

Preparing for Trek

Prepare Physically

If you will be physically trekking, **add daily walking** to your schedule at least four weeks before the event; the earlier you start, the better. You likely won't be asked to keep the pace of the original emigrants, but you'll have a better time if you can manage several miles without fatigue or pain.

If you will be wearing **unfamiliar boots or shoes**, try them out on walks at home. You may need to add arch supports, gelpads, or other modern medical aids to complete your trek experience in good health and comfort. Better to find out before you leave!

At least two weeks before your experience, start increasing your water intake. **Dehydration** is a main cause of discomfort and illness when engaged in living history activities. Pre-hydration is vital, as is drinking steady, small amounts of clear liquid at the event. Tepid water is better than ice-cold water or boiling hot liquids. While on a trek, be sure you're replacing minerals and salts by eating sour pickles (the vinegar and salt in the brine are great electrolyte replacements!) If a pickle has no flavor, nibble slowly and take little sips of water until you can taste them again.

Be sure to wear **100% natural fibers** (wool or cotton will be very common). Man-made fibers (including polyester, microfleece, and lycra) will melt when exposed to flame or sparks, and can cause problems with over-heating on warm days. Natural fibers are safer around fires and candles. Exercise extreme caution around any fires or lanterns! Stop, drop, and roll to smother any embers. Remember, light layers of wool will insulate better than one thick layer of anything else!

Be careful around **wagons and carts**—never try to climb in or out of a moving conveyance. Do not fool around with, or play pranks with, carts, wagons, or livestock.

Learn to **recognize** the signs of dehydration, and heat and cold emergencies in yourself, and in others. Keep an eye on your friends and companions—if someone stops sweating on a hot day, seek emergency medical aid immediately; if someone has an altered state of mind on a cold day, seek help for hypothermia. If you feel dizzy or disoriented, tell someone immediately!

Don't forget to bring any needed **medications**. If you have severe health problems, talk about the event with your doctor first, and get his advice. Normal medical conditions can become severe emergencies if poorly managed "in the field."

Asthmatics should always have a rescue inhaler in a handy pocket; those allergic to bees (or with other anaphylactic

reactions) should keep an epi-pen handy, etc. Be sure your leaders know of your medical needs before the event.

Prepare for the weather. You may experience extremes of heat and cold, wet and dry, all in one day. Dressing in historically accurate layers and textiles is a good plan. If you will be camping, bring something to wear on your head at night.

If you get chilly at night, **warm up from the inside:** do some jumping jacks or vigorous dancing for 10 minutes, until you have a nice glow worked up. Then, briskly towel off any sweat, change to clean, dry socks (and into clean, dry clothing if possible), put something over your head, and snuggle down to sleep. Going to sleep in the socks you wore all day, or with a bare head, is a sure recipe for getting chilled.

Bring modern **sunblock** (unscented), and take the time for a quick water-wipedown and reapplication every three hours. Use sunblock on your face, neck, ears, upper chest, hands, and forearms; everything else should be covered with light cloth layers.

Above all, **ask questions.** If you're not sure of something, ask! If you're concerned about something, ask! Put safety first.

Prepare Spiritually

The LDS overland emigrants often had deeply spiritual experiences during their trek. Check the local library for great books on the early Church and the emigration experience. Check the article "In Their Own Words" for sources on first-person accounts from emigrants and LDS pioneers of all ages.

Read your scriptures, focusing on the portions of the Doctrine & Covenants that happened during the time span of the church relocating and settling Kirtland and Nauvoo. Read other stories of exodus (such as in the Old Testament, or the Book of Mormon), and you will begin to develop a kinship with pioneers throughout our faith history.

How are their challenges similar to or different from your own? What can you learn from their responses, attitudes, and coping skills? How do you bring the experiences they had into your life today?

What you take away from a trek depends on what you bring to start... choose wisely!

