



How to...

DID YOU KNOW?

About 63 million people in the US went hiking in 2024, according to the Outdoor Industry Association.



Engage your senses on a hike

Get outside and tap into the wonders of nature during the fall season.

Research shows that spending time in nature can decrease stress, boost health and happiness, and help you pay better attention in school. One way to experience nature is to go for a hike. With your family's help, plan an outing together and gather the essentials, such as a map, the right footwear, and water. While you're walking, try to actively engage your senses to absorb what's happening around you. Here's how.

Admire your surroundings

On a hike, you'll naturally use your sense of sight to navigate the terrain and follow blazes (trail markers) to stay on your path. You can also take a moment to look up to observe cloud movements and the way sunlight filters through the treetops. Pause to appreciate fall foliage—the vibrant reds, golds, and oranges of autumn leaves.

Listen to sounds

Leave the headphones at home and listen to the sounds of nature, like a rushing waterfall, birds singing, and leaves rustling. Think about how these sounds might reflect the current season or the part of the country you live in.



Stop to smell the flowers.

Feel the wind

Try to notice how the breeze blows against your skin and whether you feel a difference when you're on flat terrain compared with standing on a hill. Tuning in to these details can help you pay closer attention to the shape of the landscape you're hiking. Also feel the texture of natural objects around you, like stones that have been made smooth by a babbling brook.

Inhale deeply

Take in the aromas of your natural surroundings, whether it's the pine scent of evergreen trees, the sweet smell of wildflowers, or the fresh grassiness of a meadow after a rainfall. You might also pick up the scents of nearby animals, like a musky fox or the smelly warning signal of a skunk.

Take a taste home

When your hike is over, you and your family might want to see whether there are any local farmers markets or shops in the area. You may want to look for locally sourced foods like maple syrup, jam, or honey so you can enjoy some of the tastes of nature long after you kick off your hiking shoes!

Inclusive trails



Many parks in the US are adding or modifying trails so they can be enjoyed by more people. Here are a few examples.

Accessible trails Whether paved paths or wide boardwalks, these passageways are designed for wheelchair users and people with other mobility devices.

Braille trails Designed for people with visual impairments, Braille trails may have tactile signs or talking kiosks, as well as ropes to offer physical support.

Cultural trails These routes connect visitors with a local community's history and heritage through displays, art installations, and other elements.