

THE WORLD OF HOBBIES

HOBBIES IF YOU LIKE

NATURE

by Sue Bradford Edwards



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AT A GLANCE

- Birding involves looking for different types of birds. Many birders use binoculars and guidebooks.
- People can go birding in cities or in wilderness areas. Some people join birding groups or use birding apps on their phones.
- A kayak is a small boat that sits low in the water. Kayakers control the boat with a double-sided paddle.
- Kayaking requires special gear and safety skills. Some state parks and outdoor gear stores offer kayaking classes for beginners.
- Geocaching involves searching for hidden items using Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates. People search for a cache, or collection of items.

HIKING

Hiking is all about walking in nature. It is often part of other outdoor hobbies, including mountain climbing and birding. Hikers carry their gear. They may hike for an hour, a day, or several days. Multi-day hikes often require camping along the way. Hiking can be a great way to get closer to nature.

Bob and Martha Manning work with the American Hiking Society. They encourage people to hike. They say new hikers should

To stay safe, beginners should go hiking with a partner or in a group. They should start with beginner-friendly hikes on familiar trails.





Some national and state parks offer guided hikes. At Denali National Park in Alaska, people can go on hikes with park rangers.

think about what types of hikes they like best. “Walk your own walk, not the walk that someone else thinks you should do,” they say.⁵ One person might enjoy long backpacking trips. Another may prefer more relaxed hikes. They want time to explore. Some people hike from one town

to the next. They find comfortable places to stay instead of camping.

GETTING STARTED

Many people enjoy hiking on their own. But beginners should always hike with an experienced friend. They can also join a hiking club or sign up for a guided hike. Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park is in Kansas. Hikers can go on guided hikes at the park. This gives them a chance to learn

Trail Etiquette

On narrow hiking trails, it is important to know who should step aside. When two hikers meet, the hiker going downhill should step aside to let the other person pass. Mountain bikers should yield to hikers. But bikes move fast. It is often easier for hikers to step aside first. When meeting a horse, a hiker should step aside.

about local wildlife. They also learn about the park's rock formations. Guided hikes help new hikers stay safe while learning the basics.

To plan a hike, a person must pick a trail. Many state parks have hiking trails. One example is the Skyline Trail in Davis Mountains State Park in Texas. People can also search online for trails. Trails have various lengths and levels of difficulty.

Hikers should think about how far and long they want to hike. A long hike may be impossible for someone who only has a few hours. Fitness is another factor. Hiking on level ground is easier than hiking uphill. The weather matters, too. In summer, hikers may need to prepare for extreme heat. In winter, they must prepare for the cold.

POPULAR HIKING TRAILS



Source: "Map: America's Best Long Trails," Backpacker, March 18, 2024. www.backpacker.com.

There are many popular hiking trails across the United States. Some trails are very long.

ESSENTIAL GEAR

Hikers need the right gear. A pair of hiking boots or trail shoes is essential. Hikers should wear **synthetic** or wool socks. These keep their feet dry. They help hikers

GLOSSARY

capsizes

tips over in water

chafing

rubbing that leads to sore skin

conservation

the act of preserving and protecting natural resources

coordinates

numerical points that mark a geographic location

habitats

the homes of plants or animals

identify

to name what something is

predators

animals that eat other animals

species

a group of animals or plants that share the same characteristics and can produce offspring

synthetic

describing a fabric made from manufactured materials

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