

## How to Preserve Nature While Hiking

If you like getting up close and personal with nature, then hiking is a great way for you to enjoy the great outdoors. While we all should understand the importance of protecting our environment at this point, there are some things that we can do that we may not normally consider as ways to preserve nature while hiking. Here are a few tips regarding what you can do on a hike to help protect nature:

- Always stay on the trail. While it does seem harmless, just wandering a few feet off the path will crush flora. Other people will follow suit and before you know it, the trail will widen, there will be erosion and wash-outs, and the backcountry will become riddled with unnecessary paths.
- Take along a reusable water bottle. Choose a durable, BPA-free bottle that is safe and that will serve you well for years to come. The landfills are overflowing with plastic water bottles and the ocean is being affected. While the regular water bottles are recyclable, very few make it where they need to go.
- Mix up your own granola and trail mix. You can save yourself money and reduce waste while cutting down on packaging. If you plan properly, you can even use local ingredients. Help even more by using reusable containers that you can take along time and time again.
- Choose your hiking gear wisely. When shopping for hiking gear or clothing, buy environmentally-friendly brands. Always thoroughly wash your clothing and gear after a hike or you could unknowingly carry insects, seeds, fungi, and disease into other areas where they haven't been before.
- Don't remove items. Leave plants and rocks where they are. Leave only footprints and take only photos and memories. You could take plants into areas where they aren't native, and you could contribute to erosion and wash-outs.
- Keep your distance. Don't approach wildlife because they could become frightened and go on the defensive. Regardless of whether you see a squirrel, a deer or a coyote, remember you are visiting their home.
- Don't litter. If you have any trash, be sure to take it out with you and dispose of it in the proper receptacles. If you come across trash left by others, be sure you pick it up and take it along. Leave the area even cleaner than it was when you arrived.

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