



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

NO GYM? NO EQUIPMENT? NO PROBLEM!

Hiking is a great mind and body exercise and a fun way to get out the house and enjoy the outdoors. Check out the information below regarding Stratford's local trails and current information and tips!

Aside from doing your part to help keep your community safe by following proper safety procedures, you will have to find new ways to stay entertained all while keeping yourself a safe distance away from others. One great way to do that? Getting outdoors. Gyms are closing across the country, so it's also a good time to figure out a new way to get in your exercise. During this period of isolation, consider exploring one of your local hiking trails. Studies show that hiking is not only good for your physical health, but your mental health as well. We all know we'll be going a little stir crazy without places to go and people to see, and getting back to nature is a good way to keep your mind clear.

Here are just a few of the physical and mental health benefits we get from hiking:

- **Reduces risk of heart disease** – Keeping your heart healthy is important and engaging in cardiovascular fitness is an excellent way to reduce your risk of heart-related conditions and diseases.
- **Lowers blood pressure** – According to the American Heart Association (AHA), more than 103 million U.S. adults have high blood pressure. By increasing your physical activity, you can get better control of your blood pressure levels.
- **Improves bone density** – Weight-bearing exercises increase the strength of your bones. Those exercises include walking, jogging, and hiking.
- **Reduces stress and improves mental wellbeing** – Staying active and making your body work a little harder can greatly reduce stress levels. You can improve your overall mental wellbeing by getting fresh air and getting your heart pumping.





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HOW TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING WHILE HIKING

Before you head out, make sure you're aware of the current guidance in place from your state and local governments regarding closures, curfews, and movement. If you are able to leave your home, here are some tips for hiking while maintaining a safe distance.

Via Mayor Laura Hoydick: STRATFORD, CT — With so many residents not reporting to work or school, I believe it is important to keep our parks and beaches open during this emergency for residents to be able to get fresh air and exercise. But I ask all residents to exercise social distancing and common sense to continue to reduce the potential to spread infection.

- Don't use parks or trails if you exhibit symptoms.
- Share the trail and warn other users of your presence and as you pass.
- Be prepared for limited access to public restrooms.
- Follow CDC's guidance on hygiene prior to visiting parks and trails.
- Observe CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of 6 feet from other persons at all time.

BE AWARE OF OTHER PEOPLE

The first rule for social distancing is being aware that other people are in the vicinity and acting to maintain adequate space (as of now, six feet is recommended) between you and others. If you see someone approaching, keep to your side of the trail, and don't be shy about stepping off the path (while doing your best to Leave No Trace) to make a little more room.

If the trail is too narrow and you have no place to go, turn your face away from the other hiker and move on as quickly as possible. Chances are, they will want to do the same.

To the extent that it's possible, avoid touching hard surfaces that others may have touched, like door handles, railings, posted trail maps, etc. If you do have to touch something that has likely been touched by others, avoid putting your hands to your face or touching any of your belongings, such as your phone or GPS unit, until you can wash your hands or disinfect them with an alcohol-based sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol).

Which brings us to: Keep your hands clean! Bring supplies with you (and be prepared to pack out your trash) and wash/disinfect your hands as often as possible.



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AVOID CROWDED PARKS

If you live in a city, go out a little farther. You may have gorgeous parks in your metropolitan area but these are going to be considerably more frequented simply due to their proximity to a populated area. Drive or bike to trails beyond the suburbs and exurbs of your metro area. You'll not only avoid people but you will also get the opportunity to explore new trails and places you've not been before.

PRACTICE DOOR-TO-TRAIL HABITS

Try and bring everything you need for your hike from home. This way, you can avoid stopping for supplies in places where there are other people, and drive or bike straight from your home to the trailhead and back. Keep a daypack with your gear handy, so you don't have to repack it every time and risk forgetting something. Always bring plenty of water, snacks, a jacket, a headlamp, a whistle, and supplies to start a fire. If your climate dictates it, bring sunscreen, a hat, and insect repellent, as well.

THINK OUTSIDE THE PARK

If you're looking to get outside for a hike, think outside the park. Research trails in state and national forests, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas. There are a greater number of such areas than there are parks, and they tend to be much vaster than parks. These non-park resources are often dispersed across many units, allowing for many more entrance points and trailheads than you would find in a typical state or national park. These factors not only minimize the number of others you will run into on your hike but also enable more successful social distancing without straining the resources of gateway communities.

As a corollary, know your limits and don't push them. The entire country is experiencing a medical crisis. Don't take risks or put yourself in situations that may require the diversion of medical resources for something that could have been avoided. Stay on trails and hike within the abilities of your current fitness level. Now is not the time to through hike the PCT or AT, or take up mountain biking, trail running, or rock climbing for the first time—save your adventures for after the COVID-19 crisis.

See below for some of Stratford's Top Rated Local Trails with descriptions and map overview!

