

## Trekking Aspects

What is a trek?

A journey on foot that is used to reach a destination, often not reachable by a wheel or other means. It is a primitive physical activity that requires patience, strength and perseverance.

Where do we trek?

We trek across hills, forests, beaches, lakes and so on. Places that offer scenic pleasure or a physical challenge or both, are usually chosen for trekking. In the modern world, trekking places are somewhat limited but nevertheless plenty for a lifetime.

Why do we trek?

We trek to feel the nature around us by being an integral part of it as much as possible. To learn being natural, we venture into the heartlands of nature and live being a part of it. As the level and exposure to it increases, you can feel the conscious presence of wilderness. It helps increase confidence, discover yourself, better your abilities and overcome a lot of inabilities. More than a learning experience, a trek is a pleasure in our busy lifestyles. We also trek to create awareness, clean forests, and rescue operations.

How do we trek?

Discipline, responsibility and motive are combined with team work, friendship and courage in every trek. From the smallest to the largest, it is not the number of treks that count but is the way we have done each.

Who can trek?

Anyone and everyone can trek. First realize your potential either by self-evaluation or speaking to a trek leader. Take up a slightly larger challenge than you can or if you only wish to enjoy a place, check what inspires you more. Choose the trek that you can do, motivates you and you enjoy it.

When to trek?

There are night treks, day –treks, night camping, 3-day treks and much larger versions too. Once you get enough expertise, you can even trek alone or lead a team. Try some weekend or holiday trekking to start with.

## Trekking Fundamentals

1. Choose a trek that motivates you. There should be an incentive in it for you and see if the group's incentive matches yours. People trek for a feel of a place, adventure, water, wildlife, photography, blogging, or even just photographs for Facebook.
2. Do not burden yourself with a trek that is beyond your potential. Trek dynamics suit different people at different places.
3. Respect local people at your trek, and their culture and beliefs fully regardless of your opinion of them. If need be, you may have to indulge in them.
4. Respect the sanctity of nature. Every forest is a temple. Do not litter. Absolute silence, cleanliness and discretion are to be maintained in all places.
5. The group is your help, tool for survival and everything. Bear with those you don't like too, they will pleasantly surprise you.
6. You will learn a lot by doing things than reading them or listening to them.
7. Wear all the protective gear you need. Speak to your trek lead. Remember to carry your survival kit at all times. Be prepared for the worst and do your best. It is better to prevent, than cure, at all times.
8. Keep the weight on you as low as possible. Water, food and basic equipment is all that you carry and nothing else. Face creams, lotions, umbrellas and more are for the cities, not forests.
9. Food you carry must not have fried or cooked food as it gets spoilt more quickly. If you take bread, it may crumble. Biscuits and Chocolates need lot of water, so avoid them. Energy bars, Chikki, dry Chapatti, jam, Beet-root, Keera, Rusk, Mango pulp are some good options to carry. Choose wisely as per your trek demands.
10. Water is a critical aspect of survival. You will need at least 2 to 3 liter a day while trekking. Although you may use forest resources regularly, you will very often run into dry times. It is better to carry as much as possible. Drink wisely.
11. Listen and follow your trek lead completely. You may help him or give suggestions but he is your boss for the entire trek. Do not take up a trek unless you trust the lead.
12. Your trek leader is most likely a more experienced guy and not a tour operator or as such. He is a volunteer providing his expertise for almost nothing. Trust him, respect him and use the opportunity to learn as much from him as possible.
13. Everyone should carry the number of the local forest range office, police station, and hospital. Before trekking at any place, permission must be taken by a written request at the local police or forest officials as per requirement.
14. Don't count on luck. Fortune does not always favor the brave.

## Trekking Gear

1. Shoes: Preserve your feet. Treks cause lots of uneven, random shocks to your body that must be reduced to preserve your knees and heels. Use appropriate shoes, usually ones above the ankle with very slightly upturned toe front, breathability, water-proof material, shock-proofing and a good grip even on wet surfaces. Beach treks can be done on bare foot too.
2. Dress: Most treks are done on simple tracks. Tracks are better to be 2-layered ones (meshing inside) and a full-sleeved t-shirt is suggested for most treks. A cap and a waist-pouch are the most common accessories. Wear camouflaging colors. Avoid army's camouflaging colors, especially in areas with extremist activity.
3. Knife: A good knife is your ultimate survival tool. It is legal to carry a knife with a less than 6-inch blade given that you have a right purpose. A good knife for most Indian treks should be sharp, light and should be easy to cut lot of wood. Although people carry sharpening stones, with some practice you can easily find a good rock. Fancy knives and Swiss-army knives won't work. Do not flaunt any knife.
4. Medicines: Learn first-aid and learn as much as possible about basic medicine. Use as little as required to stay comfortable. Trekkers carry Ibuprofen, Ondasteron, Loperamide and Paracetamol tablets. A tape, cotton, antihistamine gel and some antiseptic gel are useful. Carry any medicine that you usually take. For Asthma patients, do not forget your inhaler. Do not trek with any illness.
5. Snake Gaiters: For most forest treks, it is highly suggested to wear gaiters as they prevent almost 99% of snake bites during walking. It is mandatory for those who lead the pack. Although very few use it, remember that there is very little first-aid for a snake bite and getting one to a hospital from a forest takes a lot of precious time.
6. Leech Socks: Leech proof socks can be constructed at home. They are mandatory for all treks in rain-forests, especially during the monsoons.
7. Rucksack: A proper rucksack is a mandatory trekking gear. A good rucksack should carry all your stuff inside comfortably, must be evenly balanced to both sides of your spine and rest comfortably within your back. Weight must be distributed to the entire back equally along with the shoulders. A wide strap, good seating, tough bottom, low weight and water-proofing are the key aspects of a proper rucksack.
8. Fire: Fire can be made from various tools. Always carry a match-box, or a acid-based lighter. A Swedish lighter produces good sparks. Another simple technique for some places, specially wet, is to carry little petrol. You can make fire by rubbing stones, drilling wood and almost anything with huge friction. Carrying a small piece of coal in a very small clay pot is also a good way to create fire easily.

9. Water: Plastic bottles are the easiest way to carry water. Waterpacks are more convenient on the back. A rucksack should have a provision for a Waterpack.
10. Stick: A good stick, with a good shock or a strong fallen live branch is suggested. An ideal stick should be V-shaped at the top, standing at the height of a shoulder, be strong and free from thorns or sharp edges. For hill climbs, a stick should be just above waist high, light, with a pointed bottom and a branch outcrop or V-split at the waist level.
11. Knee/Ankle/Elbow Supports: Most regular trekkers face severe strain on the knees which can take the pain only to a certain level. It is thus suggested to wear proper knee supports and ankle supports before you have a problem. This is very relevant for treks involving boulders, jumping and rocky terrain regardless of how small it is.
12. Life Jackets: For any activity in water, a life-jacket by the side is mandatory. It is also mandatory for those who are watching over as a life-guard before trying to save any person. A normal life-jacket gives a time of 8-12 hours of floating time to get to the shore. Tubes and other equipment are less safe but are more useful in crossings.
13. Rope: A very important part of a survival process, the rope can be used for anything from snares to shelter building. Learn to use the basic knots and hitches. A good rope must be 10m long, strong, and bear at least 1000kg+ of weight easily. They are inseparable from steep climbs for belaying and other safety procedures.
14. Carabineer: A light-weight but very strong instrument used to attach the rope to a harness.
15. Harness: A climbing harness secures a person to a rope with even tension distribution.
16. Sleeping Bag: Thermal insulation, protection from small insects, reptiles and some cushioning on hard surfaces are provided. Maintain a light-weight XL+ sized bag.
17. Sleeping Mat: Sleeping mat provides terrain protection to the sleeping bag. This can be avoided when it can't be used as a floatable device to make small rafts to carry equipment or as a base-floatation for small to medium bamboo/wooden rafts.
18. Light: A long-distance penetrable torch is mandatory for night times. Although, our eye can adjust well after a while to the semi-light available, a torch is a useful device. Head-lights are useful as they keep the hands free but they usually blind long distance vision. Special torches available are costly. Choose as per requirement.
19. Socks: Wear comfortable socks that keep the feet warm and can breathe. Sports socks are the best universal choice. Woolen socks are usually avoided except in very cold terrains.
20. Navigation Tools: Learn to navigate with nothing. A GPS is a great device to carry but not 100% reliable due to its signal problems in thick forests and battery drain. A map-

compass is mandatory for direction. Compasses with a mirror in it are useful to for emergency signaling also. Keep the weight of the compass down.

21. Maps: A physical map and a terrain (topographic) map are mandatory for any trek.
22. Cell Phone: A very useful survival device. Switch them off and use them only when you get lost or in other needs. Cell signals are available at surprisingly remote places. BSNL is the best service provider for most villages and forest areas.
23. Camera: Irrespective of the level of expertise, cameras are now carried by almost everyone in a trek. Discretion is required in what is uploaded on to the web. Try not to take very expensive cameras for exploratory trekking or strenuous missions.
24. Sunglasses: Frequently under-rated, they help a lot in protection from glare and maintaining a cool head. Mandatory for dry places and Himalayas.
25. Cash: It helps to carry a hundred-rupee note in some remote part of my rucksack and have another one in the pocket. Money is mandatory to survive wherever you hit civilization and any situation may require you to produce them at critical times.
26. Tweezers: Tweezers or a nail cutter helps in removing thorns from different parts of the body. To reduce weight, carry a plastic piece if you can get it.
27. Sewing Needle: Needle with some twine thread is a great use in repairing torn backpacks, shoes, dress or at rare times stitching deep cuts Rambo-style!
28. Parachute Cord: It is a life-saver in hasty situations. Usually wound to a Knife's hilt, the cord is strong and can also be used as a fishing line. Very useful at extreme times.
29. Duct Tape: If you or your bag has an injury, clean and duct tape it strongly.
30. Pen, Paper and Chalk: Very useful in leaving messages, notes and marking trails.
31. Water Purification Tablets: A quick way to consume any water available is to use a tablet in it as they are light-weight and effective. Alternatively, if possible, one can use a vessel or a tree bark to heat water considerably.
32. Steel Bottle: A steel bottle with a wide mouth is useful to heat water, or cook. If weight is not a problem, it is always suggestible to use one.
33. Dental Floss: This strong, light-weight rope can be used for tying or stitching.
34. Whistle: Although simple and effective, use only in emergency situations.
35. Pouch: A good leather pouch or polythene sheet is suggested to keep most of the items in the kit as they provide waterproofing.
36. Poncho: A simple raincoat with a slightly sturdier material than a raincoat, it provides protection from rain to both you and your backpack.
37. Windcheater: A jacket worn to protect yourself from cold winds at high altitudes.
38. Toilet-paper: Best cleaning agent. One roll usually fits for the team. Helps conserve water, is bio-degradable and useful for writing. Bury them in a forest after use.
39. Tarpaulin Sheet: It is the light but strong shelter, and blanket useful for most treks.