

# SUMMER WELLNESS

## AH, GO TAKE A HIKE!

There is no better time of year to get outside and immerse yourself in the natural beauty that surrounds us. Clear summer skies, vacation time, and more daylight hours can mean a great day on the trails. Canada has some of the most inspiring landscapes in the world. In celebration of Canada's 150<sup>th</sup>, the federal government offered free passes to all national parks in an effort to connect its citizens to the country's natural treasures (2017). These continue to be free for all youth under the age of 17. By making admission free for youth under 17, families are encouraged to get out and connect with nature so that children can get the opportunity to better understand the urgent need to protect and maintain protected areas. For more information on our national parks, please go to <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/index>.



### Know Before You Go!

- Hiking challenges your endurance and muscle strength. Get in shape for your hike! Get your body moving in a similar way and find ways to walk more in your day. You may want to park halfway to work and walk the remainder of the route, carry a backpack to the grocery store, or begin with a nightly walk around the neighborhood.
- Choose a hike that matches your experience and physical fitness level. When first starting out choose a shorter, less steep trail, and progress over time.
- Check the weather. Motivation will be low with cold and rainy weather but the risk of an accident or fall will be high. Check the weather forecast online and choose a dry and seasonal summer day with a bit of cloud cover for the best experience. Otherwise, take a literal rain check.
- Assess your footwear and clothing. If you plan on going for a 2-hour hike in a pair of flip flops, you're going to make the wrong kind of memories. You will need a solid cross trainer or hiking shoe if you are serious about more than a leisurely stroll. Remember to break in your footwear to avoid blisters and uncomfortable feet. Dress lightly and in layers, in breathable moisture wicking fabrics, and don't forget your socks.
- Remember to fill a water bottle, pack some protein-based snacks like trail mix, a granola or protein bar, sunscreen, band aids, and if not on a marked trail... a compass (and know how to use it!)

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### Hiking Benefits the Body, Mind & Spirit

The infographic consists of three vertical panels. The first panel (blue) features a circular image of a muscular man flexing his arm. The second panel (green) features a circular image of a human head in profile with a brain scan overlay. The third panel (green) features a circular image of a colorful, multi-colored starburst. A large grey arrow with the text 'Go Take a Hike!' spans across the bottom of all three panels.

**Physical Benefits:**

- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease
- Improves blood pressure and blood sugar
- Strengthen muscles and bones
- Reduces weight

**Mental Benefits:**

- Sharpens concentration
- Builds the mapping area of the brain which decreases risk of Alzheimers
- Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression

**Spiritual Benefits:**

- Connection to nature
- Grounding and balancing activity
- Increases happy hormones
- Peace and a sense of wellbeing

**Go Take a Hike!**

While we don't have the mountains of BC, Ontario can boast about the Niagara Escarpment, the wetlands of Point Pelee, beautiful boardwalks, and the Canadian Shield. Whether it's a few hours, a day trip, or a hiking vacation - Ontario has something for everyone. Here are a few top picks for hiking adventures from Explore Magazine.

- 1) La Cloche Silhouette Trail – Killarny - [ontariotrails.on.ca/la-cloche-silhouette-trail](http://ontariotrails.on.ca/la-cloche-silhouette-trail)
- 2) Cup and Saucer Trail – Manitoulin Island - [ontariotrails.on.ca/cup-saucer-trail](http://ontariotrails.on.ca/cup-saucer-trail)
- 3) Bruce Trail – Toronto Section - [ontariotrails.on.ca/bruce-trail](http://ontariotrails.on.ca/bruce-trail)
- 4) The Rideau Trail – Kingston to Ottawa - [ontarioparks.com/park/frontenac](http://ontarioparks.com/park/frontenac)
- 5) Avon Trail – St. Mary's - [ontariotrails.on.ca/avon-trail](http://ontariotrails.on.ca/avon-trail)

Nature, as it turns out, is a powerful, accessible and cost-effective tool to help us live our best lives. Getting away from people and out in nature may be exactly what you need to feel happy and healthy. So, the next time someone tells you to "Go take a hike!", you may want to listen!

Sources: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/free-admission-parks-canada-1.4455797>  
<https://greatist.com/fitness/know-before-you-go-hiking>  
<https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/features/hiking-body-mind>  
<https://www.shape.com/fitness/cardio/how-hiking-can-help-depression>  
<https://www.explore-mag.com/Ontarios-25-Best-Hikes>