



take a hike

HEAD TO THE TRAILS FOR A DOSE OF NATURE

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“Take a hike,” might be closely associated with an unkind dismissal, but there is something to be said for the suggestion. With people admittedly spending too much time on electronic devices and having a 24-7 “on” status, the world is experiencing high stress and insomnia. Taking a hike and immersing yourself in nature could be just what the doctor ordered.

Hiking Is Healing.

Many people connect to several devices every single day. When those devices don't work correctly, what's the first thing you do? Turn the device off. When you reboot a smartphone or tablet, it works better. The same can be true for your body. If you want to clear your mind, improve your physical health, or recharge your battery, you will find that hiking is a total mind, body, and soul healer.

Getting outside, exploring nature, and being in the moment can all be done while hiking. Time outside is a powerful reset for your mental well-being. It's proven that being in nature for just twenty minutes reduces stress hormones. In fact, just two hours a week in nature promotes good physical and mental health. A quick online search yields results for grief support groups centered around the activity. Grief hikes are aimed to get you out of a circle and into the wilderness to process your pain in a healthy way.



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expert tips.

Get This Gear:

- A proper hiking backpack with a chest strap and belly strap
- Hiking boots, shoes, and poles
- Rain pants and jacket
- First-aid kit
- Water bladder/adequate water bottle
- Water treatment filter/UV water purifier
- Headlamp
- Satellite messenger or other communication device for areas with no cell service
- Sunscreen and hat, regardless of the season
- Toilet paper, hand sanitizer, trowel, and resealable plastic bags

Visit These Destinations:

- Horseshoe Bend, Arizona
- Half Dome, Yosemite, California
- Hanakapiai Falls, Kauai, Hawaii
- Bright Angel, Grand Canyon, Arizona
- Camino de Santiago, Spain
- Appalachian Trail, Eastern US

Download These Apps:

- AllTrails:** Go-to hike planning with distances, difficulty level, and reviews from other hikers
- Gaia GPS:** Best GPS for navigation and weather

Start Simple.

Not all hikes are created equal. Day hikes allow you to return to the trailhead in one day. They can vary from easy to moderate and difficult based on terrain, distance, and elevation gain and loss. Horseshoe Bend in Arizona is a relatively flat trail and less than two miles roundtrip, but a whole lot of beauty is packed into each step. For those with above-average fitness and the right gear (see sidebar), Half Dome in Yosemite, California (fourteen to sixteen miles roundtrip) and Hanakapiai Falls (approximately eight miles roundtrip) on the Napali Coast of Kauai, Hawaii are both life-changing.

For longer hikes, say anything above fifteen miles in a day, consider camping overnight. Although you break up the trek with rest, you also have additional weight with every step. Remember this: *happy campers and hikers pack light*. For multiday hikes, it is essential to test out your gear beforehand, have enough water and/or water treatment options, bring a first-aid kit, and notify someone at home of your plan. In fact, almost all long-distance hikers utilize hiking poles to help improve balance, reduce stress on knees, and increase speed. Long-haul hikes that are worthy of doing in their entirety or in sections are the Camino de Santiago (St. James' Way) in Northern Spain or the Appalachian Trail (AT) in the Eastern United States.

Leave the Roads.

Leave the fast pace of the highway or the downtown traffic jams and take to the trails. Hiking is as easy or as challenging as you want it to be. However, hiking is certainly a gateway to getting more vitamin N (Nature). You may eat right, take supplements, and go to the gym, but why not embrace the natural benefits of the outdoors through hiking, too? For better total health, consider spending more time near a green space and on a hiking trail. 