

Finally the weather that we have been waiting for! Warm days, days when we can relax at lunch, days when we can linger over a spectacular view or pause to closely examine a flower. Don't forget the ferns, they can be every bit as challenging to identify.

Starting at the Bottom - Boots and Socks

We have been busy all fall and winter trying to keep warm, now our focus shifts. How do we keep cool? Let's first look at clothing and we will start at the bottom. The boots that we used all winter will be fine, but we can change the sock system a little. We still need the polypropylene liner. If our feet are too warm in the wool outer sock, try switching to a synthetic hiking sock such as the Thorlo, it has a loop construction and is quite comfortable. I wear a pair of sandals to the hike and it feels great to get back into them at the end. A change of socks at any time of the year is good but in the warmer weather, when we can get our boots off at lunch, it is a treat. Some feet sweat more than others and this extra moisture is one cause of blisters. Three or four days before a hike try a roll on antiperspirant. The U.S. military uses this trick for recruits with tender feet. A deodorant doesn't help, use an antiperspirant. All of us have areas of our feet that are tenderer than others, put moleskin on these areas before you start the hike and leave it on.



Shorts or Long Pants

I prefer shorts in the warmer weather and use a pair of nylon ones. Cotton shorts tend to chafe. For many reasons some hikers prefer long pants, if this is your choice, try the nylon ones. For those that want the best of both types, there are long pants now that you can zip the legs off.

T-Shirt

Most warm days a T-shirt will be sufficient and like most of my clothing I choose a synthetic one. If all you have are cotton shirts, for sure use them. When the weather cools again, or is wet, cotton is a problem and some hiking areas post signs "If you have cotton on, go back now!"

In Case of Rain

Some type of rain coat is a good bet on most hikes as the forecast is not always right. Am I the only one that has noticed that? In the Air Force we called them "weather guessers". I have a collapsible umbrella that has come in handy.



Hat

Except for men in small town restaurants, nobody really likes to wear a hat. In warm weather a hat will keep the sun off our head, keeping us cooler. It will also keep the sun off our face and not many of us need the wrinkles that some would say are a sign of wisdom. Thank you I am smart enough.

Packs, Water et al

In the warmer weather I switch to a fanny pack. Try to find one that has a substantial waistband, this will help the pack keep its shape. Size does matter here, buy a large one. Mine has a place for two water bottles and I can hang another bottle on if I want. On warm days you will need more water than you ever expected to use and remember we can not drink surface water anywhere. My pack is large enough for a first aid kit, lunch, cell phone, and map case. I hang my camera, in its case, from the waist belt. The straps on the fanny pack allow me to lash on my sit-upon, fleece pullover and rain coat.

Bugs and Poison Ivy

Warm weather brings out some things that did not concern us over the winter such as poison ivy and bugs. Poison ivy, with its three leaves, is best avoided or you could zip your pant legs back on. The irritant is the oil on the leaves, if you do come in contact with it, a good wash with warm water and soap as soon as you can, will help. Your boots, pants and socks will also need a wash. Black flies, mosquitoes and ticks can be a problem and repellents using DEET are effective. Be cautious with DEET, use low concentrations and avoid use on small

children. See my other The Right Stuff articles entitled “Bugs” and “Trail Safety” for more information about bugs and poison ivy.

Hiking Clubs and Trail Maintenance

Most of us join the hiking clubs to enjoy the trails, certainly that is what I did. Those trails however, did not get there by themselves; they took a lot of planning and take even more maintenance. Most of our trails are built and maintained by volunteers. Warm weather and a group of volunteers out on the trail for a day or two of trail maintenance can be a lot of fun and very rewarding. Give the trail maintenance people a call; they can always use an extra pair of hands. Warm weather and longer days are conducive to being a bit more adventurous. If you live in the Grand Valley watershed, please consider joining the Grand Valley Trails Association. Membership forms may be obtained from our website at www.gvta.on.ca or email us at gvta@golden.net.

Other Locations

Sure, we know our local trails pretty well but the rest of Ontario and the northern U.S. have much to offer. Hike Ontario is a good resource for information on the many trails that are available to us in Ontario. Hike Ontario can be reached in Toronto at 1-800-894-7249 (or 1-905-833-1787) or visit the web site www.hikeontario.com. If you join the Bruce Trail Association [www.bruce-trail.org], you have the option of joining an *extra* Club(s) at a modest fee and add to your choice of hikes. Other hikers and hike leaders know of lots of trails, where they are, and what their experiences have been with these trails. Hikers are social people who love to network. Once you establish a network of hiking friends watch out, because you will be on your way.

Happy hiking,
Greg

About Greg

Greg is an experienced and certified hike leader and instructor. He has been a long time member of the Bruce Trail Association (www.bruce-trail.org), the Grand Valley Trails Association (www.gvta.on.ca) and other hiking organizations. Greg has an extensive background in aviation and air traffic control. Greg has taught introduction to hiking courses and map and compass courses for several years. Currently his website, Greg Vincent's Hiking Site, resides at <http://home.golden.net/%7Egvincent/>



Other The Right Stuff articles are:

- “On the Up and Up” or Icy Walking
- Footwear - Boots & Socks (how to care for your feet & how to choose boots & socks)
- Clothing (how to keep warm & dry)
- Packs (what kind to carry & what to put in them)
- Bugs (how to avoid them & prevent their bothering you)
- Trail Safety (how to ensure you hike without incident)
- Trekking Poles (modern ones - what are they & why use them)
- Winter Walking (all the peculiarities of hiking in cold climes)
- Medical Emergencies (how to prepare for & respond to a medical emergency while hiking)
- Snowshoeing (If you can walk, you can snowshoe – no ifs, ands or buts.)
- Global Positioning System or GPS (What is it and how it works.)