

TREK & TRACK'S GREAT ADVENTURE

Meet Trek and Track, a pair of boots. They wake up one morning to find a note from one of their friends taped to the door. It tells them that they should take a day trip out of the city to go climb Misty Mountain. Their friends will meet them for a picnic when they reach the top.

Trek and Track have never been to the mountains, but they have heard that Misty Mountain is a beautiful place with amazing views. They are also very excited to meet their friends, so they decide to get ready. They're not sure what lies ahead, but luckily, their friend Pointer the Compass drops by to say hello. Pointer has been hiking many times so s(he) tells Trek and Track that s(he) will help them prepare for their journey. Pointer also tells them that it's important to "Know Before You Go" so that they are safe and have a good time. S(he) helps Trek and Track pack a backpack with food, water, extra clothing, a map, a compass and other important items. S(he) also reminds Trek and Track to put on hats and sunscreen because it's very sunny on the mountain.

It's time for Trek and Track to hit the trails, so they thank Pointer for his/her help and head out the door. Trek and Track drive to the trailhead, but before starting their hike, they stop to read the sign and study the trail map. The signs also remind them that even though it has rained and the trails are muddy, hikers should try and walk in the middle of the trail to avoid stepping on flowers and other plants, or creating new trails. Trek and Track high-five each other for remembering to put on their sturdy hiking shoes. They don't have to worry about mud and they can "Choose the Right Path." As they hike, Trek and Track begin to enjoy the new surroundings. Enormous trees surround them. A creek bubbles beside the trail. The sound of birds singing fills the air. It's beautiful!

As they continue along, they run into another hiker on the trail named Flash the Camera. Flash is actually an outdoor photographer and s(he) is on Misty Mountain taking photographs of a log cabin. The cabin is very old and s(he) is excited about all the cool stuff s(he) has found: antlers, old bottles and wildflowers! S(he) keeps taking pictures of everything! Flash also tells Trek and Track that unfortunately many people have come to this old cabin and taken things home with them. S(he) hopes that by taking pictures of it to share with the public, it will help educate others to "Leave What You Find" so that other can enjoy these places as well. Trek and Track continue on the trail.

They meet another hiker named Digger the Trowel who is sitting off to the side of the trail, eating an orange for a snack. Digger offers Trek and Track part of the orange. Trek and Track thank him/her and take a piece to enjoy. They watch as Digger takes out a plastic bag and puts his/her orange peels in the bag and back in the backpack. "Why don't you just throw the orange peels into the forest?" asks Trek. "Yeah," says Track, "It's just fruit, it will decompose." Digger tells them that because orange trees are not found in this forest, and because there are many animals living here, it's important to "Trash Your Trash." Luckily he/she packed a trash bag and there is a trash bin at the trailhead so s(he) can throw it away after the hike is over. Trek and Track think about this for a second; they are learning

so many new things about hiking!

Climbing higher up the mountain, they arrive at a pristine mountain lake. Across the lake, there are many animals- frogs, squirrels, and deer all coming to take a drink. "I wish we could get closer!" says Trek. Luckily, there is another hiker standing next to them named Zooms the Binoculars. S(he) offers to let Trek and Track borrow his/her binoculars to get a closer look at the animals across the way. Zooms tells Trek and Track that binoculars are great because they help us "Respect Wildlife" by keeping a safe distance. When we use binoculars, we get to see animals more closely without disturbing them. And of course Trek and Track already learned about not leaving food for wildlife; human food can make wild animals very sick!

Trek and Track thank Zooms for letting them borrow the binoculars and continue on their way. They are getting very close to the top and the temperature is getting a little cooler and windier. Luckily, with Pointer's help, they had remembered to pack extra jackets in their backpack.

Shortly after, they hear voices up ahead. It's their friend Sparks the Stove who is meeting them for a picnic. Sparks is sitting on some large rocks off the side of the trail with his/her friend Pitch the Tent, getting a meal ready. Trek and Track are relieved; it's been a long hike and they are hungry. It's also gotten a lot chillier and they would love something warm to drink. Track asks Sparks if s(he) should get some wood to build a small fire. Sparks tells them that fires aren't allowed in the area but luckily s(he) brought his/her camp stove that they can use to boil some of the extra water they brought to make hot chocolate. What a great idea! The four of them enjoy their picnic while taking in the beautiful views.

"What a great place to enjoy a picnic," says Trek, "It's so peaceful and quiet here." Pitch tells Trek and Track that he/she looked for a nice spot off the trail, so they wouldn't disturb the other hikers who were coming up the trail to enjoy the view as well. Pitch also tells them that Misty Mountains is a very popular hiking spot, so it's always important to "Be Kind to Others" who are sharing the space too.

What a great point, think Trek and Track. Then they remember all of the friends they had met along the way who were also being considerate of them and the animals that lived in the forest.

After packing away their trash and making sure to carry out all their belongings, the four of them head back down the trail, past the pristine lake where they saw some deer with Zooms, past the field of wildflowers where they had a snack with Digger, past the old log cabin where they took some pictures with Flash, and back down to the trailhead where they began their journey.

As soon as Trek and Track make it home their phone rings. It's their friend Pointer. "How was the hike?" s(he) asks them. "It was great!" they both say. "We saw so many things along the way and made some great friends who taught us how to Leave No Trace when we are on the trails." "Wow," said Pointer, "Maybe next time you guys can teach me!" and they planned to go on another trip next weekend.

