



Tips for Outdoor Field Trips

As an educator, you have a profound impact on the lives of your students. You may be introducing your students to the outdoors for the first time. You may enhance some environmental knowledge they already have. You might even instill a passion for the outdoors that will stay with them throughout their lifetime. A little planning goes a long way towards a successful and safe trip. An outdoor field trip is a great educational experience for all involved. Here are some tips to help you ensure a good day in the field.

Call Ahead!

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Sites: Groups of 25 or more are welcomed and encouraged to use IDNR facilities, however, they are required to register in advance with the site office to avoid crowding or scheduling conflicts (use of picnic shelters, etc.).
- Other Locations: Contact the facility with your expected arrival date and number of students.
- A few IDNR facilities have staff members who provide programs for schools.
- Some locations have staging areas for buses and students. If there is one, you need to know.
- At least one responsible adult should accompany each group of 10 minors. Some locations may require a smaller ratio.
- Park hours can change due to weather conditions and/or staffing.

Dress Properly.

- In hot weather, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing should be worn.
- Most outdoor activities require sturdy shoes with good soles. Shoes or boots that are waterproof are also a good choice. Sandals, flip-flops or any type of shoe that comes off easily or offers little support should be avoided during your outdoor adventure.
- In cold weather, it is best to dress in layers. Three to four light layers under a heavier top layer are recommended.
- Insulated, waterproof boots are a must for a winter outdoor adventure. The amount of insulation required for comfort depends on the activity and the temperature.
- A good, warm hat and a quality pair of gloves or mittens will finish off the proper winter outfit.
- On sunny days, both winter and summer, don't forget the sun screen!

Insects and Ticks

- Ticks may be present in the spring and summer months. You can help deter ticks by wearing a hat, wearing light-colored clothing and applying insect repellent.
- Even with preventative measures, ensure that the students check for ticks once they get home.
- During warm weather, have insect repellent available for all outdoor activities.

General Information

- Keep well hydrated with water. Provide a snack, if possible.
- Digital cameras are welcome. Pictures are always a great way to not only re-live the trip but also to document any important features (plants, animals, historical sites, etc.).
- Journaling is a good method for students to reflect about their experiences. Have each student prepare a blank journal before the trip, possibly from scrap paper. Have them collect information during the trip and write more about their experiences later. Use pencil or waterproof ink.
- Don't litter.
- Make sure the students realize that the animals they may encounter are wild and should not be approached or disturbed.
- Be aware what you can and cannot take from the site. If you have questions, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/education/Documents/WITC.pdf>. This Web page has explanations about what is legal to remove and what permits/licenses are required to remove it. However, this document is only a general guide. The best rule of thumb is "don't take anything." Remember...leave only footprints and take only memories.
- Everyone should stay on marked trails, when available.
- Respect other trail users and do not block the trail.
- Move quietly to enhance your chances of viewing wildlife. Do not feed wildlife.

In Case of Emergency

- Have a cell phone with the numbers to the park office and/or park staff programmed in it.
- Have a signal device on hand as you may find yourself in an area with bad or no cell phone reception. A whistle is a good tool for "rallying the troops" and for alerting others if you need help.
- Pack a small first-aid kit.
- Know if any of your students are allergic to bug bites or bee stings and know the proper first-aid procedures.
- Be aware of the signs of heat exhaustion and hypothermia and know what to do if you observe any students with these symptoms.

Weather

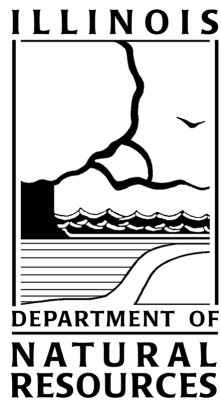
- Check the weather forecast for the day of your trip in advance and before you leave on the trip. Will rain, lightning, temperature extremes, the UV forecast, wind chill or high winds be safety concerns? Numerous resources can help you to keep abreast of current weather conditions, such as a portable National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, personal laptop computer or cell phone application.
- Lightning is a dangerous weather hazard. Spring and summer are peak months for lightning activity in Illinois. If you are outside and lightning is approaching, get inside a sturdy building. A complete guide for outdoor lightning safety information is found at NOAA's Web site at <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/safety.shtml>. If there is lightning in the forecast, make

sure you stay abreast of current weather conditions and know where the safe buildings are located. You may also consider postponing your trip to another day.

- If the forecast calls for only rain and you want to continue with your plans, consider bringing umbrellas or large trash bags so the students can make “ponchos.”

Poisonous Plants

- Illinois is home to numerous types of poisonous plants. Many people have allergic reactions to these plants, in varying degrees of severity. Knowing how to identify the most common and teaching the students the same is a good idea.
- Stick to the basics when dealing with poison ivy, “leaves of three let it be!”
- The symptoms of an allergic reaction to plants typically take some time to show up. In other words, if you or a student gets into some of these plants, you will not know it for several hours. The best rule of thumb, if you are not sure if a plant is poisonous, don’t touch it.



Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175. This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance. Printed by the authority of the State of Illinois 5/20