

Congleton Friends,
In aid of The Donna Louise Children's Hospice

teams@3peaks2019.co.uk
01260 285 699



Dear all,

It is likely you are all getting close to your challenge date and in the next week you will be receiving some information about the mountains. **Please make sure you share the mountain information and the following safety advice with all members of your team.** This email is a lengthy one but we feel it prudent to share this with you.

As with all things in life there are risks, but with sensible planning and precautions these can be minimised.

Driving, Drivers and Sleep

We believe that your most likely cause of serious injury is not the mountains, but on the roads between them! Please ensure your nominated drivers do not speed, are not tired, that they swop drivers every hour or so, particularly during darkness, and that your vehicle is in good repair. You may want to get some sleep between mountains, but please do so with your seat belt on. Your drivers should get some sleep whilst you are on the Mountains.

Weather

If the weather forecast for your date is atrocious when you check a couple of days in advance, **CALL IT OFF.** Don't be macho and risk your teams health or worse. Weather is your biggest enemy and it will win, so reorganise or better still have a pre agreed fallback date a couple of weeks later.

If the weather turns evil, get off the mountain quickly and by the path you have just come up. It takes more courage to call it off than to foolishly carry on putting your team at risk. On Scafell and Ben Nevis the emergency route down is the same as the route you have climbed. On Snowdon, if you have nearly got to the top, i.e. you have reached the "Needle" marker where the Pygg track joins the railway path, you may choose to get down by following the Llanberis path (i.e. follow the route of the railway). You can call your support crew and get them to meet you in Llanberis.

Team Work and Kit

Every team member needs to have all the suggested kit, drink, snacks and safety equipment. The weather conditions by your vehicle will not be the conditions 2 hours later on the top of the mountain, so take it all.

This is a team event for several reasons, stay as a team, don't get separated, care for each other, and the best way to not have a demoralised straggler at the back is to walk together (take their rucksack yourself for a spell, you're a team). Completing the challenge as a team is far more important than trying to shave an hour off the time.

Please look out for each other, you will all have times when you are down, cold or too tired to remember to do the right thing. Make sure everyone drinks plenty and eats snacks. Remind each other to put on or take off layers as appropriate, don't soldier on being too hot or cold. Everyone should also have a warm hat and a waterproof hood on their cagoule. If you have coats and over-trousers on, scientists say that over 85% off your total heat loss is then through a bare head. Similarly, gloves or over-gloves should be waterproof as wet gloves are almost useless.

The kit list mentions survival bags. Everyone should have one, they weigh nothing, cost little and are singly the most likely piece of kit to save lives. They are simply a huge wind and waterproof bag that you get into, or put a casualty into.

Mountains

Scafell is the mountain that has caused teams to get off course far more often than the other two. There are two causes:

- a) About half way up you need to turn left off the obvious path and head across a slope dotted with huge boulders. This turn left can be easily missed, especially as you are probably doing this climb in the dark. Look out for the fork in the path, or better still it would be helpful if one of your team has completed a practice climb on Scafell in the weeks before your challenge to familiarise themselves with the route.
- b) At the very flat summit of Scafell there are about 7 well walked paths radiating back down in every direction. In the euphoria of reaching the top you will immediately take in the panoramic view and ten seconds later have no idea whatsoever of which path you just walked up! You either need to use a compass and do bearings/back bearings, OR remember to drop a rucksack 25 metres before the summit cairn to mark the path. Simple if you know and remember. If you go down the wrong path you could end up 10 miles and 5 hours extra walk from your vehicle, as one team of ours discovered in a previous year.

One of your team needs to be a competent map reader and compass user. They need to familiarise themselves with your intended route for each mountain, and have the relevant bearings recorded for the different sections in case visibility is poor.

Medical situations, emergencies and accidents

If conditions are poor, that is wet, windy or cold or a combination of these three, then always be on the lookout for signs of **Hypothermia** in your team:-

The signs are:

- Shivering
- Cold or pale skin
- Low body temperature
- Irrational Behaviour
- Incoherent speech

Ways of Preventing Hypothermia:

- Extra layers of clothes, waterproof/windproof coat and over-trousers
- Food, hot drinks, sweets to produce energy
- Balaclava/woolly hat and warm gloves
- Shelter out of the wind
- Use your survival bag if conditions dictate

If anyone is getting cold, act quickly to prevent Hypothermia.

Treatment of Hypothermia:

- Provide extra clothing and shelter from the elements
- Bodily warmth of others helps in a gradual warming
- If well enough, come down to a warmer sheltered area or return to support vehicle
- Give chocolate or sweets if patient can take food. Give hot drinks if conscious.
- Alcohol should never be consumed on any walk, and should NOT be given to anyone who has Hypothermia

In any type of emergency/accident situation it is always advisable to come off the mountain as soon as possible especially in low cloud, snow or bad conditions. The temperature difference between the valley and summit can be several degrees. If the injured walker is able to move safely, going down the mountain is usually the best solution.

When conditions do not permit movement, find the nearest sheltered area, stay there until conditions improve. It may be at this time that you put on extra clothing and use survival bags.

Midges...

Whilst not lethal, the midges that you could well encounter in the last mile of your descent of Ben Nevis will fray your mental health to the limit. A midge net over your head gives 98% relief.

Enjoy your challenge and keep an eye out for the mountain information in the next few days.

Regards

Congleton Friends of the Donna Louise Trust

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