

DAY HIKE WEATHER SAFETY

PRE-HIKE PLANNING AND TURNAROUND DECISIONS

Hike plan

Trail / route: _____

Date / start time: _____

Expected return: _____

1 WEATHER AND ROUTE

- ☐ Check forecast and alerts for the trail location and elevation
- ☐ Check thunderstorm, wind, heat, cold, rain, and flood risks
- ☐ Review route length, elevation gain, exposure, and crossings
- ☐ Check trail closures and identify known safer return options

2 GEAR AND COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Pack rain protection, dry insulation, food, and adequate water
- ☐ Bring navigation, headlamp, first aid, and emergency shelter
- ☐ Check phone, backup power, and emergency communication gear
- ☐ Share route, party details, and return time with a trusted contact

3 SET DECISION POINTS BEFORE STARTING

- ☐ Set a firm turnaround time; turn back earlier if needed
- ☐ Identify exposed areas and possible retreat locations
- ☐ Agree on conditions that will trigger a change of plans
- ☐ Do not let reaching the destination override safety

Turnaround time: _____

Latest safe return target: _____

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ON-TRAIL DECISION GUIDE AND PRACTICE LOG

4 REASSESS CONDITIONS WHILE HIKING

- ☐ Watch changing clouds, wind, visibility, and temperature
- ☐ Check time, progress, energy, water, and group condition
- ☐ Turn around before exposed terrain becomes hazardous
- ☐ Reevaluate when trails become slippery, flooded, or blocked

5 WHEN CONDITIONS BECOME DANGEROUS

- ☐ Thunder: seek substantial shelter or a hard-topped vehicle
- ☐ Never cross floodwater or bypass an unstable washout
- ☐ Do not rush across exposed terrain during active lightning
- ☐ If safe return is impossible, reduce exposure and call for help

DECISION CHECK: TURN BACK / REROUTE / STOP

Which option avoids the most serious immediate hazards?

Is the route known and passable? Can everyone travel safely?

If no safe route exists, communicate location and request help.

AFTER-HIKE REVIEW

Weather observed vs. forecast:

What triggered our decision?

Gear or planning changes for next time:

SAFETY REMINDER

No outdoor location is lightning-safe. Never enter floodwater.