



ORINDA HIKING CLUB HIKE LEADERS' MANUAL

So you've signed up to lead an OHC "Day Trips" outing. If you've had previous experience leading one of our hikes, you probably have a pretty good idea of how to go about planning and leading an outing. But if you're relatively new to the game, some counsel will no doubt be welcome. In this hike leaders' manual we've tried to cover the most important aspects of the hike planning and leading process. We hope that it will be of use to you. And we hope that experienced leaders will also take the time to peruse this document, since experience has shown that some of our older hands can also benefit from a refresher course in the fundamentals.

We view this manual as a living document, and welcome your input on how it can be improved.

CO-LEADERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The co-leaders of an OHC outing are responsible for planning and leading the activity. They have the authority and are encouraged to screen activity participants. If the leaders judge that a person is not properly equipped or is not qualified to participate, that person may be denied participation in the activity. Factors to be considered include physical condition and proper equipment such as boots, sufficient water, appropriate clothing for the weather, etc. The well-being of the entire party should always be considered.

Anyone, club member or not, is welcome to hike with us. However, a parent or adult relative or friend must accompany children under 18 years of age. Dogs or other pets are not allowed on club outings.

HIKE CLASSIFICATIONS

Weekend hikes are scheduled every Saturday of the month and the Sundays following the second, fourth and fifth Saturdays of the month. Most hikes leave promptly at 8:30 am from the old Orinda Library parking lot (200 yards north of the Community Center on Irwin Way). Participants should arrive by about 8:15 to allow time for sign in and car pooling arrangements. Some hikes which require an unusually long drive to the trailhead will be scheduled for 8:00 am departure.

“Regular” Saturday/Sunday hikes, which form the core of the hiking schedule, are typically 8-10 miles in length, with up to 2000 feet of total elevation gain.

“Short” hikes are offered the second and fourth Saturdays of each month, plus the Sunday following “Extreme” hikes. “Short” hikes are typically no more than 5 miles long, with modest elevation gain.

“Extreme” hikes are offered in months having a fifth Saturday, and are usually 12-16 miles in length, with up to 4000 feet of total elevation gain.

“Wednesday” hikes are scheduled the first Wednesday of each month. They are typically somewhat less strenuous than “regular” hikes. Wednesday hikes leave at 9:00 am from the “Pink Wall” (the intersection of El Nido Ranch Road and Charles Hill Road, near the north end of St Stephens exit off Highway 24) in Orinda.

Sturdy hiking boots are a must on all weekend and Wednesday hikes. Participants must bring plenty of water, and except for “short” hikes, should bring lunch.

“Street Strolls” are scheduled the third Thursday of each month. Strolls range from 1½ to 3 miles in length, frequently on paved trails or city sidewalks. As a result, footwear and other equipment requirements can be appropriately relaxed. During Daylight Saving Time, the group typically meets at 6:15 pm and starts the stroll at 6:30. During Standard Time we meet for a morning stroll. The hike announcement must have details on meeting place and time. We meet at the announced stroll location, and not in Orinda. Locations for an optional lunch (after morning strolls) or dinner (after evening strolls) at a local, reasonably-priced, casual restaurant should be included in stroll planning.

BEFORE THE HIKE

The hike that you signed up to lead must take place on the date and at the location which was specified in the hike schedule. If it develops that a co-leader cannot be there for the hike, he/she is responsible for finding a replacement. The three typical ways you can find a replacement are: 1) calling club members you know 2) asking your co-leader if she/he knows of anyone who might be able to step in and 3) asking club members at upcoming hikes you attend. These three methods usually result in finding a replacement co-leader. If they fail, however, let Linda Ulbrich or Gary Rogers of the Day Trips Committee know the efforts you’ve made and who you have contacted. The Day Trips Committee will then arrange for an e-mail to be sent to all club members announcing the need for a replacement leader. If all efforts fail, either the remaining co-leader can lead the hike on his/her own (assigning a sweep on the day of the hike), or the Day Trips Committee will arrange to have an e-mail sent out canceling the hike.

Your hike will be listed in the hike schedule which is mailed to all dues-paying members and is also on the club website www.orindahiking.org. These schedules have the phone numbers of the leaders so interested persons can call for more hike information.

Permits – Anyone leading hikes on EBMUD property must have a “Trail Leader” permit which enables the holder to lead groups of up to 30. Trail Leader permits cost no more than regular permits, and all OHC members who wish to have EBMUD permits are encouraged to apply for the “Trail Leader” variety. You may obtain an application at the Orinda Community Center office, the Lafayette Reservoir, or EBMUD’s San Pablo Reservoir office. Ian Baird, Steve Stiefvater and Gary Rogers have been authorized by EBMUD to endorse your leader permit application on behalf of the Orinda Hiking Club. The permit means that you, the leader, are responsible for the conduct of your entire group on EBMUD lands. If permits are required for hiking in other areas, these will be obtained for you by the Day Trips Committee.

Planning – The hike co-leaders should scout (“pre-hike”) their hike route several weeks before the actual hike takes place. For the hikes which will be done two weekends in a row, hike leaders for both weekends should do the planning and pre-hiking together. Leaders are free to select the specific route they wish to follow within the destination area. Information on hikes done previously in the same area is on file with our club statistician Kirby Slate, and may be useful in your own planning. Counsel is also available from any member of the Day Trips Committee.

During the pre-hike, estimate (or measure, if you have a GPS or altimeter) the hike length and cumulative elevation gain. Also note water and toilet availability along the way, trail conditions and anything else that should go into the e-mailed hike description. Information about your hike area (history, flora and fauna, geology, etc) may be researched for later presentation to the hiking group at appropriate places along the way.

Contact the person who is to bring refreshments to confirm that he/she will do so.

E-Mailed Hike Description – No later than a week before the hike, a description should be e-mailed to the club’s Googlegroups address. Steve Stiefvater, the club’s e-mail czar, will check it over, and if it passes muster, will release it to all club members. The hike description should include such information as hike distance, cumulative elevation gain, trail difficulty, water and toilet availability and driving instructions for those wishing to drive directly to the trailhead. Hike leaders will receive an e-mail from Steve, a month or more in advance, with more detailed instructions for writing and transmitting the hike description.

Driving Directions and Hiking Maps – The hike leaders are responsible for providing adequate directions for anyone who is driving to the trailhead on the day of the hike. Copy a portion of a road map and highlight the route to take in color or sketch out a map by hand and write directions. It's a good idea to include written directions as well, as some members like to follow a map and others prefer written directions. Make enough copies for each driver. Maps showing the hiking route should also be prepared and handed out at the trailhead.

Safety – The hike leaders should do their best to ensure the safety of the group. This begins with the planning of the hike. Consider whether the route chosen is one that can be safely negotiated by a large group of people with varied hiking experience. It is OK for the leaders to change the hike route at any time to protect the well-being of the group.

Equipment – The Club owns 2-way radios, first-aid kits and clipboards. These should be used on each Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday hike. Make sure that the 2-way radios have fresh batteries and are ready for operation. Also included in the OHC “kit bag” are welcoming cards to be given to new hikers prior to beginning the hike. Prior to each hike, Kirby Slate, our club statistician, will send sign-up sheets to the first co-leader listed on the schedule. It is important that these sheets be used, since they include a liability waiver to protect hike leaders and the club.

AT THE ASSEMBLY POINT

Arrive at the Assembly Point (normally the old Orinda library or the “Pink Wall”) at least 30 minutes before the scheduled departure time. Weather conditions don't often force cancellation of a hike, but this is OK if judged wise by the co-leaders. An alternative hike can be considered if conditions permit.

2. Make sure you have the sign-up sheets for OHC members and non-member hikers on separate clipboards. As each hiker arrives, they should sign in on the appropriate sheet.
3. Make sure you have maps and/or directions to hand out to all drivers to aid them in reaching the trailhead.
4. Make sure that the refreshments are on hand.
5. At the gathering point or trailhead, people should be discouraged from making announcements, handing out flyers, selling anything, or in any other way interfering with your management of a successful hike. With the approval of the leaders, any such activities can be done at the lunch break or at the end of the hike.

6. About 10 minutes before the scheduled departure time get the attention of all hikers and facilitate the organization of carpools. Make sure that everyone has a ride. Hand out driving directions to the drivers
7. Next, briefly describe the nature of the hike: where it is, its difficulty, water and toilet availability, estimated hike completion time, and any special considerations such as entry fees or parking suggestions. Mention any special rules that might be in force at the particular park or wilderness area.
8. Car pool passengers are expected to defray driving expenses to the trailhead. As a guide for reimbursement to the driver, announce driving distance to the trailhead, and whether bridge tolls or park entrance fees will be encountered. Leaders may suggest a specific reimbursement amount if they wish.
9. Discourage the participation of anyone who does not appear to have at least the minimum equipment and water for the day's hike. Be sure to check footwear if hiking boots are necessary.
10. Just before departure for the trailhead have everyone form a circle to count off. Introduce any first-time hikers, and make sure that they have received a welcome card.
11. Proceed by car to the trailhead, leaving the assembly point on time.

AT THE TRAILHEAD

On arriving at the trailhead, have everyone (including any who have driven directly to the trailhead) circle up once again and count off. Make sure that all carloads have arrived. For the benefit of new arrivals, describe once again the hike to be undertaken, and ensure that everyone is properly equipped. Both co-leaders should be familiar with the route. One co-leader (the "lead") should be at the front of the group and set the pace. The other will act as "sweep", and will bring up the rear. Explain to the hikers that they are not to get in front of the "lead" or be behind the "sweep".

The two-way radios are to be used for the lead to communicate with the sweep. This is important in case of emergency or so that the lead does not get too far ahead. Have the sweep carry the first-aid kit.

ON THE TRAIL

Whenever the lead reaches a trail junction he/she should ask for a volunteer to act as the junction guide until the sweep arrives. This will prevent someone taking a wrong turn, which has certainly happened more than once on OHC hikes. Make sure that everyone knows who the sweep is. No hiker is to be in front of the leader or behind the sweep.

When hiking on roads, the group should generally walk on the side of the oncoming traffic. Bikers should give way to hikers and hikers to horses. When horses approach, move off of the trail ten feet if possible and remain quiet.

Keep the walking pace comfortable for the whole group. The lead should ensure that the group is not strung out over a great distance. Since not everyone hikes at the same pace, the faster hikers must wait periodically for everyone to catch up. Allow the slower hikers time for a break before starting out again.

Lunch is a good time for the leaders to ask for Club announcements.

Arrange "potty" breaks as needed.

Trail Etiquette Tips

- Observe regulations
- Don't pick flowers or plants.
- Be considerate to others on the trail.
- Stay on the trail. Don't take short cuts.
- Remember that uphill hikers have right-of-way.
- Respect private property.
- Move to the right if someone overtakes you.

AFTER THE HIKE

At the end of the hike take a count to make sure no one is missing. Then enjoy the refreshments.

The co-leaders should stay until everyone else has departed to clean up any trash, rescue items left behind and to be sure that no one is left without a ride.

Make sure that the sign-up sheets are mailed to Kirby Slate. Include copies of any hiking and driving maps or other supporting documents for the hike. This information is then filed for the use of future hike leaders. Also, make sure that the 2-way radios, first aid kit, welcoming cards and clipboards are passed on to the leaders of the next hike.