

Rules of Conduct

The following rules apply to all persons participating in outings activities of the Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club. Violation of these rules may result in removal of a participant from a particular outing and/or revocation of the privilege to participate in future outings.

Authority of the Leader: The authority of an outing leader is nearly absolute. The outing leader is the sole judge of the qualifications of participants. Participants must comply with the orders and instructions of the outing leader.

Eligibility to Participate: Most Mother Lode Chapter outings are open to both Sierra Club members and non-members. Eligibility restrictions, if any, should be stated in the trip write-up.

Qualification to Participate: Trip announcements typically give information about the physical challenge involved (distance and elevation gain) and the skills, equipment and experience required for successful participation. Some trips require prospective participants to provide information about their conditioning and experience to the leader for screening in advance of the trip. Other trips may simply ask participants to screen themselves before showing up at the trailhead. In either case, you should be honest with the leader or yourself. If you participate in a trip for which you are really not qualified, you won't enjoy the experience and you may make the experience less enjoyable for other participants. Leaders should give good faith consideration to accommodations requested by potential participants who are disabled.

Minors: Participants under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or have written permission from same giving phone number and authorization for continuing treatment by a physician in case of necessity.

Liability Waiver: All participants are required to sign a liability waiver. This is an important legal document which limits your right to sue the Club or its leaders in the event of injury on an outing. Your participation in an outing is a voluntary recreational activity. If you are not willing to sign a waiver, you need to find some other recreational activity.

Travel Procedures: Participants are to remain with the group unless the leader gives permission to leave, adhere to routes designated by the leader, refrain from "short cutting" switchbacks on trails, and remain behind the leader and ahead of the trail sweep.

Leave No Trace: The Sierra Club supports leave no trace principles, including minimizing the environmental impact of travel and camping, disposing of waste properly or packing it out, leaving natural objects as you find them, using stoves for cooking, limiting campfires to a single small campfire where permitted, respecting wildlife, storing food and garbage securely and being courteous to other visitors.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations: Sierra Club outings are conducted in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including requirements for entry permits, campfire restrictions, campsite location restrictions, waste handling rules, parking restrictions, etc. Rangers and other law enforcement personnel are to be treated with respect.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment of Club members, volunteers or others who participate in Club-sponsored activities is prohibited. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual suggestions, physical contact, offensive sexual language or images, or use of club contact information to make unwelcome sexual suggestions outside of Club activities.

Animals: Animals (other than guide dogs) are prohibited unless a specific announcement that animals are allowed is included in the trip write-up. The leader may permit a disabled participant to bring a guide dog as long as the group safety isn't jeopardized or local land agency rules or regulations are not violated.

Firearms: Always prohibited.

Cell Phones: Both leaders and participants are encouraged (but not required) to carry cell phones because they may be a useful resource in an emergency. Inappropriate or excessive use of cell phones for non-emergency communications can be annoying to participants. Outing leaders therefore have the authority to restrict or regulate the use of cell phones.

Hand-held Transceivers: May be carried but used only if permitted by the leader and subject to further leader restrictions.

Radios and Sound Listening Devices: May always be used at camp if equipped with earphones for private listening. On the trail or when climbing, use may be restricted or prohibited by the leader in the interest of safety.

GPS Receivers: Generally permitted, with the sole exception of navigation checkouts, where evaluators may prohibit use or possession in order to test a candidate's skill at non-electronic navigation techniques.

Hiking Poles: Permitted unless the trip announcement indicates that hiking poles are not permitted. Even when permitted, leaders have the authority to require safe practices in use of hiking poles and restrict their use when appropriate for safety reasons.

Bike Helmets: Participants and leaders must wear appropriate safety helmets while riding on a bicycle outing.

Technical Climbing Gear: In general, gear such as ropes, ice axes, or crampons is appropriate only on approved Restricted Mountaineering Trips. There is no prohibition against outings participants bringing along whatever mountaineering or safety equipment they may choose to bring on an outing for their own personal safety. However, the use of technical climbing gear should be restricted to avoiding unanticipated hazards only, not to be used for mountaineering that is not part of the structured outing.