

Do Scouts need Hiking?

A view expressed by Uwe Skrandies "Gelane", DSL Qld. Over the Mayday weekend patrols from Cairns District went on the District Hike. For me this is scouting at its best. A big thanks to all Scout leaders who were involved, I am sure we all realised by the end of this hike how valuable hiking is to Scouting.

How so? Hiking is a tool, which welds youth members together into a working patrol. On a hike a patrol simply has to work together in order to stay together. After this two and a half day, 25km hike they came in together into the campsite. If there was, at the start of the hike, "fooling around", the next 14km and a distance to paddle in a canoe for the first day soon took the "edge" off a little.

Also, hiking forces Scouts into a slightly different relationship with their ever-loving "mums". Mothers mean well. So her little darling just has to have his or her extra set of underwear, or the extra pack of soft drinks, just in case ... but her darling has to stand up to her (in a nice way) because mum is not carrying all the gear. This is all part of growing up.

I have done a bit of serious trekking in Europe and New Zealand. I believe on a hike the true character of a person comes out; it cannot hide. I also regard hiking as a tool to set in place self discipline. And what a great opportunity to try out a few new ideas on a Scouts Own

I don't think anybody gets great joy out of hiking in the rain or crawling into damp sleeping bags. However, Scouts seem to grow a few inches after a hike, especially when they get asked how the hike went. Answer: "Hey man, this is cool. Nothing to it I can hack it! "

So if we see value in hiking, how do we encourage it?

By...

1. Setting an example.

I took part in this hike. Scouts watched me, even wanted to know what was in my pack.

2. Preparation.

Use method learning by doing. Come up with as many games as possible. As I tried to catch up with the patrols in front of me, I made up these games:

Everybody turns up with a packed pack (on a Troop night). Scouts unpack his/her pack, races back to the Patrol. Next Scout races back and repacks, brings back the rucksack, and so on it goes. The winner is...!

Now that all the packs are utterly disorganised, each Scout picks up his/her own pack, gets blindfolded, unpacks it and guesses what he/she holds in their hand.

On this District hike, Patrols did not have to sleep in tents. Lots of imagination here!

Wide Game

Patrols build humpies (as they would on the hike). One "guard" with a torch tries to guard his/her place, being away a bit from it. Half of his/her Patrol sit in their bathing suits in the humpy and try to finish making it water tight. The other half of the Patrol sneaks up to the "enemy" with their rucksacks on their backs and a bucket full of water. If they get spotted they are out. If they get through they throw the water over the humpy. (Is it watertight?)

I am sure, as a Scout Leader, you will develop from here a few Troop nights full of activities on the hiking theme. Don't underestimate the badge work, which can be built into these games.

Some practical hiking skills

Using these thoughts as a way to keep hiking to the forefront, over the next few issues of Scoutfile we will give you some more practical thoughts on hiking compiled by a couple of young Venturers, Evan Bailey and Paul Doolan, who love the activity.

1. Equipment

Having the correct equipment is essential for any type of expedition. Overloaded rucksacks, wrong food and inadequate preparation can discourage new members from joining the Unit.

Below is a list of suggested equipment for an expedition. It must be noted that the quantities may vary depending on the length, season and location of the expedition. The items listed below would be divided into two categories for a hike personal gear and team gear.

Clothing: underwear, socks - woollen, T-shirts, long sleeved shirt, windcheater, woollen jumper shorts tracksuit ants (no jeans), hat - sun and/or woollen beanie, hike footwear, wet weather gear: japara, waterproof pants, toiletries: small soap and container, comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, half towel, shampoo sachets, deodorant (small cream/stick), in a small resealable plastic bag, handkerchief.

Gear: small torch, batteries/globe, 2 water bottles, cutlery, bowl, cup, cooking gear: stove (i.e. Trangia, billy, fry pan), cleaning gear, waterproof matches, pack repair kit, candle stub, garbage bag, personal first aid kit, map bag and map, toilet paper in plastic bag, small light trowel, space blanket, small length of cord.

Sleeping gear:

Choice of sleeping bag - down or Dacron most suitable, light and warm, choose bag with hood.

Pack in separate sealed plastic/garbage bag in rucksack.

Sleeping bag should be aired regularly, particularly after/during use.

Ground sheet or sleeping mat - minimises heat loss; light foam, wrapped in sealed plastic/garbage bag.

Footwear:

Must fit well and be flexible, providing support for feet and ankles.

Must be well worn in before the activity - NEVER NEW!

Preferably waterproofed.

Choose footwear according to terrain/ climate of activity.

Wear woollen socks to prevent irritation and absorb perspiration.

Allow space for wearing two pairs of socks and foot expansion.

Check condition of footwear before hand to avoid any problems. Know how to care for feet (blisters, toe nails, sore spots).

Packing a rucksack:

There is no one correct way of packing a rucksack. This is due to everybody's centre of gravity being different. The rucksack should be packed so that it allows you to stand with a slight lean forward and without any definite pull either forwards or backwards. As a guide, it's best to position your sleeping bag at the bottom of the rucksack and keep the heavier items high and close to your back. Below are some points of advice for packing your rucksack:

Everything should be wrapped separately in plastic bags.

Items most needed should be in easy to reach places i.e. first aid kit, water bottle, scroggin. Line your pack with one big plastic/garbage bag. Make sure your pack is evenly balanced. Pack should feel comfortable - shoulder straps adjusted correctly, hip strap taking the weight. Do not have objects hanging off the pack. A waterproof pack cover or a large heavy-duty garbage bag is handy in wet weather. A small repair kit is essential. Check pack condition before use. Pack weight - as a general guide, should not exceed 15 kilos.

Water containers:

2 one litre bottles OR requirements as dictated by weather conditions and water supply.

Water bottles should be sturdy and watertight -plastic or aluminium. Extra lightweight containers could be wine bladders (well washed out). Suggested personal first aid kit: (in a small plastic clip lock bag)

1 triangular bandage (folded into narrow bandage)

1 crepe roller bandage

15 Band-Aids

2 safety pins

2 panadol

small tube of antiseptic cream

piece of Elastoplast

small packet of tissues

lip protection

4 cotton buds

small zinc cream

small plastic whistle (preferably carried on their person)

Cleaning gear:

Either team or personal kit

Cut scourer pad in pieces - use only once to prevent contamination and bacteria forming.

Detergent in small plastic screw-top bottle
Sand is a good abrasive for initial removal of food.

Utensils should be kept clean to avoid health problems.

All cleaning should be done well away from water supply to prevent pollution.

Practical training suggestions

1. Give Scouts a basic checklist of gear and equipment required for Troop hikes.
2. Take the time to explain aspects of gear and why it is used or not used.
3. Each Scout to bring rucksack, sleeping gear, footwear, 2 water bottles, first aid kit, and, if possible, all gear necessary for the expedition to the meeting so items can be checked.
4. Patrol Leader to demonstrate suggested packing and storage techniques of gear into rucksack.
5. On arrival at the site of the hike, check all gear and its method of packing, weight of pack, and position of rucksack on the Scout's back.