, Mt. Tam's old gravity car route; the Dipsea trail
- An especially challenging hike (Death March)
- An easy walk for elderly, physically challenged, etc.

Ideas for activities other than hiking:

- Bird watching at your favorite wetland
- Tide pool exploration
- Movie night—environmental focus
- Plan a creative celebration of the equinox or solstice
- Organize a docent-led tour of museum or park (or take a docent tour and then lead a similar one yourself for GLS)
- Attend a conservation lecture with other GLS members (such as a lecture sponsored by the main Sierra Club)
- Organize a service trip to repair or build trails or weed out exotic plants
- Set up potluck brunch organized around a letter-writing campaign
- Photography hike and follow-up potluck to review photos
- Climb city hills and staircases
- Tour city dump or county watershed
- Tour a sewage treatment plant
- Tour little-known public park or open space
- Bicycle ride
- Mountain biking
- Old-fashioned potluck picnic
- Sports day at the beach with Frisbees & volleyball, or croquet or baseball in a park
- Special Golden Gate Park activities: Try out the fly-casting pool, row boats around Stow Lake.
- Ride horses
- Planetarium or museum or zoo visit on free day

ANYTHING THAT BROADENS OUR AWARENESS OF OUR ENVIRONMENT IS A VALID OUTING (well, except climbing and some watersports)

PLANNING YOUR OUTING

GLS members are relying on you to make sure they are safe, well-prepared, reasonably comfortable, and home on time. Some may have important health concerns or may be novice hikers very much in need of your good leadership. Show them a good time and don't violate their trust.

Define the outing profile: type of activity, rigor, duration

Define participant profile: How many participants can safely and legally take part in the outing; do they need special outdoor skill or experience, are all welcome?

NOW SCOUT IT: Generally, you will scout your outing before you offer it. If you don't, you must reveal that in your write-up describing the outing. When you scout,

Walk the route: How long does it take you in its entirety and from point to point? How rough and rutted is the trail? Are there any extremely steep sections? Do loose stones make it slippery? Any other features requiring special ability, attention, or warning? Where is the trail ambiguous? What landmarks will help you remember important turnoffs? At what points should you stop to make sure everyone is together before you go on? (At least wait at every trail junction.) If there is a hazard, what alternative route will you take? Any required bouldering, stream fords, or mud to walk through? Are rattlesnakes likely? Consider the environmental impact. Consider the psychological effect of the sequence of sites and events: It is important to note where the difficult portions of the trip are. Do they come early or late in the outing? Are they adequately balanced with rest periods?

- **TIMING**--Set a schedule. Most people average about 2 M.P.H. so is your pace realistic? Leaders generally move faster than participants. Add time for unforeseen delays (environmental and human), breaks, hydration stops, and elevation gain and/or loss. It may be easiest to calculate backwards: ending time, hiking time, lunch & rest time, starting time, meeting time. When do you want to finish? How long does the actual hiking take? How much rest and lunch time is appropriate? If you intend to be out late, you should let participants know in the write-up or at the start of the hike.
- **Lunch location:** Where will you eat lunch? Will you be able to get there at a reasonable time?
- **To stay on schedule,** it helps to know how much time it takes to get between major points in the hike

INTERESTING FEATURES

What interesting features does the hike offer? Can you point out some geological formations, identify plant or bird life, explain where the trail name came from, or the history of the place? Trail guidebooks may give this info.

Loop: Can you make the trip a loop rather than just retracing steps?

Side trails: Are there side trails worth exploring? They may lead to terrific viewpoints.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

GETTING LOST: KNOW THE TRAIL WELL! It's hard to win the confidence of your group if you haven't scouted your outing recently and aren't sure where you are going. Try not to get lost or even look lost on a GLS hike. The issue here is more than your embarrassment: if you get lost, your hikers might not want to participate again.

In addition to scouting, planning involves considering other LOGISTICS

1. TRANSPORTATION CONVENIENCE

- a. Will carpooling be feasible? The Sierra Club encourages carpooling to conserve natural resources, and not everyone has a car. If you want people to meet at SAFEWAY or ROCKRIDGE BART, will you be there to organize carpools? If not, get a co-leader to do it. Or try to arrange something on the Meetup.
- b. How long does it take to get to the trailhead from carpool site?
- c. Is public transportation available? How long would it take? Exactly what bus do you catch and where? How much does bus cost?
- d. Adequate parking at trailhead? Parking fee?
- e. Road conditions: will drivers have to take rutted dirt road? If so, warn them.
- f. Is a car shuttle necessary to get back to trailhead? If so, arrange carefully.
- g. Are there toilet facilities at the trailhead? (Helpful, especially if it's a long drive, but not essential.)

2. POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

- a. WEATHER CONCERNS: Are dustiness or excessive heat likely to be a problem on the day of the hike? Is fog likely to kill the views on the day of the hike?
- b. CHANGING CONDITIONS: Are trail conditions likely to change between the date you scout and the time you lead the hike? Unchecked poison oak growth has ruined some trails at Point Reyes. Any severe erosion might cause the trail to be closed or unpleasant by the time of your hike? If you suspect so, you should try to scout the trail again shortly before the day of the hike. Alternatively, you can call that agency's ranger office to ask about conditions on particular trails shortly before the outing.
- c. SCHEDULING CONFLICTS: Avoid traffic for events such as Bay-to-Breakers or the Dipsea. Consider that turnout may be light around Halloween, holiday weekends, Castro Street fair, Pride, Holiday weekends, and the day of time change in spring.
- d. LEGAL HASSLES: Are you on public property that will be open to the group? Stay off private property unless you have written permission. If you are leading a dog hike, have you checked that dogs are allowed on **ALL** the trails on your route? Must they be leashed?
- e. GROUP PERMITS & CLOSING TIMES: Many public lands close at dark. The Marin Municipal Water District forbids groups of 20 or more without a permit. Other agencies require group-use permits. Be aware of the ordinances that apply to your route. Take agency rules seriously.
- f. EMERGENCY AIDS: It's prudent to note the location of the nearest facilities for emergency aid, such as telephone, ranger station, or road.

WRITING IT UP—THE ART OF ATTRACTING WHILE SCREENING PARTICIPANTS

BASICS: Our mission is to get queers “Out in Nature”. Your write-up is your invitation for participants to join you. Be sure to give all the details they need to understand the nature of the outing. Include who, what, where, when and how.

SPELL IT OUT: Even if you rate your hike accurately, people may not take the trouble to decipher the rating symbols. Thus, describe length and difficulty in your write-up to make sure people grasp it.

SCREENING: The write-up can also screen out those who are not suited for your outing. If you are sloppy in your write-up, you risk problems on your hike. **A tip:** members will be very upset if the hike is harder than the rating indicates, and you may find yourself babysitting maddeningly slow walkers. Some veteran hike leaders purposely rate their hikes slightly harder than they really are to screen out problem hikers.

CO-LEADERS: A co-leader is useful in fielding questions, organizing carpools and conducting the hike. If the group is large, you can break into two groups. Using potential leaders helps recruit new leaders and keeps the group alive.

DESCRIPTION:

- Share your enthusiasm: make it sound fun.
- Come up with a catchy, provocative title. Include a geographical reference to help people understand where your outing is (e.g., “near Mt. Tam “or “East Bay”).
- Describe interesting/unusual features to attract members. Include a photo.
- Include meeting places and times. Can you offer carpool opportunities or public transit info.
- **DIRECTIONS:** Most people have GPS but sometimes it fails when you most need it. Exactly how do you get there?
- It helps to indicate your expected time of return.
- If you are planning a Bay Area overnight, don’t list the campsite location in your write-up. People will just show up without calling, whether there is space for them or not.
- List what to bring, e.g. lunch, water, money for all anticipated expense including a share of transportation costs, boots with good tread, layered clothing, windbreaker, sunscreen, sunglasses, insect spray, food, flashlights and warm clothing if at night, swimsuit if appropriate etc.
- Warn of particularly difficult aspects (e.g. “Includes a very steep climb” or “brisk pace”).
- Weather policy: Rain cancels?

APPROVAL: All outings must be reviewed before being posted. Also, policy requires they be listed on the Sierra Club website before we can publicize them on Meetup, Facebook or to any other group. Hopefully, you will enter your outing on O.A.R.S., then hit “Pending Approval” so that an administrator can review and post it. In a pinch, you can send the Outings Leader the write up to enter for you. Here’s the link: <https://tioga.sierraclub.org/activity-entry/login.jsf> You will see that the Activity Entry system is actually quite intuitive after you get through the initial hurdle of logging in for the first time.

PUBLICITY: MAKE IT CLEAR WHETHER YOU WANT YOUR HIKE PUBLICIZED on the general Sierra Club Calendar, or strictly on the GLS calendar. If you are averse to having your information online at all, we can limit your write-up to the membership e-blast. Publicity is good since the Sierra Club encourages outreach to people who are not yet members of the Club. Non-members are welcome on our outings. But also consider: Are you prepared for a big crowd that may include people who are slow and inexperienced? Are you comfortable with your name being published. If you want to list your outing on Meetup, wait until it’s been

approved and posted by the Outings Chair before posting.

CONDUCTING THE OUTING

- WHAT TO BRING
 - a. The three laminated cards: Trailhead Talk, Emergency Response, Leave No Trace
 - b. Liability Waiver, clipboard, pen
 - c. Incident Report Form
 - d. Emergency Response—Patient Report (keep it in your first aid kit)
 - e. Safety Management Plan (if desired)
 - f. Trash bag
 - g. Ten Essentials: Navigation (map and compass), Sun protection (sunglasses and sunscreen), insulation (extra clothing), Illumination (headlamp/flashlight), First aid supplies, Fire (waterproof matches/lighter/candles), Repair kit and tools, Nutrition (extra food), Hydration (extra water), Emergency shelter (tarp, bivvy sac, space blanket)

- PRELIMINARIES MEETING PLACE OR TRAILHEAD
 - a. Arrive 15 minutes early to greet members and reassure them they are in the right place and to coordinate departure activities.
 - b. Introduce yourself and others in a friendly, informal way, good idea to wear a GLS T-shirt so people can identify you at your meeting place or at crowded trailheads.
 - c. Sign up and count.
 - d. Screening: Visually inspect for out-of-shape people. If you fear someone is not in good enough shape to keep up with the group, talk to that person privately and ask about their previous hiking experience. Be sensitive and tactful. Don't make automatic judgments about a person's hiking experience and ability based simply on that person's appearance, but if the hike is strenuous and the pace is brisk, you need to make sure all participants can keep up. If you believe someone won't be able to keep up, say you are sorry, but for their safety and out of concern for the rest it would be better for that person to skip today's outing and attend another time. (Helps to have an upcoming event to recommend.) You have the right and responsibility to screen out unprepared and unfit people. If you don't, you must provide a GLS member to "sweep" and baby-sit them on the trail. If the trail is very well marked, you might give them the option of coming part way and then turning back, but do this only if you are sure they will be OK on their own.
 - i. OFFICIAL SIERRA CLUB POLICY ON SCREENING: "The outing leader is completely in charge of the outing. The leader's discretion is complete, and the leader's decisions are final. The outing leader decides who goes on an outing and who does not. If the leader is uncertain about an applicant's ability, the leader should ask questions and make suggestions. Usually, after such discussions, the unqualified applicant will decide not to participate in the outing. However, if he/she does not, the leader must be willing to say to the poorly equipped or out of condition applicant, "I'm sorry, but for your own safety and for the safety of the other participants in the outing, I cannot accept you on this outing. "

- TRAILHEAD TALK (Refer to Trailhead Talk card)
- THE HIKE

- a. **SET PACE** Set and maintain an appropriate pace with appropriate rest stops. Be sensitive to your group and adjust your pace if necessary. It's dangerous to push the group faster than it wants to go, even if you are running late. Call for RESTS if you notice some people are showing signs of fatigue.
 - b. **WHO'S IN FRONT?** If it's your policy to stay at the front of the pack, what do you do if some participants want to go on ahead of the group? It depends on the situation and your knowledge of the people who want to go on ahead. Will they be OK? Do they know where they are going and where to meet you later? Will they notice the junctions in the trail?
 - c. **CARRY a FIRST-AID KIT** on all hikes. Watch those hikers who seem to be straining. Look for signs of exhaustion, dehydration. Ask about hot spots at stops **before** a participant gets a blister. Privately talk with anyone showing excessive strain and insist that the person rest or take water if necessary. Ask if they have a condition that would make hiking difficult today. Remember your first-aid training.
 - d. **SPLIT GROUP?** If some hikers just seem slower than others and you have a co-leader who knows the route, consider breaking the group into two parts going two different paces. If the route can be shortened, perhaps the slower part should take the shorter route. Or perhaps the faster walkers can add a side-trip that the others skip.
 - e. **WAIT AND COUNT:** Wait at trail junctions to make sure everyone knows where to go. Both the leader and sweep should quietly conduct periodic head counts to make sure nobody is missing.
 - f. **ENCOURAGE GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL MANNERS:** Don't allow shortcutting, flower picking, etc. Encourage members to pick up and pack out litter if they see it. Set a good example by picking up and packing out any trash you see. (You might carry a plastic bag in your backpack for this). Encourage good peeing etiquette (away from trail, 200 ft. from water)
 - g. Don't forget to include your conservation topic and give a plug for GLS and Sierra Club membership.
 - h. **EARLY SIGN OUTS:** Before you let anyone leave the group on the trail, have that person sign out with either you or the sweep. Before they leave, make sure they have adequate water, etc. to make it back to the trailhead and make sure they aren't carrying something essential to someone else (i.e. lunch or car keys).
 - i. **BE FRIENDLY:** Mix with the group as much as possible. Make an effort to talk at least briefly with each participant. Try to say something friendly to everyone attending. Engage them so they feel welcome and at home in the group.
 - j. **STAY ON SCHEDULE:** Bring a watch and keep to your time schedule unless it's clear that nobody in the group cares when they get back.
- **ENDING THE OUTING**
 - a. **COUNT AND THANK:** Take a final head count to make sure nobody's missing. Thank each participant for accompanying you on the outing.
 - b. **RECRUIT:** Note anyone who has shown good judgment and other leadership qualities and encourage them to become hike leaders.
 - c. **GIVE A PLUG** for GLS and the Sierra Club.
 - d. **BIDDING FAREWELL:** Check that everyone has a ride, make sure all drivers have keys. If you're in a remote area, it's a good idea not to leave the trailhead until all cars have started. If you feel like having dinner with the group, see who's interested.

After a hike,

- Please e-mail the outings chair the # of participants and let him/her know if any incidents came up.

- Waivers: Law requires we hold on to them for six years. You may pass them on to the Outings Chair in person or by mail. Alternately, you can send the Outings Chair an electronic copy and store the hard copy yourself.

KEEPING YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Being an outing leader can be a tremendously rewarding experience. Often our participants have a grand time on outings and thank us warmly. Sometimes they linger afterwards in the parking lot, talking with us and wanting to prolong that special kind of closeness you share when you have just rediscovered together how wonderful and spectacular nature can be.

On the other hand, there are times when things don't go right, when our group doesn't quite click, and when inconsiderate, unprepared or unappreciative participants make us wonder, "Why do we do this?"

We do this because

- ✓ We love the outdoors and want to share that love with other queers.
- ✓ We believe the LGBTIQ community should participate in protecting and enjoying our natural environment, that GLS is needed and important and that we must contribute our time and energy for GLS to survive and grow.
- ✓ We play a valuable role in helping our sisters and brothers renew their inner energy through contact with nature.
- ✓ We are proud to be members of the nation's first and largest gay and lesbian organization for environmental protection. We want to set an example for others. We are proud to be recognized members of a conservation organization as distinguished, respected and effective as the Sierra Club
- ✓ We want to educate members of our community on the need to reduce their impact on the natural environment, and we want to demonstrate techniques for displaying good outdoor manners.
- ✓ We want to familiarize our community with specific areas, so they will be motivated to preserve natural values and speak from personal experience as advocates for preservation.
- ✓ We are proud to show that gays and lesbians make a valuable contribution to everyone's world.

Please: Contribute what you can to the group, learn to protect yourself against burn-out, don't lead an outing if you are not physically and emotionally up to the task, and above all, **HAVE FUN.**

A GOOD GLS LEADER:

- Accepts responsibility
- Knows appropriate outdoor skills and practices
- Organizes and delegates
- Is an enthusiastic, energetic self-starter with follow-through
- Remains poised and confident under pressure
- Possesses a sense of humor and is congenial and considerate
- Can be tactful and understanding, yet firm and diligent
- Has patience with the inexperienced
- Is an effective communicator, good listener, and encourages others
- Willingly imparts knowledge and skills to others
- Recognizes her/his own limitations, capabilities and shortcomings
- Identifies potential leaders

OUTING IN A NUTSHELL

Before an outing:

1. **Approval:** All outings have to be reviewed before being posted. Also, they must be listed on the Sierra Club website, before we can publicize them on Meetup, Facebook or to any other group. You can either send the Outings Chair your write-up to be posted, or to make sure it's done quickly, you can put it directly on O.A.R.S. yourself. Here's the link: O.A.R.S. <https://tioga.sierraclub.org/activity-entry/login.jsf>
2. **Publicity:** Please let the Outings Chair know if you are okay to have your outing posted on the general Sierra Club Calendar, or strictly on the GLS calendar. If you are averse to having your information online at all, we can limit your write-up to the membership e-blast.

During an outing: Realistically, we lead many outings where all of this is not necessary but as a general guideline, make sure you have:

- The three laminated cards: Trailhead Talk, Emergency Response, Leave No Trace (Let me know if you need one)
- The updated 10 essentials <http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/wbc/nc/Main%20Pages/essentials.htm>
- FIRST AID KIT: suggested content list from the Sierra Club <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/medical/first-aid/kit-contents.aspx>
- Sign-in sheet and Liability Waiver (I'm sorry, you have to sign in for the following 3. (remember, user name is "clubhouse" and password is "explore") <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/forms/gco/SignInWaiver.PDF>
- Emergency Response—Patient Report (keep a copy in your first aid kit) http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/forms/programs/sample_forms/Patient_Report.PDF
- Incident Report Form: http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/forms/programs/insurance/incident_report.PDF

Don't forget to include a conservation topic and give a plug for GLS and Sierra Club membership.

After a hike,

- Please e-mail the Outings Chair the # of participants and let me know if any incidents came up.
- Waivers: Pass them on to the Outings Chair. You may store them yourselves (law requires we hold on to them for 6 years), but in that case, send the Outings Chair an electronic copy.

Disclaimer: This guide is not intended to replace, but merely supplements, the Sierra Club Outings publications “OUTING LEADER HANDBOOK”. Please refer to that document or the Sierra Club Clubhouse for definitive information on Hike Leading, Insurance, Liability, Restricted Outing, Sierra Club Policies, etc.

Below are some Links and Forms that you may find useful:

- Related Links and Forms
 - a. Link to Activity Entry Login <https://tioga.sierraclub.org/activity-entry/login.jsf>
 - b. Liability Waiver <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/forms/gco/SignInWaiver.PDF>
 - c. suggested first aid content list from the Sierra Club:
<http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/medical/first-aid/kit-contents.aspx>
 - d. 10 essentials link: <http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/wbc/nc/Main%20Pages/essentials.html>
 - e. Emergency Response—Patient Report (keep a copy in your first aid kit)
http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/forms/programs/sample_forms/Patient_Report.PDF
 - f. Incident Report Form:
http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/forms/programs/insurance/incident_report.PDF
 - g. Clubhouse Home Page <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/>
 - h. Outings Training home page <http://clubhouse.sierraclub.org/outings/training/default.aspx>
 - i. SF Bay Chapter Sierra Club <http://www.sanfranciscobay.sierraclub.org/>