

## Best Ways to Preserve Nature While Hiking

Hiking has become increasingly popular as people look for safe ways to get out of the house and get some healthy exercise while social distancing. But with more people hiking there are possibilities for increased damage to the trails and local wildlife. Hikers can help mitigate their impact by following these guidelines:

### Keep Dogs Leashed

Hiking with your furry friend is healthy for both of you, but you are still responsible for your dog when you're hiking. Dogs that aren't leashed can cause chaos in the natural world. Dogs can trample plants, dig up grass and soil, destroy animal's homes and nests, chase or even kill small animals, and bother other hikers. [Keep your dog on a leash](#) when you're hiking and always clean up after your dog the same way that you would anywhere else.

### Don't Leave Food Behind

A huge number of hikers think that they're being ecologically responsible by leaving food scraps behind because they assume the remnants of their snacks will decompose and enrich the soil. And it's true, they will, but not for a long time. But human food is often not healthy for wild animals. Take all of your trash with you when you leave, even the food scraps.

### Use Reusables

When hiking, pack your food in [reusable containers](#) and use a refillable water bottle. Don't use wasteful single use plastic packaging. You can buy or make handy canvas bags to hold snacks and sandwiches or bring fruit to eat. A large refillable water bottle will ensure that you have enough water to stay hydrated on your hike.

### Always Walk On The Trail

Hiking trails were created so that hikers would be able to walk easily through nature while also minimizing the amount of damage those hikers are doing to the environment when they hike. Walk single file on the trail and not next to the trail so that you don't contribute to soil erosion along the trail. Even if the trail is muddy or wet stay on the hiking trail. Walking off trail increases soil erosion in that area. Never create your own shortcuts through the woods or fields.

### Don't Bother The Animals

It's fun to see [animals in the wild](#) when you're hiking but remember, these are wild animals that live in that habitat. You're a guest in their home. Walk softly. Don't talk loudly. Don't try to lure the animals over to you with food. Take photos of the animals using the zoom lens features on your camera and then move along quietly.

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