



# Wilderness

## Network of Georgia

### The WNG Trip Leader's Guide

#### A Network of Volunteers

As you probably know, the Wilderness Network of Georgia counts on members like you who volunteer their time and expertise to organize safe, enjoyable outings for everyone. This guide is for all of you who are thinking about leading a trip, to let you know what to expect and what is expected of you. It is also a reminder to experienced trip leaders. Since it cannot cover every concern or situation that may arise, there is no substitute for common sense and good judgment on your part. As a potential trip leader, be sure also to check the [WNG Participant's Guide](#) to see what is expected of those who attend your trips.

#### Why Lead a Trip?

As a WNG member in good standing, you may offer us trips and other events of your choosing, as long as you are qualified to lead them. If you want to see more of a type of event you enjoy, this is your chance to provide it. Besides getting the trip you want on the calendar, you gain useful leadership skills without undue pressure to do more than you enjoy doing, and you get to know more participants better. Researching new trips and offering them expands your wilderness experience. Two added incentives are that if you lead at least one WNG trip, you are eligible to serve on the Executive Committee; and if you lead three trips in any year, your dues for the following year are waived. Finally, we fellow WNGers will deeply appreciate your efforts. For all these reasons and more, WNG members find leading trips to be very rewarding and satisfying.

#### Choosing a Trip

As a beginning leader, you may start with an easy and familiar trip, and then work up to more challenging ones. Day trips requiring minimal skill on the part of leader and participants are always in demand. Short hikes with a picnic lunch in nearby wilderness areas are a good example. The basic requirements are that the event involve, as our [by-laws](#) state, non-competitive "wilderness or nature-related activities;" that you have the required judgment and expertise to lead the trip; and that it be safe, protective of the environment, and enjoyable for all.

Note that first aid and CPR courses are recommended for all leaders and strongly recommended for leaders of remote wilderness trips. A Red Cross link is on our website.

First consider outings you have enjoyed before. Guide books and outdoor magazines are another good source for trips and techniques, as are [WNG newsletters](#) and [the WNG web calendar](#). Attend a Trip Planning Meeting if you can. They are scheduled each quarter prior to the Potluck and Planning Meeting, and many ideas for trips are shared. This usually includes a potluck dinner too, and is an enjoyable social occasion. At this event, and always, experienced leaders are glad to make suggestions, and we will be glad to co-lead a trip with you, taking some of the responsibilities, if you wish.

## Planning Your Trip

It is up to you to decide when the trip will take place, keeping in mind other events already on the calendar, weather and trail conditions, water levels, presence of other people in the area, access limitations, etc. The hunting season in some areas requires extra precaution. You also get to decide such things as the length of the hike, location of the campsite, etc., although some details can be discussed later with participants and agreed upon jointly. Be open to suggestions, but be sure to set trip requirements consistent with all WNG policies and adhere to them start to finish. Before writing up and submitting a trip, it is also wise to tell the [Trip Coordinator](#) what you have in mind and get his suggestions on appropriateness, scheduling, etc.

Get maps and guide books and select your route. When appropriate, contact personnel at the place you want to visit to get details about what is available, what costs are involved, and what regulations apply. Scouting out the trip ahead of time is recommended, especially if the place is new to you. If the trip will end at a place different from the starting point, plan to shuttle vehicles.

Set the minimum or maximum group size when necessary. It should be large enough for safety and enjoyment, but not so large as to become unmanageable. Environmental impact should always be a concern. See the [WNG Environmental Impact Policy](#) and follow it.

Figure all costs and make arrangements for transportation, lodging, meals, guide and equipment fees, etc. Decide how to handle deposits and reservations carefully, and develop a refund policy in the event of cancellations, which always do occur. Note that WNG members usually prefer inexpensive accommodations. You may include your expenses for toll calls, postage, etc., but costs should be divided fairly among participants, including the leader.

## Announcing Your Trip

In your write-up, be enthusiastic and informative, focusing on outstanding features and including necessary information such as name of trip, date(s), the difficulty rating, based on the [Trip Difficulty Rating Guide](#) posted on our website, contact information, deadline for signing up, etc. Be concise, though, and leave minor details for later. Some WNG trips are announced as joint trips with other organizations. This is an option you might want to consider. Avoid announcing the exact time and place to meet, so that participants will sign up with you first, allowing you to manage group size and know whom to expect.

Submit your write-up to the [Trip Coordinator](#) for approval, which you should get right away. (This process can be done easily on-line via the website, as soon as that feature is operational in 2005.)

Once approved, your trip is posted on the [website calendar](#) for members and visitors to see and respond to, and it is published in the next quarterly [newsletter](#), time permitting. The newsletter deadline is usually one week after the quarterly Potluck and Planning Meeting. Note that, unlike the newsletter, the web calendar is always being updated, and any changes you need to make in your trip announcement after initial posting can be submitted on-line for approval.

Your other options for getting participants are the quarterly Potluck and Planning Meetings, where you can speak to the group and answer questions, and the Listserv Announce where you can post reminders and updates to all members who subscribe to that feature and may want to sign up. Both the Listserv and the [web calendar](#) are also good for announcing trips offered on short notice.

## Organizing Your Trip

As trip leader, you should reply promptly to all who respond and welcome all bona fide WNG members, as well as any other gay or bisexual men at least eighteen years old, on a first-come, first-served basis, space permitting. As you get responses, usually by e-mail from the website or the newsletter, offer to answer any questions and make a list of those who decide they want to attend, including each name, e-mail address, phone number, amount paid, etc. Be especially considerate of new or inexperienced applicants, and tolerant of those whose plans change. Be alert to possible limitations of applicants.

If the trip fills, keep a waiting list in case of cancellations, which are likely. Especially in the case of new people, you may ask for further information to make sure they are fit for the event, have necessary gear, etc., before including them on your confirmed list. Visitors should pay their dues and join WNG after one event in order to continue with us. You can tell those who sign up that you will send them details and directions a few days before the trip. We also recommend that you refer them to the [WNG Participant's Guide](#) and the [Trip Difficulty Rating Guide](#), both on our website, to make sure they know what is planned and what is expected of them.

When the time gets close, inform participants of all pertinent information, such as time to meet, directions to the meeting place, carpooling options, the weather forecast, items to bring, eating and sleeping arrangements, personal expenses, WNG policies, park regulations, etc. Note that riders in carpools are usually expected to help pay for gas, etc. For hiking, car camping, and backpacking trips, you may refer people to the [gear lists and tips](#) posted on the website. Remind everyone to bring plenty of water, depending on time to be spent away from safe sources. Also remind everyone to notify you if they cannot attend, rather than being a no-show and holding up the group.

Just before the trip, finalize the list of participants; send details to late sign-ups; confirm any reservations; pack a good first aid kit, cell phone, maps, etc.; get a [WNG Liability Waiver](#) (from the website or the [Trip Coordinator](#)) to be signed by each participant on arrival; leave an itinerary and contact information with someone; check for last-minute phone messages and e-mails; etc. Note that participants should not ask to go at the very last minute and may be denied if necessary.

Be sure to inform everyone if plans change or if the trip has to be cancelled.

## Leading Your Trip

The following checklist will help insure that your trip is a success from the outset:

1. Double check to make sure you have done all you can to make your trip safe, protective of the environment, and enjoyable for all.
2. Greet people as they arrive, make introductions, and use your people skills to get everyone off to a good start.
3. Have all arrivals sign the [WNG Liability Waiver](#) and provide emergency contact information along with details about allergies, limitations, etc, so that you can help address any emergency situations on the trip. After the trip, keep this waiver for your use and protection, as well as that of WNG and its officers, in case issues come up later.
4. Take charge and see that the trip goes according to plan, accommodating participants with different skill and stamina levels, arranging for a car shuttle, etc. Make sure no one joins the group unprepared or unaware of what is ahead.
5. Keep an accurate head count of your group and wait for any who have lagged behind. Discourage others from getting ahead of the group, unless the trail is clearly marked and you agree to split up.
6. Be fully aware of the [WNG Environmental Impact Policy](#) and adhere to it always.
7. If an accident occurs, stay calm, assess the situation, see who else may have needed expertise, check the waiver for special needs, and give first aid that you are qualified to administer. If necessary, send two people to get help, making sure they know the nature of the emergency, the location, etc.
8. See that everyone gets back safely. Groups often decide to have a last meal together before splitting up. With luck, the others will pay for your meal. On parting, thank everyone for coming, say goodbye, and congratulate yourself on a job well done.
9. When you get home, you may want to contact any no-shows to see whether they got lost – or to remind them to notify the trip leader whenever they have to cancel.

## After the Trip

Remember to file the [Liability Waiver](#) with signatures in a safe place and keep it indefinitely.

Reunions with photographs and memories are always enjoyable, but you may want to let someone else organize that.

Be certain to let other members know how your trip went. You can quickly tell us about the trip online and even attach a photograph or two so that we can feature your trip on the website and in the newsletter - as well as in our permanent archives. This database of past trips is an important resource for future trip leaders and an excellent way to share your experiences.

Attend the next potluck and tell us about your event.