



Guided Hike COVID-19 Guidelines

October 4, 2021

Hike Nova Scotia (Hike NS) urges Nova Scotians to walk or hike while respecting [gathering limits](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic and follow the [advice of public health officials](#).

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.

Phase 5 Reopening Plan Guidance:

If yours is a regular walking or hiking club or a group that is an official, registered organization, then no [gathering limits](#) are in place for events run by these organizations. No physical distancing is required and masks are not required outdoors. If yours is an informal group, then, there are gathering limits of 50 people outdoors without social distancing and masks. Masks are still required for indoor gatherings.

Proof of Vaccination

For all events run by an official, registered businesses or organizations, the NS government now requires all volunteers and participants to show [proof of vaccination](#). Organizers should ask volunteers to show proof of vaccination prior to leading events and participants can simply bring a copy of their COVID-19 vaccine receipt with them (electronic or printed) and show it to organizers/volunteers before joining the event.

For more details on running a guided walk or hike, see our more detailed [Guided Hike COVID-19 Guidelines](#).

Organizers

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:

- If you choose to have registration, make attendance rules clear (such as proof of vaccination, etc.)
- 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.
- 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>.

Hike Leaders:

- Make clear to any volunteers the rules of leading/participation (such as proof of vaccination, etc.)
- 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

- Make clear to any participants the rules of participation (such as proof of vaccination, etc.)
- 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.).



- 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.
- 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/>.