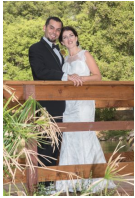




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A Hiker's Paradise: Hiking In Hot Weather



By Angela McLaughlin - Ramona Home Journal • Thu, Jun 01, 2017

The sun scorches your back, sweat cascading down, as you focus on putting one foot in front of the other — the heat of summer will soon be upon us.

For some, it may sound more appealing to stay inside, enveloped in the comfort and safety of your air-conditioned home. But do not let the summer heat deter you from exploring the amazing trails in Ramona's backyard.

Keep the following guidelines in consideration to help ensure your safety during the upcoming summer hiking season, and always remember to contact your physician with any questions regarding your health.

Hike in the Morning or Evening

It may be difficult to gather the motivation needed to get out of bed earlier in the morning — or, likewise, to go hiking after a long day at work — but hiking during cooler times of the day will not only be more enjoyable, it will be safer, too.

Typically, you will begin to feel the heat by 10 or 11 a.m. and will not feel relief again until early evening. Plan your hiking adventure during times when the sun's rays are less extreme — and keep yourself more protected in the process.

Check the Weather and Pick the Right Trail

Before you venture out, be sure to check the weather in the area of your hike. In higher elevations, the sun's rays will be more intense, so knowing what you are getting yourself into will help you prepare — and may help you decide which trails to avoid.

Many local trails offer little to no shade, as the terrain and climate do not support much more than shrubs or a few small trees. If you know the day will be a scorcher, you will be better prepared to pick a trail that offers more shade, fewer hills and more resting spots.

Wear the Right Clothing

In the heat of summer, it is tempting to strip down and bare as much skin as socially acceptable. However, the opposite is recommended during a hike. In fact, you may be surprised what a difference the right type of clothing will make.

Not only will long pants protect you from plants and animals that may cause harm, but covering your arms and legs will help protect you from the sun.

Wear loose-fitting, breathable clothing that covers you fully. Complete the outfit with a brimmed hat and sunglasses.

As always, make sure to wear shoes suitable to the trail you are hiking. Sturdy boots with ankle support are best for rocky trails with many inclines.

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Set yourself up for success by starting your hike fully hydrated and fueled for exercise. There is some debate about how much water you should bring on a hike, but the general guideline is that you should drink one liter of water per hour — and more while exerting yourself in hot weather.

In order for your body to properly absorb the water, it is best to steadily drink throughout your hike rather than going long periods without and then gulping a lot of water all in one sitting. This method will keep you hydrated throughout your excursion and aid in preventing dehydration.

Another important part of proper hydration is keeping your electrolytes in balance. Consuming something that contains sodium and potassium, such as a fruit-and-nut mix, will help maintain your electrolyte balance. There are also electrolyte powders and tablets available that may be mixed into your water; these are a good idea to have on hand for any hike. Make sure to prepare properly by packing both food and water — you never know when you will need it. Rest frequently when the heat rises, and make sure to match the length and level of your activity to the amount of supplies you'll need. The last thing you want is to sip the last drop of water from your canteen while you are only partway through your hike!

Pay Attention

As with any hike, make sure to pay attention to what your body is telling you.

This is extremely important when hiking when the temperature is high. Watch for signs of dehydration and heat stroke, which may include dizziness, nausea and headache, among other symptoms. Contact a medical professional if you are concerned or have questions.

Hike Safely

It is always recommended to hike with a buddy — especially during periods of high heat — and to let someone know where you will be hiking and when you intend to return.

As always, make sure to pack a first aid kit and sunscreen, and carry enough supplies for everyone in your hiking party. Hot weather hikes are typically not recommended for your canine companions. Not only is it hard on them — and the heat on their paws is not so pleasant — but you will need to carry even more water than normal for both you and your pet, making for a heavy pack. Keep your pets safe by leaving them at home or taking them on shorter hikes.

Avoid setting yourself up for an ill-fated adventure. Too many people are unprepared and end up being rescued from the trail. Do not underestimate the heat, and you will be less likely to run into any issues.

Don't let these risks scare you away from enjoying the great outdoors. Get outside and explore — just do it with a little bit of sense, forethought and preparation.

For information or to recommend a local trail, email angelamclaughlin@ramonajournal.com.

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