

Sample activities  
in the forest:  
**Guided excursions  
in the rain**



*For the theme of guided excursions in the rain, we present:*

*SUMMARY OF INFORMATION*

*PRACTICAL ADVICE*

*SAMPLE EXCURSION*

### **SUMMARY OF INFORMATION**

Your excursion was planned perfectly. The main themes were discussed with the person in charge of the group and you planned a series of very entertaining activities. But the sky has clouded over threateningly, and the excursion can't be rescheduled. Now what?

You start to count the clouds, hoping that things will stay dry. For a few moments it looks like the sky is clearing up... we hope for the best.

The participants arrive happily at the meeting place. They get off the bus and, as soon as the excursion begins, it starts to rain. You ask yourself: What should I do with my excursion? Should I change the program? How can I continue?

In this section we offer some practical advice and specific activities that will allow you to carry out a successful and entertaining guided excursion in the rain.

### **PRACTICAL ADVICE**

Do not deceive yourself. When it is a real downpour, you cannot continue. You must find a place under a roof and adjust your plans.

Despite the fact that the optimum situation is to have good weather, you can also plan an excursion in the rain. The main thing is to plan the alternate route and activities ahead of time. In this way you will not have to worry about whether it rains on the day of your excursion. Nevertheless, always carry extra raincoats and umbrellas, which could be donated by a company for publicity purposes if you do not have the resources to purchase them.





## 1. Clothing

Before beginning an excursion in the rain, you should check to see if the participants' clothing is adequate. In these cases, the proverb "Bad weather does not exist, only inappropriate clothing" applies because experience dictates that despite intense prior conversations, visitors arrive at the protected areas in clothes that do not protect them against the rain.

For the forest excursion, each participant should have a raincoat, a cap and an umbrella if available. Ask participants to loan any extra apparel to their companions. And do not forget that in the forest there are big leaves that can easily be used as umbrellas. If you set the example, all of a sudden everyone will want to be a forest fairy.

Make sure the participants' shoes are at least water and mud resistant because comfort is a very important factor for walking and enjoying the route that you have chosen.

## 2. Route

In an excursion in the rain, the route selection is very important. Do not take the group through grass, through recently planted areas, through ferns or through very muddy forest paths. Remember that even in a recently cut meadow, feet get wet quickly. Avoid streams and select your route bearing in mind that participants will not have boots as resistant yours.

The route you should develop depends greatly on the type of rain. If it is drizzling, choose a route through dense forest canopy because part of the rain will be intercepted in the treetops. However, if it has been raining hard for quite a while the canopy will no longer be able to absorb a significant portion of the water. In this situation it is usually best to find shelter and plan appropriate activities.

Wind and wind direction are also important factors in planning routes through the forest in poor weather conditions. Choose a route protected from constant strong winds as participants will probably not enjoy a walk with the wind constantly in their faces.



### **3. Program change**

Do not insist on developing previously planned themes while standing in the rain. Instead, change the excursion into a simple walk. This allows participants to move constantly and forget about the rain a bit.

### **4. Activities**

Every excursion in the rain must also, whenever possible, include some relaxing moments. Additionally, activities must be performed without extra materials because even though the guide cannot prevent bad weather, he/she should avoid ruining costly materials in the rain.

### **5. End**

Organize a positive finish. Do not worry if the rain did not allow you to complete the planned themes and activities. Nor should you think the excursion was a failure because you only completed one part of your original program. When it rains, just remember that it is important for the participants to spend two or three hours enjoying nature. Experiencing an unusual situation together can be very interesting. If you feel that the participants liked the excursion, ask them what they most enjoyed of the experience and reinforce this positive impression by asking them what they normally would do at home on a day like this.

## **SAMPLE EXCURSION**

### **1. Theme: The Water**

If it rains, there is nothing more logical than having water as the central theme of your guided excursion. You should give priority to the observation of nature, water and the forest soil. If you are also lucky enough to have a foggy day, the participants will be able to enjoy the magic of this special forest environment.

It is interesting for groups to investigate the distribution and intensity of the rain at different points in the forest. The participants can try to find out where the greatest and the least amounts of water are collected within the forest. Before beginning the excursion, distribute simple plastic containers for the visitors to place at different locations in the forest. The containers can be placed next to a trunk, under dense canopy, under both old and young trees, on an open path in an open space. At the end

of the excursion they can compare and discuss the results. They will find that different types of trees affect the hydrological balance of an area in different ways.

In the activity **WATER 2**, The Water's Path through the Forest you will find more details about the effects of different types of trees on the hydrological balance of a forest. Taking the example of different types of leaves, you will be able to demonstrate each tree's ability to intercept water. The participants must stand under two or three different trees to experience how much water falls from their leaves. This will allow them to see how the different sizes of leaves influence the fall of the water onto the soil surface. This activity can end with a game described in **WATER 4**, Boat Race.

## 2. Theme: The Soil

The soil theme also offers possibilities to demonstrate interesting things on a rainy day.

Look for places that stayed dry despite the rain; for example, under trees with thick tops or in rock crevices. Have the group dig a hole in a place with lots of trees and in another with few trees. Later, have participants analyze how much time went by before moisture penetrated the soil.

Show the group soil that has been compacted by heavy vehicles constantly passing on the forest roads. Here, the soil structure is destroyed and the water stays on the surface in puddles. If there is enough time to plan or change your excursion, you could complement this experience with **SOIL 10**, Forest Soils Do Not Easily Forget.

Although it requires some preparation, another simple way to demonstrate the forest's filtration capability is **WATER 3**, Potable Water in the Forest.

Conclude the excursion with a comparison of soil samples, one with forest cover and another without vegetation, to illustrate the danger of erosion. The instructions for this comparison are in **SOIL 11**, Proof of Erosion.



### 3. Theme: The Animals

Generally, during guided excursions, participants want to see animals in the forest. We know very well that this can be difficult depending on the area. However, together with the group you can reflect on the behavior of the animals when it is raining, and discuss where they might prefer to hide. This would be a good time to look for dry places in the forest.

You can begin this theme with the activity **FOREST AS VITAL LIVING SPACE 1**, Guessing Animals. In this activity the participants search for animal signs, which usually thrills them and can also help them forget about the rain a bit. **FOREST AS VITAL LIVING SPACE 2**, Following the Signs and Tracks of Animals suggests some ideas so that the hunt for signs can be successful. Conclude the excursion with the activity **FOREST AS VITAL LIVING SPACE 5**, Silent Pursuit. Each participant will quickly realize that the rain plays an important role in strategies to find animals.

### 4. Theme: The Beauty of the Forest

Through careful observation of nature, you will find very different and beautiful images. On a rainy day you can take a group in search of the beauties of the forest. You can promote the desire to observe through three possible activities: **MOTIVATION 2**, Camera and Photographer, **MOTIVATION 4**, Unusual Point of View and **FOREST AS VITAL LIVING SPACE 3**, Hide and Seek.

Don't forget to look around a tree during the rain. Together with the group, pay attention to how water runs down a tree trunk. In some cases, the water goes straight down the trunk; in other words the tree drains itself. On the other hand, there are cases where the trunk remains relatively dry because of its location and the thickness of its branches.

You can also play **TREE 11**, Meeting a Tree so that the participants find, observe and return to the same tree.

An excellent activity to conclude the excursion is **TREE 10**, We Are a Tree. Obviously, during the rain the children who represent the roots cannot lie down on the ground but they can stoop. The activity itself is sufficiently entertaining.