

JU-SI ADVENTURES



TRAIL CHOICE

(STYLES OF TRAILS)



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Trail Choice & Style

There are so many potential long-distance trails. How do you choose? This paper will guide you into a deeper understanding of which style of walk would be best suited for your experience level and personal interest.

Understanding the characteristics of various styles of trails will guide you on choosing the right trail for you. For simplicity, we describe three styles of long-distance journeys: the wilderness thru-hike, the hostel trek, and the five-star walk. Most long-distance walks will fit somewhere between these main categories.

Any trail that intrigues can be done solo, with friends, or as part of an organised adventure group. If you wish to challenge yourself, but lack experience, consider going with an experienced hiker, or hire the aid of a trip planner and/or guide.

Wilderness thru-hike:

Expect to be alone in remote wilderness areas, away from communities. You will need lightweight camping gear and be familiar with its use. These hikes require specialised skills.

Backcountry camping:

Knowledge of backcountry camping, cooking with ultra-light stoves, wilderness first aid, and techniques to minimise wildlife interactions are necessary.

Food:

Food caching may be required during your journey. You will be eating mostly dried or dehydrated meals. Experience in planning for your nutritional needs on a long-distance trek is key to minimising health problems such as extreme weight loss (muscle wasting), colds and flus, and exhaustion.



Physical Fitness:

You will be carrying your gear in your backpack. The terrain will be varied and rugged. This style of trail is physically demanding. A strong fitness base will increase your chance of success.

Hygiene:

Scarcity of water will dictate when washing and grooming occurs. You will be wearing the same clothes for many days in a row. Expect to spend days without bathing. Freshly laundered clothing and showering will be a luxury.

Orienteering:

Most trails have markers, but in some remote areas you will depend on your orienteering skills to stay on course. Experience in route finding, using a map and compass, and/or a GPS are vital to avoid getting lost.



Self-sufficiency:

Communities may be few and far between. You may not meet other travelers on route. Being able to navigate the challenges found in isolated natural settings is key with this style of trek.

If wilderness thru-hiking interests you, do you have the expertise required to undertake a backcountry trek? If there are gaps in your knowledge, consider taking courses, or going on a shorter trip with an experienced hiker (or guide) prior to choosing this style of adventure.

Hostel Style Trek:

These treks may have cultural, historical and/or religious significance. The trails will cross natural settings and communities regularly. Sharing accommodations and meals will be less expensive and will provide you with the opportunity to make new friends from all over the world.



Accommodations:

Expect to sleep in hostels. Private hostels will have rooms where 6-8 people sleep communally, while in community hostels you may expect to share a room with 50 to 100 people. These accommodations can be noisy and crowded. Your hosts will generally have stringent rules of conduct and set hours of business. Reservations may or may not be required.

Food:

Many hostel hosts will provide a rustic/traditional meal for the travelers. Expect to eat communally or share kitchen time with other travelers. These trails will cross communities often and you may be able to buy food stuffs in markets and/or grocery stores along the way. You can also eat in restaurants and cafes. Keep in

mind, you may not find what you eat at home on the trek. If you have a special diet, allergies, or are a fussy eater plan for alternatives.

Physical fitness:

You will require less gear and your pack will be lighter than on the wilderness thru-hikes. But these trails will still be challenging and in varied condition. On some trails there may be services that will transport your luggage to your next accommodations. This will decrease your pack weight significantly. The cost for this service is usually minimal. A good fitness base will minimise injuries and muscle soreness.

Hygiene:

Sleeping in hostels will allow you to bathe and wash your clothing daily, if you wish. Most hostels have gym-style shower facilities for men and for women. They often supply laundry machines as well (for a fee).

Orienteering:

Trail markers will typically be well planned and obvious. Guidebooks are generally available for these popular trails and often suggest complete itineraries and lodging options. The hiker will still need to pay attention to his/her environment to stay on the path.

Self-sufficiency:

You will be on your own to determine the distance you travel every day, where you will stop for the night, and where/what you will eat. But you will be crossing communities often and may be walking with others. You will generally not be alone all day.



Five-Star Walks:

These walks are like those mentioned in the hostel style section. The difference comes with the style of accommodations and level of services. Choosing hotels or B&Bs will add luxury at the end of the day's walk. You will have better sleeps and feel pampered. But this comes at a cost. Do you have the finances to afford a five-star trip?

Accommodations:

These trails go from community to community and you will sleep in hotels and/or B&B's. You will be in private rooms but may have to share a bathroom with other travelers. Reservations are required.



Food:

Many hotels and B&B hosts will provide a meal for travelers. You may eat alone or with others. Are you an adventurous foodie? If you have a special diet or have allergies research if your hosts will cater to your specific needs. The trail will cross communities often and you may be able to buy food stuffs in markets and/or grocery stores along the way. You can also eat in restaurants and cafes.

Physical fitness:

You will require to carry minimal gear in your backpack. Services will transport your excess luggage to your next accommodations. But the trail will still be challenging and in varied condition. A basic fitness base will minimise injuries and muscle soreness.

Hygiene:

Sleeping in hotels and B&B's will allow you to bathe and wash your clothing daily, if you wish. Most hotels have private washrooms for each guest, but it is possible that you will have to share with other travelers. They often supply laundry services, for a fee.

Orienteering:

Trail markers will typically be well planned and obvious. Your itinerary will be pre-planned using guidebook recommendations for hotel stays, restaurants, and possible excursions. The hiker will still need to pay attention to his/her environment to stay on the path.

Self-sufficiency:

Your reservations will oblige you to walk a certain distance every day, where you will stop for the night, and where/what you will eat. But you will be crossing communities often and may be walking with others. You will generally not be alone all day.



Guides/Planners/Adventure Tours:

Adventure agencies offer varying services to the long-distance walkers. Some will plan an itinerary and reserve hotels/hostels for you. They may provide contacts/reservations with shuttle services for you, to and from the trail, and/or for your luggage along the trail. These itineraries take the planning and worry out of the trip.



Other adventure agencies will offer guides to accompany you on the trail. They will plan the itinerary, lodging and/or camping logistics, and perhaps prepare meals and special outings along the way. Your guide will escort you along the journey and make sure everything runs smoothly.

Once you have chosen a style of trail, look for options. The link below is our current favorite, it will give you basic information on more than 1700 trails across the globe. There are endless websites where you can also research specific trails and related books, maps, and blogs that offer detailed information.

www.traildino.com

And remember, we are here if you have any questions!