

# Sionnach Adventure!

Fail to Prepare - Prepare to Fail



So, you've booked into a Sionnach Adventure. It's not called an Adventure for no reason. You'll spend two nights under canvas in some of the most beautiful and remote parts of the country, sometimes in sun, sometimes in rain and if you're lucky sometimes in snow. You'll have to carry everything you need: your tent, rain gear, food and sometimes even water. Reading through this document should help you plan and prepare for a Sionnach, know what to expect, help you to pack properly and more importantly know what to leave behind!

## Before the Sionnach

The first Sionnach of every year is the last or second last weekend in September. This doesn't give much time to prepare if your scout group takes holidays over the summer. There is a handy guide to preparing for a Sionnach on our website [www.sionnach.org](http://www.sionnach.org). This has a sample programme for the three scout meetings before a Sionnach.

## Map and Compass Skills

Make sure your compasses work, point north and are free from bubbles. Learn the parts of a compass and what they do. Replace the short red chord that is far too small with a good length of paracord so you can hold the compass at your belly button.

You should practise the following

Walking on a bearing

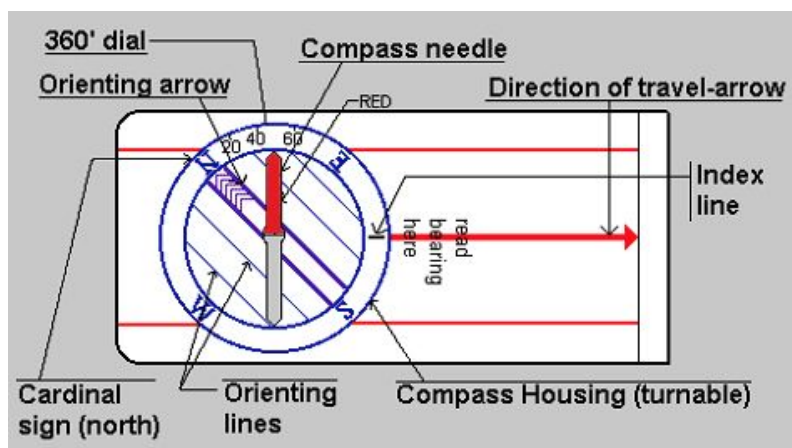
Taking a bearing

Adding magnetic variation

Look at the map of the area

Creating a route card

Pacing 100m.



Having the correct map and compass is just as important as the skills to use them. You don't need to be a pro at the skills when coming on a Sionnach for the first time, we will help you. You do need to have practised a bit though!

**Top tips and handy hints!** Ensure you have the correct map or extract (the coordinator will usually email one out). We recommend a Silva type 4 compass. These come with handy navigational aids like roamers! **Please don't write / draw on your maps!!**

## Equipment

The equipment you bring (or don't bring) on the Sionnach will definitely influence your success. We say success but we mean enjoyment! This should be fun and enjoyable. It won't be if you bring the kitchen sink! A good rule for Sionnachs - plan for the worst, hope for the best. This however doesn't mean bring nineteen litres of water, twelve spare sandwiches, hair gel, a peg mallet and a set of your parent's best delph!

## Troop Kit

Your troop should provide you with the following equipment.

**Tent** - Put it up the week before and make sure it has enough pegs for all the guy lines, plus one or two spare. Make sure all the zips work and add extra paracord for guys if some are missing. The type of tent you bring on a Sionnach is very important. It needs to be light enough to be carried, but durable enough to stand up to the elements. Wind, rain and puddles can almost be guaranteed.



**An Icelandic:** As appealing as it sounds, this just won't cut the mustard. Too heavy, too bulky and somebody is definitely going to forget the dollies or the ground sheet. Leave this for your week long standing camps.

**Dome tent:** Sounds idyllic, lots of space, porch for your gear and even some windows. Don't be fooled. Tents like this are heavy! They have too many fibreglass poles, which are heavy and break. They are too big so act like sails to catch the wind. They often only have a single skin (1 layer) so the rain just pours in! Leave it for the car camping in France with your folks!



**Hike Tent:** Now we're talking! Separate flysheet to keep the elements out. Inner to keep the heat in. Sleek low profile to stay out of the wind. Lightweight material, plenty of pegging options and guy lines. A (small) porch for gear and just two aluminium (lightweight) poles. Perfect!

**Top tips and handy hints!** Use x shaped or triangular, v shaped pegs on the hills, they will stay put in irish bog much better than round pegs. Now, which way does the V point, towards the tent or away? Discuss!



## Troop Kit

Your troop should provide you with the following equipment.

**Trangia** - and trangia bottle. Know how to use it, know what all the parts are. Fill your trangia bottle with methylated spirits or meths. If you are using a gas cooker, use the small stove type, not the briefcase camping-gaz style.

The Good



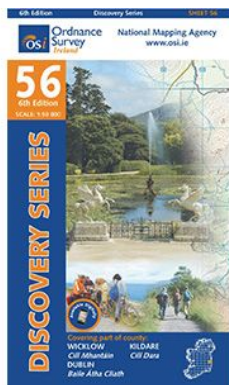
The Bad



The Ugly



If you are stuck you can use a regular bottle for your fuel, but when it leaks over all your gear and food, don't say we didn't warn you. Better to use a fuel bottle like that lovely MSR one over there.



**Map and Compass** - Map should be laminated. Not "weatherproof", because, well they aren't. Laminated maps only please. Don't bring a paper map unless you have a map case.

You should bring an OSI Discovery Series map. These are 1:50:000 scale maps, and ideal for walking with. Invest in the map and buy a laminated one. Once more, buy the laminated one! You'll need at least two maps per patrol. The Coordinator will email a 'map extract' a few weeks before the Sionnach. This will allow you to get preparing your route card.

Your compass should work, point North, spin freely, have no bubbles and a long enough chord so you can comfortably hold it at your bellybutton. A Silva type 4 is recommended.



**Top tips and handy hints!** To use your compass like a pro, larks foot it onto a belt loop and keep it in your pocket or tie it to your wrist and stuff it up your sleeve when not in use. It's very impractical around your neck!

## Personal Kit

You'll need to have all the essentials or else the staff might turn you away at check in on Friday night for health and safety reasons.

Ok, let's get something straight right away, you like stuff. Everybody likes stuff. Leave your stuff behind. Nobody likes carrying stuff up mountains. Especially when your stuff is heavy because you let it get wet. Don't let your stuff get wet!

Personal gear falls into two categories. Needs (essential items) and wants (luxury items). You might find however that as you get more experienced, items move from one list to another. For example in the winter there might be little need for sun cream or a towel, but in summer you may not need a hat and gloves.

Check out the kit list on [sionnach.org](http://sionnach.org) for a full rundown of what you need. Here we will just talk about some of the 'tricky' and essential bits of kit.

**Boots** - These need to fit. They should belong to you and you should have broken them in already (worn them for a few weeks), this will prevent blisters. They need a good strong sole and ankle support. Ideally leather as the fabric and gore-tex ones tend not to perform in the bogs of Ireland. Trail shoes or runners are **NOT** suitable and you will be sent home.



**Rain Gear** - You need waterproof jacket and trousers. Ski jackets are snowproof, not waterproof and we won't be skiing. Jackets should cover your wrists, cover your bum, have a few handy pockets and a hood. Sometimes bringing two jackets is a good idea. The type of jacket that you can fold up into a tiny bag (mac in a sac) will not keep you dry! Your waterproof leggings can be the pull up type, zips make entry with boots easy. They should be long enough to cover the ankle of your boot. Gaiters make a great addition to any boot / wp trouser combo.



**Rucksack** - Needs to be able to fit everything inside of it (except a roll mat and some tent poles). A 65 or 70 litre will be plenty for the prudent packer. Make sure it fits and all the buckles open and close, tighten and loosen. You should line your rucksack with a heavy duty plastic bag or a dry bag. A fertiliser or compost bag is ideal. 'Dirt' cheap and more durable than the dry bags you can buy.



**Top tips and handy hints!** It's a wise idea to ensure your spare clothes and sleeping bag are double waterproof, they should have their own 'dry bag' just in case disaster strikes, at least you'll have somewhere warm and dry to sleep.

## Bag Packing

The way you pack your bag is essential to how comfortable you will be when carrying it. The first step to bag packing is to lie everything out that needs to go into your bag. The bulky heavy items should go close your back towards the middle and bottom of the bag. The lighter items go towards the top and away from your back.

Identify the things that need to be at the top or easily accessible like raingear, map and compass, water bottles or snacks. These should go in the top pocket or side pockets.

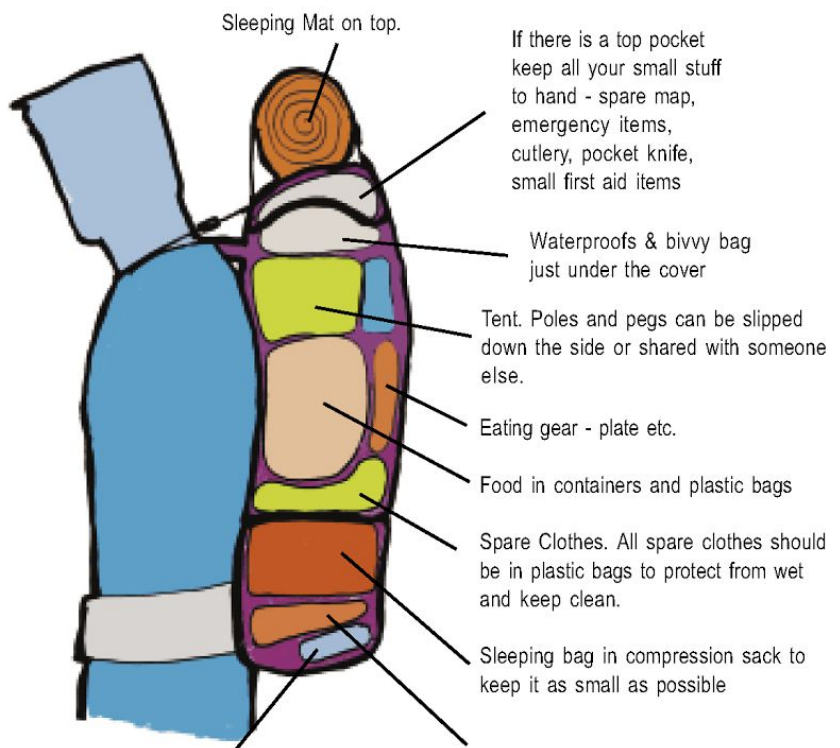
Bring your packed rucksack to your weekly scout meeting on the week before a Sionnach. With your patrol take everything out and repack it. Add the shared gear like stoves and tents. Does it all fit? Does it feel comfortable?

With help from your leaders adjust the straps on your bag to make it fit correctly. The weight should be on your hips, not your shoulders and your bag should not swing when moving.

anything that you don't need and keep items on the outside of the pack tied down and tidy. Make sure however that you

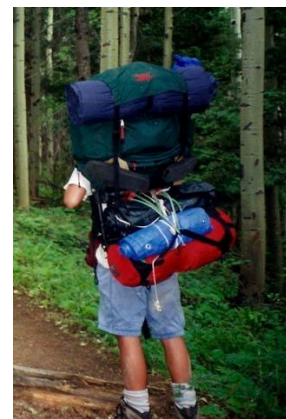
pack in the middle to bottom of the pack. This will help to stabilise your pack particularly when travelling over rough terrain.

### General Guide to Packing a rucksack



A well packed bag on the **left**. Everything is contained inside the pack. Pockets are utilised well. Weight is distributed evenly, making it easy to balance.

On the **right**, the pack is overloaded, gear is hanging outside, needing more energy to move as well as being unbalanced which can lead to nasty accidents.



**Top tips and handy hints!** Only take one bag with you on a Sionnach. There is no need for a day bag or small bag. You won't be allowed walk with it or anything else in your hands like chairs or sleeping bags.



## Food

Very often the best part about Sionnachs is sitting down in the evening over a meal, with your patrol and new friends to chat about the day and plan more adventures. The food you take and eat on a Sionnach is of vital importance. It needs to sustain you, keep you warm and be a morale booster in times of poor weather. Although we have to cook on a stove doesn't mean that the food has to be of poor quality, quite the opposite in fact!

You have a few meals to prepare and pack food for, but before you get to that make sure you have a good dinner on Friday night, as there won't be a lot of time to cook dinner on arrival. Sometimes a snack for supper is nice though!

You'll need to bring food for two breakfasts, two lunches and one dinner. Make sure you get a good breakfast on Saturday morning. Porridge or pre made pancakes heated on a Trangia is great on cold mornings. **Tip** add some raisins and powdered milk to your oat mixture for an extra treat. The milk will make it creamy and because it's powdered it won't go off!



Sausages are a great treat for breakfast, but precook them at home and just heat them up when you need them. This saves time and fuel. They are also less likely to go off! The same goes for meats for dinner!



For your lunches, make sandwiches at home and bring them along. Fruit, chocolate bars and GORP are good additions too. You'll need some snacks to munch on along the way. Lunchboxes are a great idea, as long as they are compact and not too bulky. Perhaps consider using salami or cured meat instead of ham or chicken in sambos.

**Top Tips and Handy Hints!** GORP (Good ole raisins and peanuts can be a great snack or emergency ration. Just buy some nuts and chocolate and mix them all in a ziplock bag. If you like you could bake them like flapjacks. Remember though emergency rations are for emergencies. Don't eat them till you're safe (or in an emergency).

## Food

For dinner it's a good idea to plan what you are going to eat with your patrol. No point in all cooking separate meals, the Trangia pots are designed for two people.

Try to leave as much of the packaging at home. Infact sometimes it's better to cook it all at home and just bring the meal with you to heat up!

Avoid using tins, these are heavy, often full of excess water and you have to dispose of the tin afterwards. Dehydrated food is great and easy to cook for Sionnach beginners and those new to cooking on a stove. They are lightweight, easy to cook, hard to burn and taste ok. However as you get better at cooking you might want to strive some something more. Sweet and sour, chicken curry, stir fried veg and noodles, pasta and chorizo....



Precooked rice is a great timesaver. It also means you have to cook it for a shorter time which means less fuel!



Pot Noodle or Koka Noodles are handy but have little nutrition. Don't bring these. Eat real food instead!

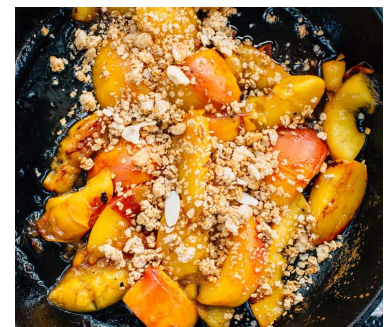
Avoid tins and cans as they are heavy and a pain to carry out.



Dehydrated pastas are great for beginners but not great for adventurers with better taste and more skill!



Just because you're on a weight budget doesn't mean you can't have dessert! Why not try some banoffee or some apple and pear crumble-less. For banoffee you'll need digestive biscuits, caramel, bananas, cream and a flake. For the crumble-less just add apple and pear slices to a trangia pan with honey and brown sugar and sprinkle some granola bar on top!



**Top Tips and Handy Hints!** Use small plastic bottles for condiments. You can keep milk, sugar, coffee, oil, or whatever else takes your fancy. Lightweight and secure.

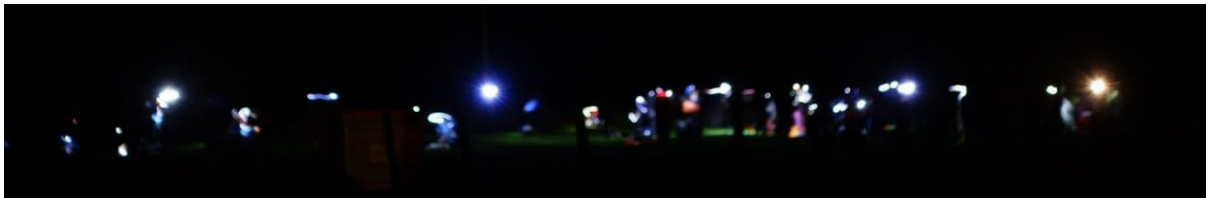


## Sionnach - Timeline

In this section we will examine how a sionnach works, what to do and when to do it. We will also give you some hints and tips to make life a little easier. Adventure doesn't have to be hard!

### On the Friday

**Gear** - Have packed your gear at a scout meeting and make sure the leaders have checked it all. Ensure that members of your patrol distribute the troop gear like tents, tranguias, gas and survival shelters. Have your rain gear and head torch somewhere easy to find at the top of your bag. It will be dark and often chaotic, make life easy!



**Lifts** - Sionnach teams are four scouts and one leader. This is a nice number to have on the hill and for learning purposes. Coincidentally one team fits in one car - perfect! If you are getting dropped off by another leader or parent, please make sure your lift doesn't leave until after the staff check your gear. If you're missing something important, you'll need to head home. Note that parking can often be in precarious locations. Remove all valuables.

**Dinner** - Eat your dinner before you leave for the Sionnach, or else stop en-route. There won't be much time for dinner on Friday night! You can however have a snack for supper. Some biscuits or perhaps a hot dog. It should be easy to eat, easy to heat and easy to clean.



**Bed** - Set up your tents. Usually this is just a field or a grassy area beside a car park. If you are there early, be considerate of others travelling long distance to get to the event and leave enough space for them.

**Top Tips and Handy Hints!** Don't spend ages running around and chatting on Friday night. Get a good night's sleep, there is a long weekend ahead! Ear plugs are great and really help when your leader snores!



## On the Saturday

**Leaders meeting** - Usually at 9am there is a meeting for leaders of the patrols. This occurs just after a staff meeting. The staff discuss the route, any hazards, interesting features and any medical conditions or things to look out for with participants.

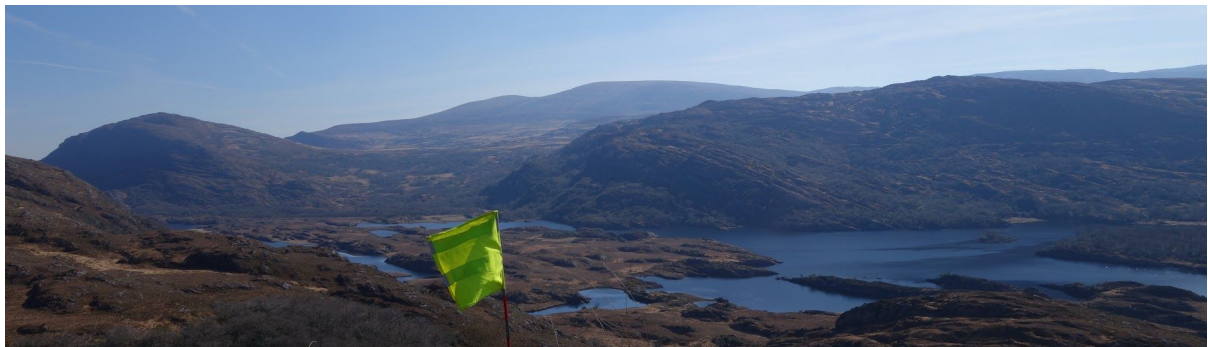


Therefore if there is a medical or other condition staff should be aware of, let them know before that meeting. The leaders meeting will introduce some of the staff, outline the route, weather conditions and hazards to be aware of. Ask any questions you may have at this point.



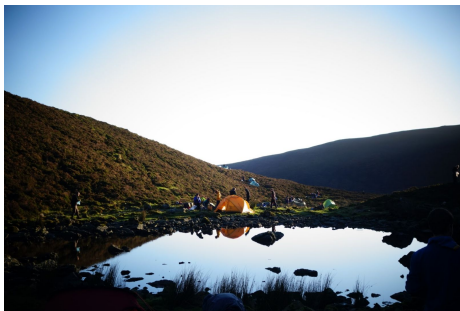
**Tags** - Each patrol on the hill will be issued with an ID tag. It is very important. That's how staff know how many patrols are on the hill and who everybody is. Don't lose it, and wear it around your neck. You will need to give it to the checkpoint staff when you arrive.

**Bases** - As you walk the route you will encounter checkpoints. Some of these will have staff, a few may not. At each checkpoint with staff there will be a learning objective or task or game. The staff are highly experienced adventurers or well on their way to being, so listen up and ask questions!

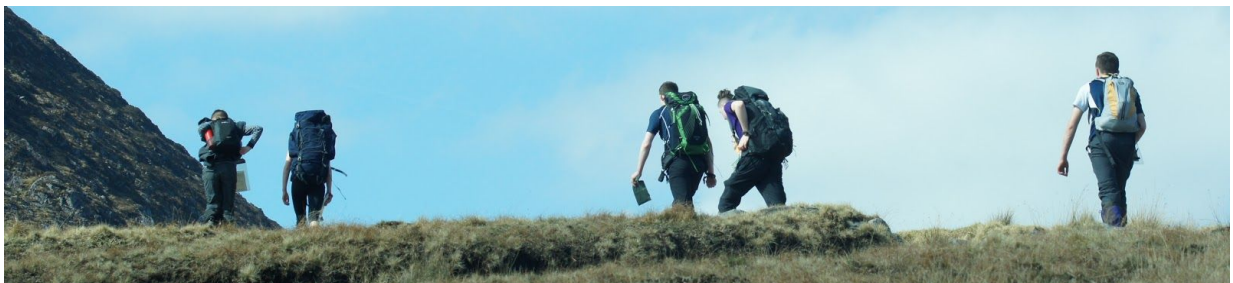


Various manned and unmanned checkpoints with different activities!

**High Camp** - Saturday morning sees the patrols walk to 'High Camp'. From here we will set up our tents before trying for the summit or horseshoe loop. Pitch your tents away from any obvious water channels or hollows that might flood if it were to rain. Peg out your tent properly and use the guy lines. Even if the weather looks good now it could change. Any gear you do leave behind, leave it together in a drybag. Don't lay out your bedding just yet!



Leave the bulk of your gear, just take a bag, lunch, first aid kit, storm shelter and Trangia. It's a good idea to bring a torch and one sleeping bag that's well protected from the elements. You should only ever stop for lunch at a checkpoint, never between. If you get into difficulty, remember that help might be closer behind you than in front.



**Dinners** - After the walk and after you have checked in with the high camp staff member, it's time to get cooking. Fire up the Trangia and get your grub on. You've had a long day on the hill you deserve to put your feet up and relax. However this doesn't mean you can allow litter to blow around the campsite or food to spill either. Be careful and take all rubbish and food home with you. Leave no Trace. **Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints!**

After dinner why not cook up your dessert and wander around high camp offering a taste to other patrols (and staff!). Get to know one another and make friends.

**Top Tips and Handy Hints!** Pick somewhere nice to sit. Make sure it's big enough for your whole patrol. Bring a bivvy bag or foam mat to sit on. Boil up some water from the nearest river or stream to cook dinner on. Don't forget your warm layers and a torch. It will get cold and dark very quickly. The warmer and more prepared you are the more enjoyable dinner will be!

**Toilet business** - If you have to do a number two up on the hills, make sure you have some toilet paper. Find a nice secluded spot well away from the campsite or water courses. Dig a small hole with your foot in the earth and do the business in there. Use a minimal amount of toilet paper. Do not burn it. Cover your waste with organic material fully. Do not use baby wipes as these don't biodegrade so nicely.

**Top Tips and Handy Hints!** Put some toilet paper in a small ziplock bag. This will prevent it from getting wet and keep you out of a 'tricky' situation.

## On the Sunday

**Scouts Own** - Before we start to leave high camp on Sunday all the scouts, leaders and staff will come together to talk about the event and reflect upon our place in the world, space and time. Oh and badges, that's when you get the badges! Well done, you have almost completed a two night adventure in the wilds of one of Ireland's beautiful mountain ranges.



**Collection** - As we often use very small car parks, the first patrol down may not be able to leave straight away as they might be blocked in. Keep this in mind when parking on Friday night. If you are getting collected then you need to arrange a collection time upon arrival on Friday, but do keep in mind that these can change due to weather on the hill.

It's a good idea to have a full change of clothes for the drive home or the quick cuppa and cake in the local coffee shop!

## PEAK Patrols

If you have completed a few Sionnachs and want more of an adventure then check out the other event we run - **PEAK**. Once you have graduated from the PEAK programme you can come back with a patrol of four PEAK graduates and complete a Sionnach by yourselves, with no leaders!! Like these guys!

