



Even during the pandemic, spending time outside is good for you — as long as you do it safely. Whether you're on a hike, biking on a greenway or paddling the river, it's imperative that we all practice social distancing and do everything we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### **Maintain six feet of distance on trails and greenways at all times**

It's important that all of us continue to practice responsible social distancing, even when we're in nature. Maintain six feet of distance between you and other people, even when you're jogging or biking. Don't be shy about asking for "six feet" from other people, spread out to less popular trailheads if you can and try to avoid times of heavy use.

### **Use wider trails and greenways**

Give yourself space so that you can easily move away from others to maintain social distancing. On some trails, this will require stepping off into small side trails when other hikers are approaching and waiting for them to pass. Visiting the Blue Ridge Parkway overlooks are a great way to be outside while having more control over your distance from other people. If one overlook is too crowded, you can stay in your car and drive to the next one.

### **Keep children and dogs under control**

Have a conversation with your children before venturing out and make sure they are following proper social distancing measures that keep other people and your own family safe. Now more than ever, it's important to keep your pet on a leash. The verdict is still out on whether dogs can catch COVID-19, but you don't want to have to break protocol to retrieve them.

### **Keep your hands clean when you travel**

Have a conversation with your children before venturing out to make sure they follow social distancing measures that keep other people and your own family safe. Now more than ever, it's important to keep your pet on a leash. The verdict is still out on whether dogs can catch COVID-19, but you don't want to have to break protocol to retrieve them.

### **Stay within your skill level**

To reduce accidents, use your best judgment and choose outdoor opportunities that are appropriate for your experience level. With our healthcare system increasingly overwhelmed, now is not the time to try to teach yourself to skateboard or to go lead climbing for the first time.

### **Be extra prepared before you go out**

With state park and national forest offices closed in our region, it's important to bring extra food and water on your trip. We also recommend bringing a backup map or taking screenshots of your GoogleMaps directions in case you lose service.

### **Leave No Trace is always important, but could be life-saving now**

Since the coronavirus is thought to be transmittable through human waste, make sure to bury any waste six-eight inches deep and 200 feet or 70 BIG steps away from water sources. Many experts are recommending against using public restrooms right now. Since park and forest staff is also more limited at this time, trash receptacles will likely be emptied less frequently. Pack your trash out with you and get rid of it at home.

### **Remember that we're all in this together**

Decisions you make outdoors can directly affect the health of others. Let's be good neighbors and follow these practices so we can all keep enjoying the outdoors in these difficult times.