

Field Trip Etiquette

Part 1

By Don Rideout

One of the reasons many of us join a fossil club is for the opportunity to go on collecting trips. The thrill of finding a great fossil, maybe the find of a lifetime in a location that is not normally accessible to us can be a great motivator to join.

Trip leaders like me spend countless hours preparing for trips. Contacting the land owner or quarry to set up a trip is just the beginning. Staying in contact as the date approaches, drafting countless e-mails, responding to e-mails, compiling lists, scouting the area if needed are just a few of the things done behind the scenes. Then there is the tougher process of having to tell people by e-mail the trip is full and compiling the alternate list. If you could see some of the replies to those e-mails you might wonder why we lead trips at all. All of us do this in our spare time, without any compensation.

The reasons we all do this may vary slightly, but for me it is the pleasure of helping others access locations and helping them find great fossils. I get the same thrill of someone else finding a great fossil as I would have finding it myself.

The process goes something like this. Each quarter dates are submitted to the various places we go to. These dates coincide with days the leader is available. Once we receive confirmation of the dates we decide when the best time to announce it to the club is. Then a bulk e-mail is drafted and sent out to the mail list. The fun then commences.

So here are a few tips to make that process smoother, for all of us.

- Read the announcement email FULLY before emailing for a spot. That email will give the date, trip leaders name and email and any other specifics.
- Check that date on your calendar to make sure you can go, before you ask for a spot. When you have to cancel at the last minute because you never could have gone anyways creates extra work for the trip leaders.
- Be sure you can stay for the entire length of the trip.
- Make sure you are physically able for the particular trip.
- When asking for a spot make sure you include your full name, correct email to contact you with and a good phone number. This is also a good time to ask any questions you may have about equipment needed, what type of hunting and what type of fossils are found.
- If your response says you are on the list, wait for your next email.
- If your response says the trip is full and wants to know if you wish to be on an alternate list, please respond. But respond nicely and respectfully. No one is trying to keep you off of trips. Trips are first come, first serve. We cannot be responsible for any issues with email. Mean emails back to the trip leaders will not help your situation at all. In fact it could be detrimental.

As the trip date approaches you will receive an email from the leader to confirm the trip and make sure you will still be attending. RESPOND to that email. I have had so many people that do not respond. It creates problems and extra work for the trip leader. And honestly, on my trips if you don't respond or just do not show up you will probably not get another spot on another trip.

And finally, make sure you bring all of the safety equipment required. Make sure you are there before the time stated. When you're late you hold everyone up. Make sure you are courteous to all people attending and don't crowd other hunters, without their consent. Remember this is supposed to be fun!