

GUYdelines

A few thoughts for outdoor lovers and leaders from

WILD GUYde Adventures, LLC

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I often have the opportunity to lead children or groups of them in the outdoors -- maybe you do too. You might be an active outdoor-oriented parent, or you might work with kids in a formal capacity as a teacher, youth group leader, or troop adult. My goals for every trip are FUN and LEARNING. Following is a simple and creative way to bring home to kids some basic principles about staying safe and having a positive time in nature. Using various animals as the springboard, you can launch off into safety behaviors, positive observation, and self and group care. After reading, feel free to embellish or add your own additional thoughts.

Some Animals to Learn From

1. Bears are omnivores; they eat lots of different foods, and they eat every chance they get. We are too, so when you are in the backcountry, *keep yourself fueled up with lots of food*. Breakfast is particularly important from a physiological standpoint, to prepare our bodies for a day of action. Breakfast eaters have been proven to get better grades in school (Adolphus, Lawton, and Dye, 2013), so it stands to reason that, in a challenging situation, they are probably going to make better quality decisions when it comes to safety and survival. Many adolescents in particular make a habit of skipping breakfast or eating low quality food. If I have a group member who is consistently cold when everyone else is not, I will frequently ask them if they ate breakfast this morning, and most times, the answer is NO. People distracted by discomfort are at higher risk for bad decisions and unsafe behaviors.

2. Whitetail deer are very shy of other wild creatures and dangers. *Be like them and be cautious; don't harass wild critters in the backcountry*. Help is far away, and those animals are unpredictable. The thumb-rule is this: when viewing a wild critter, hold up your thumb. If you are close enough that the critter is larger than your thumb, you are too close.

3. Hawks can see small mice and other movements from far away. *Keep your eyes sharp* – look carefully around you, notice movement, or changes in the weather, and *be aware*. Taking binoculars can extend your learning and give you access to details. Carrying a field guidebook to birds or trees, or a nature identification app on your phone can get kids more invested in observation. A professor I had in college told me, “*Anything is interesting if you know enough about it!*”

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4. Squirrels use leaves to insulate their nests. If stranded, *burrow down, or stuff leaves in your jeans and jacket* to stay warm through the night. This is a skill taught in survival courses, but the core concept is that it is the dead air space that our bodies heat, and that then warms us. This is the concept behind insulation in houses and puffy jackets on our shoulders. The insulation layer provides the dead air space, and then the shell layer (rain jacket, poncho, vapor barrier) traps the warm air, keeps wind from stealing it away, and protects the insulation layer from precipitation. Add in the idea that because of the large amount of blood feeding the brain, our heads release a lot of the heat from our bodies. A hat goes a long way toward keeping your hands warm on cold and windy days. Teaching kids to thermoregulate is an essential outdoor skill.

5. Mountain lions move noiselessly when stalking; they move and stop, move and stop. In wild critter country, *move quietly, and be patient* if you want to see animals up close. Stalking is a fun skill to practice on nearby accessible critters like the rabbits in your back yard or the whitetail deer up at Big Meadows. These animals are not domestic in the truest sense, but they will tend to let you get closer without serious threat than some other wilder mammals. Balance this with the safety suggestion in No. 2 above.

6. Blue Jays squawk when they are threatened. *Always carry a whistle and use it if you get in trouble.* In the outdoors, one blast means STOP, two blasts mean GATHER or COME HERE, and 3 of anything in the outdoors means DISTRESS/HELP. It is also a very physically economical tool in terms of effort. You can waste a lot of energy yelling “*Help,*” or you can just blast that whistle. My advice for active families or scout troops: *A whistle on every person every time in the outdoors – my \$1.29 peace-of-mind!*

7. Elephants use their trunks, and **camels** store water for long desert trips. *Drink often, keep hydrated, and always carry a water bottle in the backcountry.* As adults, we need to model frequent hydrating at hiking rest stops, and then monitor everyone’s water bottle levels to make sure they are drinking. The folks I have the most trouble convincing to drink in the outdoors – adolescent females! Why? They don’t want to have to pee in the woods. Monitoring personal urine color is also a healthy gauge of hydration effectiveness: clear or pale yellow is great, while bright yellow or orange means someone is drying up inside. BE A GRAPE, NOT A RAISIN!

8. Cats can see in the dark, and **bats** have echo-location radar. We don’t have these abilities, so *always carry a flashlight or headlamp* – even day-trips can turn into unexpected overnights. A light can also permit you to look into dark rock crevices or holes in hollow logs. It is one of the **Ten Essentials** – those 10 things that outdoor survival experts recommend that you always carry in your pack, whether for an afternoon day-hike or a 5-day backpacking trip. (The others, in case you haven’t reviewed them lately: *map, compass, pocketknife/multi-tool, extra food, first aid kit, whistle, shelter - can be a tarp or extra clothing, water, and fire-starter.*)

REPLY to share your thoughts and creative additions. Happy leading and teaching out there! **LRZ**

Are you coming to Virginia for a family vacation, church group trip, troop event, or escape weekend? Why not experience Virginia adventure with **WILD GUYde Adventures!**

WGA offers guided beginner level outdoor adventures and competent instruction in activity fundamentals. We can take you ***hiking, rock climbing and rappelling, wild caving, or canoeing/kayaking.*** We use various activity areas in the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, along Virginia’s Blue Ridge, and in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia. Check out the 2024 trip options below, or call to talk about your own creative adventure idea!

(540-433-1637 or lester@wildguyde.com)

You may also visit www.wildguyde.com

CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE: 2024 Daytrips with WILD GUYde Adventures,
Harrisonburg, VA

Top-Roping at Hidden Rocks, Virginia: This is the rock climbing trip for the adventurous beginner – you don't have much experience, but you want a great outdoor day with your family or special friends. Thirty minutes west of Harrisonburg, we'll park just inside George Washington National Forest, gear up, and hike a scenic 20 minutes through rhododendron and hemlocks and across some mountain streams to a secluded sandstone cliff. There will be pink and white mountain laurel in June, and wild huckleberries in August. You'll be introduced to harnesses, knots, helmets, and the *belay system*; then we'll try some easy warm-up climbs to remind you that the kid inside you still likes to clamber on things. We can go on to some harder climbing that invites you to try new skills and movements. And we'll finish the day with a rappel – backing over the edge, with nothing between you and the ground below but 60 feet of air and a great view! Closer to Luray or Northern Virginia? We'll visit **Waterfall Mountain** in the Massanutten Range, or **Little Stony Man** on the Blue Ridge for TALL climbing and spectacular Shenandoah Valley panoramas.

(Full day \$250 for 1-3 people; \$60 for each additional. ½-day \$175 for 1-3, and \$45 for each additional)

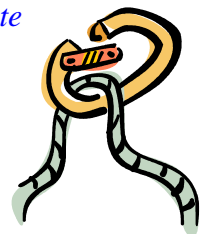


Beginner Climbing at Seneca Rocks, WV: After 90 minutes of curving mountain highway (okay, *country two-lane*), you'll gasp to see a spectacular blade of Tuscarora Sandstone, whose summit sits almost 1000 feet above its North Fork Valley floor. Seneca Rocks is a scenic place for the beginner or family to learn the rock climbing basics, top-roping and rappelling to an awesome West Virginia backdrop. Easy routes guarantee early success, but more challenging climbs also wait to test your skills. Seneca Rocks is an awesome place to climb, just beyond the sign: "*Here ends the realm of the hiker!*"

(Full day \$275 for 1-3 people; \$65 for each additional. ½ day \$200 for 1-3; \$50 each additional)

Multi-Pitch at Seneca Rocks: A little more experienced in climbing? Maybe you tried it at camp or the local rock gym? Ready for the next step? Join me for the multi-pitch experience, seconding the route as we lead-climb to the top of the fabled South Summit! This is the only technical summit in the U.S. east of the Mississippi. Seneca has routes at all ranges of difficulty, from starters like *Old Ladies Route* (5.2) to mid-range classics (*West Pole* 5.7) to old school hardman routes like *Crack of Dawn* and *Madmen Only* (5.10). Every one of them will give you a new appreciation for the expression "*high and vertical.*" Register your accomplishment and ruminations in the summit journal, wave to tourists way down in the valley, and then head down to *terra firma* via the three-pitch rappel. Finish the day with a splash in the North Fork River swimming hole at "Gravel Beach"; then pick up a cold drink and a West Virginia memento at Harpers General Store.

(Full-day: \$225 1st person; \$150 each addl.)



Instructional Climbing: This is a tutorial for those who have a little exposure to climbing, and want to gain eventual autonomy. Lots of instruction in current best-practice and hands-on trying it for you in rigging top anchors, belaying skills and equipment alternatives, movement coaching, and rappel setup and protection. There will be individualized attention and repetitive practice, as well as some exploration of the historical evolution of climbing equipment and protocol. You will finish the day with a lot more confidence in your basic skills. Bring a partner so you'll have someone to climb with later.

(\$175 1st person; \$125 each for 2nd and 3rd)

WILD GUYde Adventures offers two other rock climbing options: a **Boy Scout Rock Climbing Merit Badge** tutorial for troops and leaders. We send a booklet to get troops started on their knots and First Aid requirements ahead of time, and then spend two days going through all the climbing, gear spec., and

rappelling activity requirements (\$95 each). We also offer the **PCIA (Professional Climbing Instructor Association) Top Rope Climbing Instructor Certification** course and exam. This 3-day course (\$450) and 1 day exam (\$150) is for recreational climbers who want to add an instructor certification on their resume. It's also very useful for individuals guiding with club, camp, or university outing programs.

Peaceful Paddling: Canoe a ½ day stretch of the **South Fork River**. This Class I and II water is ideal for families with elementary school children – just long enough to be engaging without getting boring. As we wind through pastures in the Shenandoah Valley, you'll learn basic canoe strokes and maneuvering. Dangle your feet or plunk your head to cool off. And keep watching for blue herons, turtles on logs, and cows in the water!

(Half-Day: \$140 1-3 people; \$35 each additional. Full-Day: \$175 1-3 people; \$45 each additional)



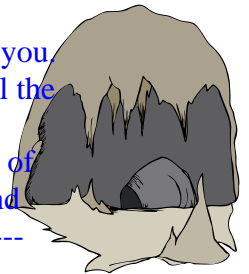
Pick-up-the-Pace Paddling: A fuller day of canoeing awaits further down the **South Fork**. This provides a little more excitement for teenagers, adventurous parents, & other paddle pilgrims! A casual start allows a review of canoe strokes and partner teamwork.

An amazing rope-swing breaks the quiet – you won't believe what comes out of your mouth when you let go (“*Geronimo!*?”) More paddling through runs and pools, always under the shadow of Massanutten Mountain. Lunch on the bank and then back into the boats. Finally, at Milepost 17, *Compton's Rapid* – a great shoot-through with some higher standing waves! Paddlers call it a “Fat II,” but stay wide of Pillow Rock! Below, there's a jumping rock for another cool-off before paddling the final mile to the take-out. Load the boats and start the drive home – happy, tired, and maybe a little sun-tanned! West Virginia travelers may want to visit the gorgeous “Trough” on the **South Branch of the Potomac**. High and remote mountain walls on each side of the river, and keep your eyes open for bald eagles!

(Half-Day: \$140 1-3 people, \$35 each additional; Full-Day: \$175 1-3 people; \$45 each additional)

Half-Day Caving: The underground sidewalk and the tourist cave light show are not for you. You want to see it the way it was before the electrician got there! Primitive caves have all the features of the subterranean world – *speleothems* (stalactites, flowstone, soda straws, and columns), *lots of real mud*, and sometimes even *bats* (but most of them are asleep, and all of them are harmless). Pull on your coveralls, clip on your helmet, adjust your headlamp, and down we go. There are squeezes if you want them, and belly crawls for the adventurous --- but there are also corridor ceilings higher than your house, and large cavern rooms for the claustrophobic. Learn cave travel safety, underground navigation, and some “total body movement.” Find out what the year-round underground temperature is, and then finally emerge back into sunlight with a new appreciation for what happens underneath Virginia when limestone and groundwater meet. The gleam of your smile might be the only thing shining through the mud on your face! Caving trips can be ***Beginner Caving*** (mostly horizontal movement – walking, stooping, or crawling) or ***Intermediate Caving*** (for folks fit enough to handle strenuous vertical moves, and more sustained physical effort). *Caving trips are not advised for individuals who might be unfit, excessively overweight, or who live an extremely sedentary lifestyle, or for very young children.*

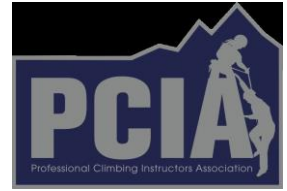
(\$140 for 1-3 people; \$30 for each additional)



Design Your Own Adventure: Numerous other options exist, including hiking and climbing guiding along **Virginia's Blue Ridge** or at the **NROCKS (WV)**, group orienteering challenges in the National Forest, a climbing self-rescue clinic, outdoor fitness training, and flatwater paddling instruction for beginners and children. We can customize to meet the interests of your family, scout troop, or youth group. Call to talk about your needs.

Things you oughta know:

- **Lester R. Zook** is the **WILD GUYde**. He is a *Wilderness First Responder*, and is an *Instructor Provider* with the Professional Climbing Instructors Association. He has been leading wilderness adventures and training camping leaders for 40 years, and loves to take people outdoors! **Ethan Zook** has been a camp counselor and adventure leader at numerous camps. He is a *Red Cross Lifeguard* and a *Virginia Paramedic*. **Aaron Zook** is a climber, caver, and paddler, a *Red Cross Lifeguard*, and has been through *Wilderness First Aid*. **Mary Tapolyai** is a *WFR*, and a *Leave No Trace Master Educator*. Together, we are a small family business that strives to provide exceptional service, and create value in the lives of our guests.
- More detail on activity possibilities is available by visiting www.wildguyde.com. Call or e-mail to ask questions and to arrange dates, rates, and meeting points. You may also check us out on **Trip Advisor**, **YELP**, or **Facebook**.



(540) 433-1637 or lester@wildguyde.com

- **WGA's** guiding season is 7 days a week. Rock climbing is March through October, paddling is best in the spring and summer, and wild caving is year-round. Call early to reserve; weekends in particular can fill quickly.
- **WILD GUYde** will provide all technical equipment (ropes, harnesses, helmets, etc.). A personal *things-to-bring list* (clothing, water, lunch, etc.) will be provided.
- We can also help with **lodging ideas**. We can recommend from *primitive* to *posh* – National Forest campgrounds, drive-up motels, and some delightful Bed and Breakfast inns!
- For groups of 10 or larger, we disregard the starter fee and simply bill the per-person rate.
- Payment is by cash or check, payable to **WGA**; unfortunately, credit cards cannot be accepted at this time. Gratuities are never expected, and always appreciated!
- Some activities have inherent risks – that's the meaning of the word *adventure*. Participants will be asked to fill out a **Medical Form**, and sign a **Participant Agreement** acknowledging certain dangers. Some activities are physically strenuous, emotionally demanding, or require sustained cognitive attention to task and detail. We make every effort to create a great day, but **WGA** guides do reserve the prerogative to deny access/participation if, in our judgment, the client is not likely to be successful, or might pose undue hazard. Clients also may not be “under the influence” or “feeling the effects” of alcohol or recreational drugs at the time of the event.
- **WILD GUYde Adventures** incorporated in Virginia in 2004, and is fully insured. **WGA** is a permittee with the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests, and along Virginia's Blue Ridge. **WGA** is an equal opportunity provider and employer. **WGA** practices environmental stewardship, and is a member of the *Access Fund*, the *National Speleological Society*, the *Virginia Tourism Corp.*, the *Shenandoah Valley Travel Assoc.*, and the *Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce*.



How was your trip with the *WILD GUYde*?!

Thanks again for guiding us – the trip was awesome! I'm a little sore and bruised today but it makes me happy because it reminds me of everything we did. The info was clear and the location appropriate. I also really enjoyed how you incorporated learning and team building elements into our trip. (Sarah, 2012)

We arrived back in Florida late Thursday night. We had a wonderful time on our adventure with you and we have all been raving to everyone about how great the trip was! Your professionalism and encouragement allowed us to continue on even when some of us were reluctant to try (me, of course)! The boys raved about the caving and the fact that it looked scary, but once you got through it, it wasn't as difficult or scary as you thought it would be. Todd and I were both thrilled with the learning experience for the kids and feel that we have all grown as a result of facing our fears. Everyone talked about what a great guide you were for us! Overall, our adventure was a wonderful experience and the highlight of our trip to VA! (Christine, 2012)

We had a blast, everything was perfect, and you did an amazing job! The pictures are AWESOME! We would recommend you to any outdoor lover! We agreed that we learned so much from you. (Nina, 2012)

Thank you so very much for a wonderful adventure rock climbing last week. It was wonderful to share the time with my daughter. We both really appreciated your teaching style and the knowledge you imparted. I found a whole bucket-full of sermon illustrations. The location was excellent. We appreciated the fact that we were alone on the climb (except for the beautiful hawk). The photos you took came out well, and we showed them to my wife who appreciated our joy, but was thankful that she chose a more Hobbitish way to spend the day (reading). (Pastor Chris, 2012)

Your customer service was outstanding. Despite my late contact, you found a way to get us in on an adventure. The experience was excellent. The kids had a blast but you were appropriately serious in your approach. Safety was a clear priority as it must be. The experience was well structured and presented a number of great challenges. (Mark, 2012)

Our 3 children (25, 21, 16) went on a rock climbing adventure with Lester. They were beginners and Lester was an excellent guide. He was knowledgeable, safety and detail oriented, and an excellent teacher. They came back smiling and a little sore. Our family isn't the outdoorsy type, but they all said they would definitely do it again! Well worth the drive and the time. (Meredith, 2021)

This was my and my husband's first time rock-climbing. All I can say is that it was an amazing experience. We have done activities from zip-lining and parasailing to sky-diving and I can say this is right up there with all of those activities. I was a bit nervous to start my repel over the edge but Lester makes sure you are confident that your equipment is holding you. Now that I have experienced it, I want to go back and do it

again and again. This was a great learning experience and Lester was full of knowledge about rock climbing, rappelling, nature, and just life in general. Would recommend to anyone looking for some adventure! (Krysten, 2021)

Lester, we absolutely loved climbing with you! We will be climbing more – that was so fun and challenging yet doable with an incredible adrenaline rush and boost of confidence. Things we learned: How to tie a strong knot; Small footholds do a lot for you; Look down! The harness is holding me; Screaming helps; The hike is not the hard part; You will get giant leg bruises after rock climbing; Don't give up cuz you can make it; Safety, positivity, and being good to nature; Talking with people makes hikes less exhausting; It is quite thrilling to climb 70 feet without falling knowing that you could've done it without a rope. (Haley and Sam, 2021)