



READING THE MAP

LEARN THE BASICS

Knowing the terrain is key when planning your adventure – or when you are right in it. This is the basics.

COLOR CODING

Topographic maps are colour coded: blue for water; roads, paths, buildings and other man-made objects.

CONTOUR LINES

Contour lines represent the topography or vertical shape of the landscape, and will help you identify features like mountains, valleys and ridges; the closer the lines, the steeper the slope.

LOCAL VARIATIONS

North is always up – on all maps! However, other symbols and features may differ depending on where you are.

USE THE MAP AND SCALES TO MEASURE DISTANCE

A map is a scaled down model of reality, hence it is important to understand how it represents distance. Measure the distance with the base plate of your compass and the scale of the map.

Does your compass lack the corresponding scale?

Use the regular metric ruler and this simple rule: drop the last three digits from the scale and this is the number of metres on the ground represented by 1mm on the map; e.g, on a 1:50.000 map this means that 1mm represents 50 metres.



ORIENT THE MAP TO NORTH

The easiest way to use a map and compass together is to orient the map towards North. Simply align the map meridians with the compass needle so that “up” on the map is pointing North. Now everything on the map is in the same direction as on the ground. When travelling along your route, remember to keep the map oriented at all times. By doing this it will be very easy to follow your route since turning right on the map also means turning right on the ground! Properly orienting the map is quick, easy and the best way to avoid unnecessary mistakes during your trip!

USE SIGNIFICANT TERRAIN OBJECTS TO NAVIGATE SAFELY

Use significant terrain objects to mark your route, e.g. rivers and lakes, hills, fields, paths, roads and power lines. By holding onto this visual “handrail” you will travel faster and more safely, reducing the number of possible route-finding errors.