



## Hiking Safety and Ethics in British Columbia

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### Bear Safety:

No matter where you hike in British Columbia, you could easily encounter bears, they roam everywhere. The wilds are home to the bears; you are the visitor, respect their rights and never

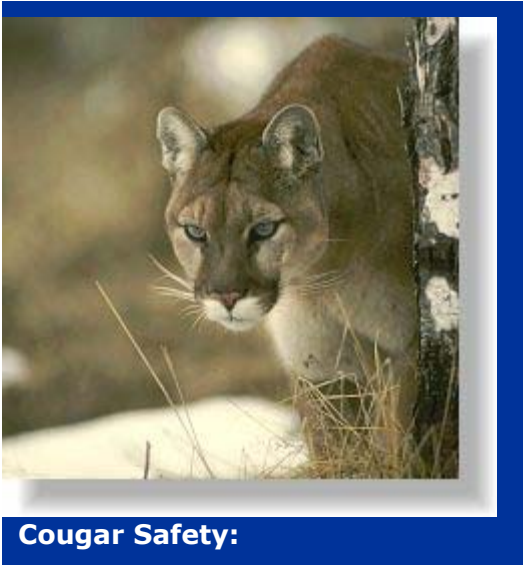
approach this unpredictable animal. Never attempt to feed a bear, do not surprise them by practicing defensive tactics. No two bear encounters are the same, there are no common rules for dealing with this situation, but it helps to learn about bears and their habits. It is best to try and avoid bears. Any bear is dangerous when defending a fresh kill, or one that has been eating and likes to eat human type foods and of course a mother defending her young.

Things you should know about bears. They can run as fast as horses, both [grizzly](#) and [black bears](#) can climb trees. They enjoy excellent senses of smell and hearing, and their eye sight is better than you think it is. All bears have a personal space and will defend it vigorously.

When in the wilderness always look for signs of bears. These signs could include droppings, tracks, digging, claw and bite marks on trees. Make lots of noise by talking loudly, singing, calling out, clapping or wearing a bell. Make sure you are heard, it's best not to surprise a bear. The further away from the bear, the better, for picture taking use a long-range telephoto lens, keep children close and within sight and if possible leave your dog at home.

Children should never approach bears, especially cubs. When in bear country, youngsters should always be supervised even when playing. Petting, feeding, or posing for a photo with bears or near them is a definite NO. Do not leave your vehicle when there are bears at the roadside and keep your windows up.

Food and garbage odors easily attract bears, so it's essential to reduce or eliminate odors from your camp, clothing, vehicle and yourself. Do not keep ANY food in your tent, store it so that bears cannot smell or reach foods. Garbage must be properly stored and packed out.



### **Cougar Safety:**

Cougars, also called mountain lions or panther are Canada's largest cat. In British Columbia they primarily live in the southern third of the province, but are found in other regions. Generally, cougars are solitary and very secretive animals. Sightings are rare, attacks on humans are extremely rare, but it is best to be prepared and to learn as much as possible about this elusive, but beautiful and graceful wild animal. Their prey is mostly deer, although they will kill and eat wild sheep, elk, rabbits, raccoons, beaver and grouse, and they have been known to go after livestock. Cougars are most active at dusk and dawn, but can be seen anytime day or night, no matter the season. Cougars are predators and we have little or no understanding as to what might provoke an attack, but being prepared and taking precautions never hurt. For some reason, cougars are more likely to attack children than adults, maybe it's because of their voices, small size and quick movements. Teach children about cougars and what to do should they see one.

If hiking back country areas where cougars could roam there are a couple of things to keep in mind. Never hike alone, groups offer more protection. Try not to surprise a cougar, be noisy when hiking and carry a strong stick that can be used as a weapon, keep children close by and under control, and most important watch for cougar signs and tracks. Should you meet up with a cougar, never approach the animal, leave the cougar an avenue for getting away, stay calm, do not run, and never turn your back on a cougar. If there are children with you, pick them up as quickly as possible and make sure the cougar knows you are a threat, not prey, so arm yourself with a stick, throw rocks, speak loudly and fight back if attacked.

Cougars are beautiful animals and deserve our respect. After a sighting both you and the cougar should come away from this exciting experience unharmed. If the cougar is a threat to you or your family, inform the nearest Conservation Office.

### **Hiking Safety:**

Like any other outdoor recreational sport, using common sense is very important and there are things you should do, to make your hiking trips a safe one. Comfortable and sturdy footwear is a necessity, hiking boots give you more protection than do running shoes, this is especially true if your trek takes you in the mountains and wilderness. Wear comfortable woolen or cotton socks and always carry rain gear. A walking stick could also be very handy. If the terrain is not familiar, it is best to hike with someone who knows the area and always take into consideration your own hiking experience and capabilities. Over extending yourself can lead to unexpected problems, and maybe a call to search and rescue. Items you should have with you

pocketknife, matches in a water proof container, fire-starter (either a candle or a chemical type) and a flashlight. Also have with you extra clothing, food and liquid. For more information please read the [Wilderness Survival Guide](#).

Before you head out on any hike, make sure someone knows where you are going, and when you will be back. Do not leave the marked trails. Should weather turn bad or the hike be more strenuous than expected, turn back. Protect yourself from hypothermia and dehydration and be aware of the possibility of sun strokes and sun burns. Be safe, have fun!

### **Backcountry and Wilderness Ethics:**

In the past few years, concern for the environment has become very important. YOU, the hiker must do your part to help preserve and protect the wildlife and terrain. Always pack out all your garbage, never cut corners and obey all signs. If back packing in the wilderness, it's best to carry a stove, and definitely use the designated campsites when possible. Make your toilet arrangements away from any water. Be aware of the vegetation, wildlife and lands, tread gently, let's protect what we have, so others may enjoy it for years to come.



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