



Trip Leader- GMC's GUIDELINES FOR SECTION OUTINGS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Edited April 1st, 2021

These guidelines were created by a staff-volunteer working group in June 2020 and have been edited to reflect current conditions and guidance. Trip leaders and participants have done a great job following the guidelines and putting safety first.

Vermont's caseload is still higher than at any point during the 2020 hiking season. While multi-household recreation is permitted, we encourage each leader and participant to consider their own COVID-19 risk profile and take every possible precaution when considering outdoor recreation with others.

There is specific guidance for the Organization, Outings Coordinator, Trip Leader and the Participant. For trip leaders and participants, we've broken the guidance into specific time frames.

1. *Planning a Trip*
2. *Before the Trip*
3. *At the Start of the Trip*
4. *During the Trip*
5. *At the End of the Trip (Not for Participants)*
6. *After the Trip*

These guidelines are prescriptive but will inevitably fail to cover some questions and answers. Without being too verbose, consider the below summary of rationale for establishing guidance.

1. Minimize the chances of including potential sources of contagion on our trips.
2. Reduce the opportunities for transmission spread on our trips.
3. Follow rules and regulations established by relevant governing bodies and maintain some semblance of consistency with GMC's other guidelines.
4. Provide consistent and simple guidance for outings leaders and participants.

Resources for COVID-19 Guidance

Vermont Department of Health COVID FAQ's- <https://apps.health.vermont.gov/COVID/faq/#4761>

Governor Scott's COVID-19 Response- <https://governor.vermont.gov/covid19response>

ACCD Cross-State Travel Guidance- <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>

FPR Outdoor Recreation and COVID-19- <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/outdoor-recreation-and-covid-19>

Vermont Department of Health- <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19>

Green Mountain Club Response- <https://www.greenmountainclub.org/covid-19-response/>

ORGANIZATION

- Provide initial guidelines.
- Disseminate guidelines to outings coordinators, including pushing out updates as they occur.
- Securely file for 30 days all trip leader contact lists.
- In the event a trip participant tests positive, coordinate with the VT Department of Health for participant list and contact tracing.
- Make guidelines available online in an easily found location and share that location with Section President's and Outings Coordinators.
- In consultation with Section Outings Working Group, provide updates to guidelines.
 - Receive feedback from trip leaders and outing coordinators.
 - Monitor guidance from governing organizations.

OUTINGS COORDINATORS

- Act as conduit for guidelines, questions, and feedback from trip leaders.
- Ensure that trip leaders who have signed up to lead trips acknowledge that they have read, understood and accept section outing guidelines.
- Ensure trip leaders are collecting participant contact information and sending it to the GMC for filing.
- Outings coordinator will share and inform trip leaders of the following:
 - These guidelines for section outings.
 - Availability and assistance from Outings Coordinator and GMC-staff contact.
- Consider buying PPE supplies (masks and sanitizer) in bulk to make available to trip leaders.



GMC's GUIDELINES FOR SECTION OUTINGS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

TRIP LEADER

These are the minimum safety guidelines for GMC Section Outings. A trip leader may impose additional limitations (e.g., reduce group size, limit breaks) if they wish to.

If planning a bike, paddle or other recreational outing, follow all guidelines of that waterway/trail network and communicate questions or concerns with your Outings Coordinator and/or GMC.

The trip leader's Section Outings Coordinator as well as the GMC Staff are available for specific questions or clarifications related to this guidance.

Planning a Trip

- Identify a backup trip option if the trailhead parking lot is at or over capacity.
- Aim for a route that is less likely to be crowded on the day and time of the trip. Consider weekdays or early starts. This is a good opportunity to get out on less traveled trails.
- Do not plan any trips that involve carpool or shuttles unless carpoolers are from a single household or if all carpoolers have had at least 14-days pass since their final vaccine dose.
- Do not plan trips out of state unless it can be ensured that all participants in that trip have had at least 14-days pass since their final vaccine dose.
- Overnight trips may be planned only if all participants are fully vaccinated.
- Be sure to have an experienced hiker (up front) and sweep (at the rear), to reduce need to move back and forth throughout the group, and to increase safety.
- Plan trips well within the trip leader's and expected participant's capabilities.
- Any publicity (papers, website, e-mails) should include either full participant instructions or a link to the same, and should not include the meeting place, to ensure RSVP by participants. Note that [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) requires an event date/time, but not a location.

Before the Trip

- Communicate with and require an RSVP by all participants, giving them participant instructions and getting an acknowledgment that they have read, understand and agree to follow participant instructions. In particular:
 - Participants should not come if they or anyone in their household shows symptoms of COVID-19, has been exposed to someone sick or has traveled out of state and not quarantined upon returning.
 - For out-of-state participants, follow the Agency of Commerce and Community Development Cross-State Travel guidelines, viewable here: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>.

- Participants should bring a mask and hand sanitizer that they can keep accessible during the hike, plus all their own usual hiking stuff (water, food, clothing, sunscreen, bug dope....)
- Participants need to be certain of their ability to do the planned trip, and trip leaders should verify the same. This is not the time to try pushing your limits and thereby take on added risk for the individual or group.
- Limit trip size to ten participants, including leader(s).
- Collect contact information (name, email, phone number) for all participants before trip. This information is to be used only for contact tracing.
- Trip leader should consider bringing extra masks and hand sanitizer for emergencies (e.g. forgot mask, damages mask). This is not a substitute for participants bringing these items. Section outings coordinators may make these available to leaders.
- Communicate with your outings coordinator and check the GMC website for any updates to outing guidelines.

Start of Trip

- Remind participants of the criteria (travel, no symptoms, mask/distancing, etc...) to participate in the trip and ask them if they agree to have met/meet that criteria.
- Adopt an “arrive, play, leave” mentality, minimizing to every extent possible *start of* trip gathering time.
- Wearing masks and standing at least 6-feet from others, give brief name introductions and repeat “guidelines” of the hike.
 - Ask to ensure everyone has read the participant guidelines.
 - No sharing, food, water or equipment outside your own household members.
 - If it must happen outside of your household, use hand sanitizer.
 - Stay spaced out on the trail at least 6-feet apart, and preferably more.
 - Minimize passing, and when you pass wear a mask, say “hello” and communicate with the hiker about the next best move to preserve trailside vegetation and social distancing.

During Trip

- The GMC recommends all participants wear masks and practice social distancing on group trips. Due to advances in vaccination, Vermont guidance currently provides certain mask and distancing exemptions which the trip leader may choose to allow. Those exemptions are below.
 - If all individuals on an outing have had 14-days since their final vaccine dose.
 - If the outing includes one or more vaccinated household and no more than one unvaccinated household.
- Leader picks spots for breaks that are not crowded, where people can spread out without blocking the trail and without treading on sensitive plants and soils. Consider splitting the group into two and breaking those two groups slightly separate from each other. Avoid using shelters and picnic tables during breaks.
- Communicate with the lead hiker, sweep hiker and all participants the need for hiker awareness and consideration of others.

- When approaching another hiker to pass, slow down, give a friendly “Hello” and communicate with hiker the next best move for passing while preserving social distancing and the trailside vegetation.
- Step off trail when needed. In areas that don't allow for six-feet of passing, step at a 90-degree angle off the trail onto a durable surface, wait until the passer is gone, and retrace your footsteps to the trail.
- Sweep should make any hikers passing from the rear aware of the remaining group up ahead.

At End of the Trip

- Ensure trip leader has contact information (name, phone, email) for all participants.
- Remind participants to immediately contact the Vermont Department of Health if they feel any symptoms of COVID-19.

After Trip

- Trip leader will send contact information for all participants to lcurrier@greenmountainclub.org to be securely filed for at least 30 days.
- If trip leader show signs and symptoms of COVID-19, contact your primary care provider or health provider immediately to request further guidance.
- Give feedback on the outing and these procedures to the outing’s coordinator.



GMC's GUIDELINES FOR SECTION OUTINGS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Participant

Planning a Trip

- Look for a trip that is well within your hiking ability. This is not the time to try pushing your limits and thereby take on added risk for the individual or group.
- For out-of-state participants, follow the Agency of Commerce and Community Development Cross-State Travel guidelines, viewable here: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/restart/cross-state-travel>.

Before the Trip

- Sign up with the trip leader and provide contact information to be filed securely by GMC Staff for 30 days. Participant contact information will be used only in the event contact tracing is required.
- Review and **acknowledge that you have read, understood and agree to follow these participant instructions.**
- **DO NOT COME** if you or anyone in your household shows symptoms of COVID-19, has been exposed to someone sick or has traveled out of state and not quarantined upon returning. Alert the trip leader you will not be coming.
- Bring a mask (a "buff" is not acceptable) and hand sanitizer that you can keep accessible during the hike, plus all your own usual hiking stuff (water, food, clothing, sunscreen, bug dope...). Bring multiple masks to swap out if one gets dirty or sweaty.
- Do not carpool or shuttle with others unless carpoolers are from a single household or if all carpoolers have had at least 14-days pass since their final vaccine dose.

Start of Trip

- Adopt an "arrive, play, leave" mentality, and minimize gathering time at the trailhead or summit.
- Wear a mask as you exit your vehicle, meet the leader and other participants, hear the hike instructions and depart from the trailhead.

During Trip

- The GMC recommends all participants wear masks and practice social distancing on group trips. Due to advances in vaccination, Vermont guidance currently provides certain mask and distancing exemptions. It is the trip leaders choice to allow these exemptions on the trip. Those exemptions are below.
 - If all individuals on an outing have had 14-days since their final vaccine dose.
 - If the outing includes one or more vaccinated household and no more than one unvaccinated household.
- Stay spaced out on the trail at least 6 feet apart.

- All participants should be aware of the need for hiker awareness and consideration of others.
 - When approaching another hiker to pass, slow down, give a friendly “Hello” and communicate with hiker the next best move for passing while preserving social distancing and the trailside vegetation.
 - Step off trail when needed. In areas that don't allow for six-feet of passing, step at a 90-degree angle off the trail onto a durable surface, wait until the passer is gone, and retrace your footsteps to the trail.
- Don't pass the lead hiker and be sure to stop at any trail junction or place where there is any uncertainty about the route.

After Trip

- Give your name and contact information to the trip leader if they haven't received it already.
- If you show signs and symptoms of COVID-19, contact your primary care provider or health provider immediately to request further guidance.