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HOW TO: PICK A LOCATION

There are a few different options for deciding where you'd like to go on your trip. You can a) decide what **scenery** interests you most (desert, forest, ocean, etc.), b) you can consider what **activities** you'd like to do during the trip and choose a location best suited for those activities, or c) you can throw a dart at a map and go wherever it lands spontaneously!

Another element to consider when picking a location is what **time of year** you are planning for the trip to happen. If you know that you'll have time to travel over winter break, you might not want/be able to travel somewhere that has severe winter weather conditions. Keep this in mind when thinking about what activities you'd like to do there as well. If you are wanting to go snowboarding in Colorado, you'll want to go when the conditions will be best.

Also consider your **budget**. Travelling to somewhere closer to home will almost always be cheaper than travelling across several states. However, your college years are the ideal time in your life to travel, so if you're able to work around the financial aspect, we highly recommend taking the risk if it does not pose a threat to your financial well-being.

If you'll be camping or backpacking, you'll want to make sure that there are **campsites** available and water sources. Ideally, check into campsites at least a month before your trip. If you can't afford a campsite, you can also search for B.L.M. (Bureau of Land Management) campsites. They are free but have limited amenities. Here's a [link to their site](#) to find campsites! There are also websites and apps like TheDyrt, MoochDocker, AirBnB, and others that will post campsites on private property.

Depending on the size of the group you'll be travelling with and the location, you might need to obtain a **permit**. It is best practice to apply for your permit between 6 months - a year in advance. Be sure to check the website for the location you'll be travelling to in order to ensure you won't need a permit, or to go through the permit request process. If you have difficulty with this, the UNK Outdoor Adventure is always available to assist you. Our office phone number is 308-865-1549 and our email is unkoutdoors@unk.edu.



HOW TO: PICK A PRIMARY ACTIVITY

There are tons of options for what you can do on your trip, especially if you're looking to get outside. Here's a few for your consideration...

- Hiking
- Backpacking
- Paddling
- Snowboarding/Skiing
- Snowshoeing/XC Skiing
- Fishing
- Camping
- Mountain Biking
- Rock Climbing/Bouldering

When deciding what you'd like to do on your trip, consider the following...

- Have you done this activity before?
 - If not, will you be travelling with someone who has, or hiring an outfitter/guide?
- Is it something you've always wanted to try or learn?
- Is this activity offered at the location you are travelling to?
- Do you have time to physically and mentally prepare and train for the trip?
- Will you be travelling solo or with others?
 - Some activities require multiple people (climbing, canoeing, etc.)
- Can I afford the cost of the gear I need for this activity if I don't already own it?

If you choose to do an activity that you haven't done before and nobody else travelling with you has done it either, it is smart to consider hiring an outfitter or guiding service for your trip. These companies supply gear, information, shuttles, and sometimes a personal guide for the activity and area you are travelling to. These services are incredibly convenient, however they can be expensive as well. To look at outfitters or guiding companies near the area you're going to, a simple Google search will typically do the trick. Be sure to read reviews as well! **Do not attempt an activity you haven't had prior experience or training with on your own.**



GEAR SELECTION

Your gear selection will vary depending on what activity you decide to do. However, most of the stuff you will need will be the same from trip to trip. Here is a link to an [Outdoor Gear List](#) to help you get started packing. UNK Outdoors offers discounted gear rentals to current UNK Students, so if there's something on the list you don't have or can't afford we can rent it to you for your trip! Come to Cushing W104 during our office hours and speak with any of our office staff.

Here are some breakdowns for gear depending on your trip activity.

Paddling:

- Canoe, Kayak, or Paddleboard
- PFD a.k.a. Lifejacket
- Paddle
- Straps (for car topping)
- Cooler and Ice
- Dry Bags
- Fin Kit (for paddleboards)
- Throw Rope (optional)

Camping/Backpacking:

- Tent
- Sleeping Bag
- Sleeping Pad
- Stove and Gas
- Pot Kit
- Water Source and/or Method of Purifying Water (iodine tablets, sawyer squeeze, etc.)
- Wag Bag/Poop Kit
- Trekking Poles

Snow-Related Activities:

- Skis and Ski Boots
- Ski Poles
- Snowshoes
- Snow Pants
- Winter Coat
- Gloves
- Hat
- Hand Warmers
- Cramp-ons

UNK Outdoors does not rent out climbing gear to the public. This is part of our safety precautions. If you'd like to go climbing, we recommend searching for climbing outfitters in the location you plan on travelling to.



SAFETY

The most important part of any **trip plan** is being sure that a copy has been given to someone reliable who knows when you're leaving, where you're going, and when you plan to return. This ensures that if something were to go wrong, this person would be able to help authorities in their efforts to help you.

Here is a link to a modified version of the [UNK Outdoors Risk Management Plan](#). You can save a copy of this document and use it to create a trip/float plan.

Also be sure to do research on what **environmental factors** about the area you are travelling to that could pose a risk (bears, poison ivy, flash floods, etc.). If you are travelling to a specific park, their website will often have updates on the conditions in different areas of the park. You can also typically find a phone number for the information center. They can provide current conditions as well along with any dangerous wild animal sightings in the area.

In regards to personal protection, here are some tips.

- Always lock your vehicle when you are not in it, including at gas stations while pumping gas
- Carry pepper spray, stun gun, or bear spray
- Make noise while hiking; it will deter wild animals
- Be careful when taking photos near cliff edges. Dozens of people die every year taking photos at the edge and getting too close.

If you will be travelling in **bear country** you'll want to make sure that you store your smellables (food, used dishes, scented lotions and soaps, toothpaste, etc.) inside of a bear canister or bear bag. Here is a link on [how to properly store your food!](#) This includes bear canisters, bear bags, and bear hangs.

You'll also want to make sure that you have a tool kit and jumper cables in your car in case you have car troubles. If you have a AAA membership or something similar, ensure you have your account number and the phone number at the ready. It's also smart to carry an atlas or printed step-by-step directions to your destination in case you lose cell service.



FOOD

What food you pack will depend on the activity you are doing. If you are backpacking, you'll want to pack lightweight, filling foods that won't have a lot of waste. If you are paddling or climbing your food can be a little heavier since you won't be carrying it as far for as long. If you are looking for recipe ideas, check out the [UNI Outdoors Cookbook](#)! There are also tons of tips for packing food in the cookbook, so take a look at those too!

Specifically when backpacking you'll want to make sure that you don't pack food in any glass containers. You also want to make sure that your food won't get crushed in your pack (bread, for example). You'll want tons of snacks to make sure you are keeping your energy up! In general, anytime you head on an outdoor adventure, don't skimp on food. **The outdoors is no place for dieting!** Eat when you're hungry and drink plenty of water.

UNK Outdoors uses a [food grid and meal breakdown](#) to make understanding the meals for a trip easier. Feel free to make a copy and use our template for your trip.



CALCULATING GAS COSTS

One of the most expensive parts of any trip is the cost of gas. It's smart to calculate how much your trip will cost gas-wise to ensure you budget properly. There are loads of websites that can calculate this for you, but we will break it down manually here.

First, enter your starting location, then enter your destination in Google Maps. Take the total miles for this distance and multiply by 2 to get your total miles for the entire trip. It's also okay to round up a little if you're close to a more even number (ex. 247 gets rounded to 250).

Then you'll need to know what the MPG (miles per gallon) are for the vehicle you'll be taking. If you aren't sure, check your owner's manual or sometimes a quick Google search will do the trick. You'll also want to know how many gallons of gas your tank will hold. Look in the owner's manual or Google for this one too.

Next, multiple your MPG by the number of gallons your tank holds. This should tell you how many miles you can drive on a full tank of gas. ($\text{MPG} \times \text{Tank Size} = \text{Miles Driveable w/ One Tank}$). Then divide the total miles you'll be driving by that number ($\text{Total Miles} / \text{Miles driveable with one tank of gas} = \text{How many times you'll have to fill your vehicle}$).

Now that we know how many times you'll have to fill your vehicle, we can look up the average cost of gas in the US (<https://gasprices.aaa.com/>). This website will also show you the average cost broken down by state and has a gas calculator. Next, multiply the average cost of gas by the tank size and you'll get the cost for one full tank of gas. Then multiply that number by the number of times you'll have to fill your vehicle. This should give you the total cost of gas for your trip.

- $\text{MPG} \times \text{Tank Size} = \text{Miles driveable with one tank}$
- $\text{Total miles you'll be driving} / \text{Miles driveable with one tank} = \text{How many times you'll have to fill your vehicle}$
- $\text{Average cost of gas in the US} \times \text{Tank Size} = \text{Cost of one full tank of gas}$
- $\text{Cost of one full tank of gas} \times \text{How many times you'll have to fill your vehicle} = \text{Total cost of gas for the trip}$

Example: I drive a Chevy Express that gets 13MPG and has a 31 gallon tank. I'm driving from Cedar Falls, Iowa to Malibu, California (1,530 miles one way). I'll drive a total of 3,060 miles.

- $13 \text{ MPG} \times 31 \text{ gallon tank} = 403 \text{ miles driveable with one tank}$
- $3,060 \text{ miles} / 403 \text{ miles in one tank} = 7.59 \rightarrow \text{Round up to 8 fill ups}$
- $\$3.07 \text{ (as of 6/11/2021)} \times 31 \text{ gallons} = \$95.17/\text{fill up}$
- $\$95.17 \times 8 \text{ Fill ups} = \$761.36 \text{ to drive from CF to Malibu and back.}$



ACCESSING AND READING MAPS

Maps are often expensive, but are imperative to ensuring your trip goes smoothly. If you're looking for maps on hiking trails, **AllTrails** is by far the best resource for finding virtual trail maps. You can usually screenshot the map for free, but you can also pay for a better version. If you need a more detailed map, search online stores for what fits your needs.

You might not want to wait to buy a map at the ranger or information station because they will be more expensive. Make sure if you are going to a large national park or trail system that you purchase a map that shows your section of trail. They often break up the parks into sections to make the maps less bulky. Guide books are also really great, but also expensive.

UNI Outdoors also has a collection of maps for many places in the US, so come take a look and we might be able to help you get a copy.

Watch this [video](#) to learn how to read a topographic map! You might also be able to find video blogs of people who have done the trip you plan on doing. Watch them! You'll want as much info about the geography and terrain as possible.

