



Wilderness

Network of Georgia

The WNG Participant's Guide

A Network of Volunteers

Welcome to the Wilderness Network of Georgia. Our success depends entirely on the active involvement and cooperation of gay and bisexual men who want to enjoy the outdoors together. We count especially on experienced members who volunteer their time and expertise to organize wilderness trips and other nature-related outings for the rest of us. The joy and satisfaction we all get from WNG comes from the enthusiasm and creativity of all our participants and their ability to work together for everyone's benefit - which is why we call ourselves a network.

This guide informs visitors and reminds members about what to expect and what is expected of you in WNG activities. Since it clearly cannot cover every detail or situation, there is no substitute for common sense and good judgment on the part of all our participants. As our by-laws state, we welcome all gay men, eighteen and older, who wish to join "in a spirit of good will, mutual respect, and discretion."

How to Get Started

The best way to get involved in WNG is to attend an event as a visitor, maybe with a member you know who has told you about us. We welcome new people at any one event, after which we hope you will fill out a [registration form](#), pay your annual dues, and continue with us as an active member. We welcome new members who may not be "out" at work or even at home.

Our Sunday evening potluck and planning meeting in town each quarter is one of the best ways to get started. We always have great food and fellowship, and usually draw up to 100 members and visitors. Besides the all-you-can-eat dinner, we have a short meeting that acquaints new people with our recent and upcoming activities. For that and all other WNG-sponsored activities, check the [Web calendar](#) at our site: www.wildnetga.org.

Clicking on a specific calendar item gives you a pop-up with details of the event, along with an easy way to e-mail the trip leader if you are interested. You will find much more information on our site, including reports of recent trips, photos, details about how to join, [tips about gear and other requirements](#) for different types of outings, our [By-laws](#), etc.

The second best way to be informed about WNG activities is through the [newsletter](#), which is provided to members each quarter, either on-line or by regular mail. Be aware, though, that, unlike the Web calendar, the newsletter is not updated during each quarter.

A third way to be in the know is to [join the Listserv](#) when you become a member, so that you get useful messages occasionally e-mailed to members. The Listserv Announce is for reminders of upcoming trips and other events, changes in dates, cancellations, and other items pertaining to WNG activities. The Listserv Forum is for non-commercial matters of possible interest, not directly related to WNG activities. Members may post on the Listserv, as long as they observe WNG Netiquette.

Expectations of Participants on WNG Trips

Visitors and new members must follow some basic requirements and cautions when they participate in a WNG event, and all of us may need a reminder at times. For your safety and enjoyment, as well as everyone else's, please abide by the following:

1. In considering any WNG event, you are first responsible for noting its stated level of difficulty, based on the [Trip Difficulty Rating Guide](#), and then assessing your own skill level and limitations before asking to attend an event. Always inform the trip leader of any disabilities or other special needs you may have and ask about any special considerations you may need.
2. The [calendar](#) on the website is the easiest way to find out about a trip and contact the leader: Just click on any trip and respond to the pop-up as directed. Trip descriptions and contact information are also in the [newsletter](#). E-mailing is preferable, but if you contact a leader by phone, be sure to call at a reasonable hour.
3. Contact the trip leader well ahead of time to inquire about a trip. If the trip is full, you may ask to be placed on a waiting list in case of cancellations that would make room for you. If you wait too late to inquire, the trip leader may not be able to accommodate you. Besides being full, some trips are cancelled for lack of participants, only because people who wanted to go did not ask in time. Several days' notice is usually good for a one-day event; at least a week's notice is preferable for an overnight. Major trips require more notice and planning. Avoid signing up and taking a spot before being sure you want to go and can.
4. Follow all reasonable guidelines and decisions of the trip leader before and during the trip. He is in charge. Anyone who is not well prepared or does not follow the rules may be asked not to participate, or to leave a trip in progress.
5. Never be a no-show. Notify the trip leader right away if you have to cancel. No-shows are a problem for leaders and participants who want to start on time without waiting for someone who may not be coming. If a last-minute emergency prevents you from canceling, it is a courtesy to contact the leader right away after the trip to let him know what happened.
6. Check with the trip leader ahead of time about any extra people you want to bring. Pets (on leash) are allowed only on trips so designated.
7. Find out what you need for the trip and be sure to bring it - proper clothing and gear, water, snacks, food for meals, money for expenses, etc. We can help you borrow or rent gear and get helpful advice. The website has [Trip Tips](#) that include gear lists and guidelines for different activities.
8. Never bring firearms, fireworks, or other dangerous or unnecessary items on a WNG trip.
9. On arrival, be sure to sign the [liability waiver](#), give an emergency phone number, and list any allergies or other special concerns that the trip leader may need to know so that he can help you get the right assistance in an emergency.

10. Share in trip responsibilities such as carpooling; helping pay for gas; bringing any food or gear you have agreed to provide for others; helping to gather firewood, cook, clean up, solve problems that arise; etc.
11. Stay with the group unless you have approval from the leader to be away. Avoid lagging behind or running ahead and getting separated.
12. Be considerate of others who have less experience or stamina. When stopping to rest, for example, help make sure the last ones to arrive also have a chance to rest.
13. Be advised that WNG does not condone excessive drinking, illegal drug use, or anything that is against other applicable laws or park regulations. Participants who are in violation are subject to penalties.
14. Never drop litter or disturb the natural environment by cutting live growth, trampling vegetation, taking shortcuts that damage paths, walking atop dunes, etc. Observe the WNG goal of "leave no trace," explained in our [WNG Environmental Policy](#). We almost always leave a place cleaner than we found it, packing out at least some of the litter we see.
15. Keep campfires small in areas where they are permitted and use only dead wood found on the ground for fuel.
16. Observe proper latrine etiquette: Urinate in an out-of-the-way spot. Defecate in a very remote spot – well away from campsites, paths, lakes, and rivers – by digging a small hole and thoroughly covering everything afterward, including paper. Nothing is more offensive than discovering that someone has not properly disposed of waste.

Becoming a Leader

After you are more familiar with WNG, consider leading a trip of your own or co-leading a trip with an experienced leader. It is the best way to become truly involved, meet more people, and get the most out of our group. Details about how to do this are found in the [WNG Trip Leader's Guide](#).