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Best Ways To Preserve Nature While Hiking

More than 40 million Americans take to hiking trails every year. Hiking is a fun and healthy way to enjoy your time in the great outdoors. Hiking gets you up close and personal with nature, so you will need to do your part to preserve nature while enjoying it. With the right attention to the great outdoors, and with us all doing our part to preserve nature, we can keep things looking their best for wildlife that resides there as well as for future visitors. Here are some of the best ways to preserve nature while hiking:

- Never wander off the trail. When you step off the trail, you will crush flora and damage plant life. Other hikers will see that you stepped off the trail and will do the same. Before you know it, the trail is widened and there will be switchbacks. These actions cause erosion and will lead to trails washing out.
- You know the [importance of not littering](#), but now is a good time for a reminder. If you have trash, take it with you to dispose of at the end of the trail. If you come across trash that was left behind by others, gather it to take with you and dispose of it properly.
- Take along your own water. [Hydration is important](#). Instead of taking along bottles of water that will end up adding to the plastic bottles filling landfills and oceans, buy a high-quality, reusable water bottle made of BPA-free products. These water bottles are durable and will serve you well for years to come.
- Wash yourself, your clothing, and your gear after every hike. Make sure everything is clean before hitting another trail. You can unknowingly carry seeds, insects, bacteria, and fungi from one location into another. This will cause the spread of disease and can cause non-native plants to take over plants in areas where they are native and thrive.
- Protect natural water sources. If you have to go to the bathroom while out on the trail, be sure to get several hundred feet away from any natural water sources, such as rivers, creeks, lakes, and ponds. Dig a cat hole, and when you have finished, be sure to cover it completely.
- If you [bring your dog hiking](#) with you, make sure that he or she is on a leash. You don't want your dog running around unleashed. Your dog could dig up ruts in the trail, which could lead to potential erosion down the road.
- Don't pick flowers, dig up plants, or take rocks. Leave everything as you find it. You should take only photographs and memories and only leave footprints behind.

With the right care and attention, we can work together to preserve nature while hiking.

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