



Hike Smart: Summer Backpacking



Hiking in the desert at the hottest time of the year carries inherent risk. Timing your hike to avoid this dangerous heat is crucial to ensuring your personal safety and having an enjoyable trip. To survive, you must limit the amount of time you exert yourself in direct sunlight. Hike in cooler weather—near dawn and dusk or at night. Do not underestimate the intensity of the mid-day desert sun!

Do You Have a Realistic Plan?

Grand Canyon National Park assists more than 600 hikers during the hot summer months and helicopter rescues an additional 150 people. Many overestimate their fitness and hiking ability. *You are responsible for your safety and the safety of your family and friends.*

- Leave an itinerary with someone reliable and be sure to check back in.
- Avoid hiking in the heat between 10 am and 4 pm.
- When headed down, be in camp by 10 am.
- Leave camp before sunrise and be above the Redwall Limestone by 10 am.
- It takes twice as long to hike out as it did to hike down.
- Do not rely on the National Park Service to rescue you.

Have You Checked the Weather?

Temperatures in the shade: 105°F (40°C) at Indian Garden and 115°F (46°C) at Phantom Ranch.

Check the weather before you leave

- July and August bring severe thunder and lightning storms. Stay away from tall objects, such as trees, and seek shelter.
- Watch for National Weather Service heat warnings and avoid hiking on those days.

Regulate your pace and rest often

- Walk with a stride that allows you to talk with your companions.
- Rest often in the shade. You will slowly begin to recover after 30 minutes of rest.
- Eat and drink while at rest.

Stay wet and stay cool

- Staying wet and cool improves your hiking performance.
- Soak your hat and shirt
- Submerge yourself in creeks.
- Wear a wet bandana around your neck.
- Carry a spray bottle to cool yourself.

Protect yourself from the sun and elements

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or carry a sun umbrella.
- Wear sunscreen and sunglasses.
- Bring a rain coat.

Balance Your Food and Water Intake

Food You expend tremendous energy while hiking and trying to stay cool. Double your caloric intake to help maintain your energy.

- Eat carbohydrates and salty foods when drinking water and while resting.
- Hiking suppresses your appetite; eat double your normal intake of carbohydrates and salty foods.
- Be cautious with electrolyte tablets or salt replacement products. Using food to replenish your lost electrolytes is much safer.

Water Walking uphill on a hot summer day causes excessive sweating. Your body's fluid and electrolytes must be replaced.

- Too little water leads to dehydration and life-threatening heat stroke. Over hydration and lack of salty foods causes hyponatremia—a seizure-producing electrolyte disorder.
- *Eat and drink while resting—sip fluids while hiking.*

Trail Courtesy

1. Travel with a friend, and stick together.
2. Use restrooms along the trail.
3. Mules have right of way.
4. Uphill travelers have right of way.

5. To pass someone, slow down and let them know you want to pass.
6. Do not store or abandon gear along the trail; it attracts wildlife.
7. Pack out your trash.
8. Be quiet; respect those seeking serenity.

Hikers' Checklist

- A Grand Canyon National Park backpacking permit, required for all overnight hikes
- Food and water—minimum four quarts/ liters per day
- Well-fitting and broken in hiking boots or shoes
- Wide-brimmed hat
- Sunscreen
- Clothing appropriate for the weather

- First aid kit with personal medications
- Duct tape, pocket knife, and parachute cord
- Hiking poles
- Headlamp with spare batteries
- Ground cloth, tarp, or tent
- Blanket or sleeping bag with ground pad
- Map, compass, and signal mirror
- Water purification tablets or filter
- Stove, fuel, and matches

Travel as light as possible. The heaviest items in your pack should be water and food.

Information

Preventative Search and Rescue
Grand Canyon National Park
PO Box 129
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023
www.nps.gov/grca

