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# TRAIL TIPS

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## Helpful Hints for Hiking

### Safety in Numbers

Thanks to our Tech Team, Trail Tips is now available on the SCH website! Just go to to <http://www.suncityhikers.org/members/trail-tips/> to view all of the past issues.

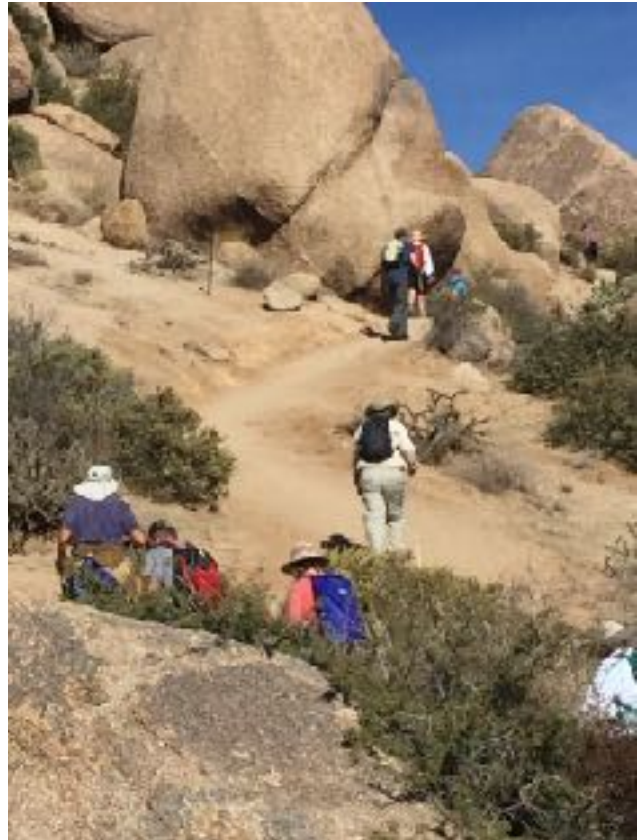
Spring seems to be upon us here in the Valley of the Sun. The temperatures are warming up nicely, and there are more and more fellow hikers on the trails.

The Sun City Hikers are also experiencing an increase in their numbers. Membership is booming, and I welcome all of the new faces to our merry band of boot-wearing desert dwellers.

In light of our larger and larger hiking groups, I'd like to suggest a few trail behaviors that will help all of us have safe and pleasurable hikes.

#### **WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN**

We often hike on some pretty steep, rocky trails here in Southern Arizona. Trails can be slippery and somewhat treacherous on some of the steeper grades. When descending in a large group of hikers, leave at least ten feet or so between you and the hiker in front of you. That way, if you are unfortunate enough to slip and slide down the trail, you don't take out the person walking in front of you. If everyone is bunched up going downhill and someone slips in the back, it will resemble a bunch of dominoes falling down the hill.



Keeping a little distance between hikers is not a bad idea at all times. I personally do not like someone walking on my heels; it makes me a little nervous and tense. Feel free to ask that tailgater to move on in front of you; I'm sure they won't mind.

Conversely, don't spread out so much that you can't see the hiker behind you. You should always be able to look back and see the next person in the group. Unless you're the sweep (a little hiking humor, there...).

### **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK**

One of the reasons it is a good idea to always be in sight of the next person in the group is to make sure they're OK. If you happen to see the hiker in front of you stumble repeatedly or seems to be having a difficult time keeping up with the rest of the group, please ask if they're alright. He or she may be just tired, or it may be something more serious like dehydration. Be aware of someone's appearance: are they flushed, red in the face, maybe panting? Suggest a stop to the leader of the group, and make the leader aware of the situation. It may be nothing, or you may be helping a fellow hiker out of a potentially serious event.

### **NO POKING**

If you are carrying your hiking stick(s), please carry them with the tips pointing in front of you and downwards. Carrying them in this fashion ensures that you can see the tips and not poke the hiker in front of you. If you carry your poles with the tips behind you, you can accidentally poke the hiker behind you as your arms are swinging, or the hiker behind you can run right into them. We don't want anyone's eyes getting poked out. There's a lot of paperwork involved...

### **USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM**

One of our guidelines in the Sun City Hikers is to never hike alone. There is truly safety in numbers. If you are not feeling well, or are just too fatigued to continue with the hike, speak up and let the leader know. I am sure that at least one other hiker will be willing to accompany you back to the trailhead.

One of the leading causes of tragedy when hiking is that we never leave a hiker alone. There are far too many cases of a solo hiker going for a short one or two mile hike and getting lost, stranded, dehydrated, or encountering some other misfortune. Having even one other person with them could have avoided catastrophe. So please don't ask your hike leader if it's OK for you to take a quick jaunt on that spur trail to the summit, return to the trailhead or stay at the saddle by yourself.

Live to hike another day.

### **LEND A HELPING HAND**

Let's face it, we're all getting older. We don't hop down those boulders as well as we used to, and those big steps carved into the rock faces are often a little more than we can safely get down. Why not stop at the bottom or top of that scramble or slippery bit and offer to lend a hand to the next hiker? They may say no, they're doing okay by themselves. But they may gratefully say thank you! They may just ask you to hold their hiking sticks for them while they negotiate that steep scramble up or down.

And who knows? You may just meet a new friend.

As Beth, our club president, likes to say, we're a Family of Hikers. Let's all help our members to have the greatest hiking experience possible, and I'm willing to bet that doing so will offer YOU the greatest hiking experience as well.

Have a **SAFE** hike out there!

Burt