



# Guided Hike COVID-19 Guidelines

February 8, 2021

Hike Nova Scotia (Hike NS) urges Nova Scotians to hike while respecting [gathering limits](#), practice [social/physical distancing](#) and follow the [advice of public health officials](#). Parks, trails and beaches are now open but there are [restrictions to their use](#).

To ensure hike leaders and participants stay safe and follow provincial public health restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hike NS has created these guidelines to assist hike organizers, leaders and participants. These are not hard-and-fast rules, only guidelines meant to give general direction for managing guided hikes. Organizers are encouraged to adapt them to their needs. However, Hike NS urges organizers to always obey public health directives and keep them top of mind at all times.

## Organizers

Plan all aspects of your event to maintain physical distancing of two metres (6 feet) between all participants, organizers and hike leaders at all times.

### Choosing a trail:

- Avoid holding hikes on trails where there is already a lot of use (such as popular trails that have overflowing parking lots on a regular basis, etc.) or schedule hikes at less busy times on such trails.
- Consider using trails that:
  1. are wider to allow more room for users walking in opposite directions to pass while maintaining physical distancing of two metres apart;
  2. give more opportunities for people to step off the trail to maintain physical distancing with minimal impact to the trail and natural surroundings;
  3. have ample room in parking lots, at trailheads and other gathering areas on or near the trail to allow for physical distancing to take place easily; or
  4. are loop trails and consider having all hike groups and participants move in only one direction on the loop to avoid meeting one another.
- Consider contacting the trail managing body that you plan to run a guided hike on its trail. It might appreciate knowing a hike will take place. Ask if it has a return-to-activity plan that may outline any new rules or guidelines for use during this time or if it has plans or protocols in place for increased sanitization for any high-touch amenities (like washrooms/pit toilets, interpretive areas, etc.).



### Registration and Participants:

- Consider a limit of 10 participants per guided hike group (including the hike leader) who maintain physical distancing of 2 metres between one another. Note that multiple groups could be on the same trail at the same time, but they would each need their own leader, stagger start times and space themselves out so that one group is physically separated from another group (we recommend a group stay at least 4 metres or more away from another group).
- Please note that as gathering limits change, the number of people allowed to gather with physical distancing may be greater than the 10 people we are recommending. However, with 2 metres of distance between each participant, the line of hikers in that group (say, if the group was 50 people) would be very long and there is a risk of those who lag behind becoming separated from the group and perhaps taking a wrong turn. For this reason, Hike NS is recommending a more manageable group of 10 people with physical distancing within that group. Use your judgement when determining group sizes according to your capacity to have leaders, the type of trail and number of participants registered.
- Require registration with no drop-ins allowed; only those who are registered are permitted to be part of each hike group.
- Communicate the rules/guidelines for participating in the hike to those registered (copy the guidelines for leaders and participants below).
- No one is permitted on the hike who:
  1. has COVID-19 symptoms or is unwell;
  2. has recent travel history outside of the Atlantic bubble; and/or
  3. is under quarantine or has had exposure to COVID-19.
- During the registration process above, be sure to ask if a person falls into one of these categories and, if they have, they are not permitted to register. Provide this link for people who are uncertain as to their condition (government of Nova Scotia link)  
<https://when-to-call-about-covid19.novascotia.ca/en>.
- Do not encourage carpooling among hike leaders or participants (except among people in the same household or social group of 10).

### Hike Leaders:

- A hike leader or organizer onsite should not:
  1. have COVID-19 symptoms or is unwell;
  2. have recent travel history outside of the Atlantic bubble; and/or
  3. be under quarantine or has had exposure to COVID-19.



- A hike leader or organizer onsite should not be someone who is considered to be high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as outlined by the Government of Canada (i.e. individuals with chronic medical conditions, weakened immune systems, and older adults).

### During the Hike:

- Be aware of pinch points on the trail: areas when people might be forced, due to the limited space available, to congregate and where physical distancing might be difficult. These are:
  1. in parking lots,
  2. at trailheads,
  3. when two groups are passing on the trail in opposite directions; and
  4. at natural viewing, resting or gathering spots on the trail.
- Try to anticipate these situations and make plans for how to make physical distancing easier.
- Consider using signage to indicate where meeting/gathering spots are, to reiterate the need for physical distancing and any other important information for participants.
- Wash or sanitize hands frequently when possible, in particular before and after coming into contact with others and communal surfaces.
- We recommend against handing out any materials to participants, but if you must (such as maps, pamphlets, etc.) sanitize your hands before doing so.
- Add masks and gloves to your emergency first aid kit(s).
- An alternative to guiding a hike is to have people stationed at key points along a trail and allow participants to do a self-guided hike, with information and directions given by those at the stations.
- Obey the guidelines below for leaders and participants.
- Obey any other restrictions/limitations deemed appropriate as per guidance from the provincial government and public health.

## **Leaders and Participants**

- No one is permitted on the hike who:
  1. has COVID-19 symptoms or is unwell;
  2. has recent travel history outside of the Atlantic bubble; and/or
  3. is under quarantine or has had exposure to COVID-19.
- If you are uncertain as to your condition, go to this link (government of Nova Scotia link): <https://when-to-call-about-covid19.novascotia.ca/en>.
- Bring a non-medical mask for use when physical distancing is difficult to maintain, such as in parking lots, at trailheads or in other stopping or gathering areas on or near the trail. The



exceptions are children under two or anyone who has a medical reason for not wearing a mask. Masks must be worn if you go inside a public place before, during or after the hike (such as indoor washrooms, community centres, etc.).

- Physical distancing of two metres (6 feet) is required between everyone in a hike group at all times, especially at the beginning and ending of hikes. All must be spaced out two metres apart while hiking, when stopped on the trail and when taking breaks. Individuals in the same household do not need to maintain physical distancing but, as a group, should keep two metres away from others.
- No carpooling to or from hikes (except among people in the same household or social group of 10).
- If the parking lot and trailhead are crowded with people when you arrive, stay in your car until you can keep two metres apart.
- No hugs or handshakes.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth without washing hands first.
- Do not share food, drinks, equipment/gear or other materials/objects.
- Practice good hand hygiene (wash your hands often and bring your own hand sanitizer).
- Practice good cough/sneeze etiquette (cough or sneeze into your elbow).
- Travel in single file when approaching others.
- Be courteous when passing others on the trails by:
  1. announcing that you wish to pass if approaching someone from behind;
  2. moving to the right edge of the trail to maintain a two metre distance;
  3. passing others while remaining on the trail surface, where possible; and
  4. using a durable surface that won't impact vegetation or lead to trail widening or braiding if you must step off the trail to allow safe passing.
- Minimize contact with high-touch surfaces (handrails, gates, benches, etc.).
- Avoid gathering at viewpoints, interpretive signs and other attractions on the trail.
- When gathering is necessary, line up, maintain two metres distance and wait your turn.
- Abide by all direction of travel requirements where they exist (such as one-way travel).
- Respect all posted trail rules and guidelines.
- Respect Leave No Trace principles.
- Respect all COVID-19 restrictions required by hike organizers/leaders.
- Be responsible for managing your own safety and risk while on the hike.

Again for more information please visit: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>.