

Hiking

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Hiking is the preferred term, in Canada and the United States, for a long, vigorous walk, usually on trails (footpaths), in the countryside, while the word walking is used for shorter, particularly urban walks. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland, the word "walking" is acceptable to describe *all forms* of walking, whether it is a walk in the park or backpacking in the Alps. The word hiking is also often used in the UK, along with **rambling** (a slightly old-fashioned term), **hillwalking**, and **fell walking** (a term mostly used for hillwalking in northern England). In New Zealand a long, vigorous walk or hike is called **tramping**.^[1] It is a popular activity with numerous hiking organizations worldwide, and studies suggest that all forms of walking have health benefits.

[2][3]



Two girls hiking in Sham Valley, Leh-Ladakh, India

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Related terms



Hiking in Argentina.

In the United States, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, and United Kingdom, hiking means walking outdoors on a trail, or off trail, for recreational purposes.^[4] A day hike refers to a hike that can be completed in a single day. However, in the United Kingdom, the word walking is also used, as well as rambling, while walking in mountainous areas is called hillwalking. In Northern England, including the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales, fellwalking describes hill or mountain walks, as fell is the common word for both features there.

Hiking sometimes involves bushwhacking and is sometimes referred to as such. This specifically refers to difficult walking through dense forest, undergrowth, or bushes, where forward progress requires pushing vegetation aside. In extreme cases of bushwhacking, where the vegetation is so dense that human passage is impeded, a machete is used to clear a pathway. The Australian term bushwalking refers to both on and off-trail hiking.^[5] Common terms for hiking used by New Zealanders are tramping (particularly for overnight and longer trips),^[6] walking or bushwalking. **Trekking** is the preferred word used to describe multi-day hiking in the mountainous regions of India, Pakistan, Nepal, North America, South America, Iran and in the highlands of East Africa. Hiking a long-distance trail from end-to-end is also referred to as trekking and as thru-hiking in some places.^{[7][8]} In North America, multi-day hikes, usually with camping, are referred to as backpacking.^[4]

History

The idea of taking a walk in the countryside for pleasure developed in the 18th-century, and arose because of changing attitudes to the landscape and nature, associated with the Romantic movement.^[9] In earlier times walking generally indicated poverty and was also associated with vagrancy.^[10]

United Kingdom

Thomas West, an English priest, popularized the idea of walking for pleasure in his guide to the Lake District of 1778. In the introduction he wrote that he aimed

to encourage the taste of visiting the lakes by furnishing the traveller with a Guide; and for that purpose, the writer has here collected and laid before him, all the select stations and points of view, noticed by those authors who have last made the tour of the lakes, verified by his own repeated observations.^[11]

To this end he included various 'stations' or viewpoints around the lakes, from which tourists would be encouraged to enjoy the views in terms of their aesthetic qualities.^[12] Published in 1778 the book was a major success.^[13]



Map of Robert Louis Stevenson's walking route, taken from *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879), a pioneering classic of outdoor literature.

Another famous early exponent of walking for pleasure, was the English poet William Wordsworth. In 1790 he embarked on an extended tour of France, Switzerland, and Germany, a journey subsequently recorded in his long autobiographical poem *The Prelude* (1850). His famous poem *Tintern Abbey* was inspired by a visit to the Wye Valley made during a walking tour of Wales in 1798 with his sister Dorothy Wordsworth. Wordsworth's friend Coleridge was another keen walker and in the autumn of 1799, he and Wordsworth undertook a three weeks tour of the Lake District. John Keats, who belonged to the next generation of Romantic poets began, in June 1818, a walking tour of Scotland, Ireland, and the Lake District with his friend Charles Armitage Brown.



Claife Station, built at one of Thomas West's 'viewing stations', to allow visiting tourists and artists to better appreciate the picturesque Lake District.

More and more people undertook walking tours through the 19th-century, of which the most famous is probably Robert Louis Stevenson's journey through the Cévennes in France with a donkey, recorded in his *Travels with a Donkey* (1879).

Stevenson also published in 1876 his famous essay "Walking Tours". The subgenre of travel writing produced many classics in the subsequent 20th-century. An early American example of a book that describes an extended walking tour is naturalist John Muir's *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* (1916), a posthumous published account of a long botanizing walk, undertaken in 1867.

Due to industrialisation in England, people began to migrate to the cities where living standards were often cramped and unsanitary. They would escape the confines of the city by rambling about in the countryside. However, the land in England, particularly around the urban areas of Manchester and Sheffield, was privately owned and trespass was illegal. Rambling clubs soon sprang up in the north and began politically campaigning for the legal 'right to roam'. One of the first such clubs, was 'Sunday Tramps' founded by Leslie White in 1879. The first national grouping, the Federation of Rambling Clubs, was formed in London in 1905 and was heavily patronized by the peerage.^[14]

Access to Mountains bills, that would have legislated the public's 'right to roam' across some private land, were periodically presented to Parliament from 1884 to 1932 without success. Finally, in 1932, the Rambler's Right Movement organized a mass trespass on Kinder Scout in Derbyshire. Despite attempts on the part of the police to prevent the trespass from going ahead it was successfully achieved due to massive publicity. However the Mountain Access Bill that was passed in 1939 was opposed by many walkers' organizations, including The Ramblers, who felt that it did not sufficiently protect their rights, and it was eventually repealed.^[15]

The effort to improve access led after World War II to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and in 1951 to the creation of the first national park in the UK, the Peak District National Park.^[16] The establishment of this and similar national parks helped to improve access for all outdoors enthusiasts.^[17] The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 considerably extended the right to roam in England and Wales.

United States

An early example of an interest in hiking in the United States, is Abel Crawford and his son Ethan's clearing of a trail to the summit of Mount Washington, New Hampshire in 1819.^[18] This 8.5 mile path is the oldest continually used hiking trail in the United States. The influence of British and European Romanticism reached North America through the transcendentalist movement, and both Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-62) were important influences on the outdoors movement in North America. Thoreau's writing on nature and on walking include the posthumously published "Walking" (1862)".^[1]

(<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1022#download>) While an earlier essay "A Walk to Wachusett" (1842) describes a four-day walking tour he took with a companion from Concord, Massachusetts to the summit of Mount Wachusett, Princeton, Massachusetts and back. In 1876 the Appalachian Mountain Club, America's earliest recreation organization, was founded to protect the trails and mountains in the northeastern United States.



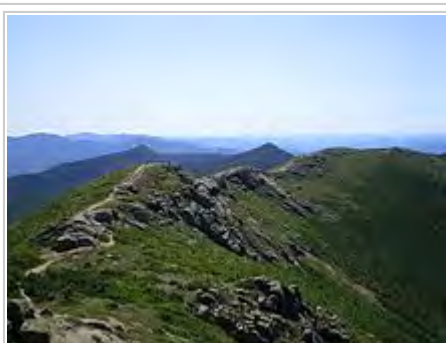
Thoreau walked 34 miles (55 km) to Mount Wachusett, shown here.

The Scottish-born, American naturalist John Muir (1838 –1914), was another important early advocate of the preservation of wilderness in the United States. He petitioned the U.S. Congress for the National Park bill that was passed in 1890, establishing Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks. The Sierra Club, which he founded, is now one of the most important conservation organizations in the United States. The spiritual quality and enthusiasm toward nature expressed in his writings inspired others, including presidents and congressmen, to take action to help preserve large areas of undeveloped countryside.^[19] He is today referred to as the "Father of the National Parks".^[20] In 1916, the National Park Service was created to protect national parks and monuments.

In 1921, Benton MacKaye, a forester, conceived the idea of the America's first National trail, the Appalachian trail, and this was completed in August 1937, running from Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine to Georgia.^[21] The Pacific Crest Trail ("PCT") was first explored in the 1930s by the YMCA hiking groups and was eventually registered as a complete border to border trail from Mexico to Canada.^[22]

Long-distance hiking

Frequently nowadays long-distance hikes (walking tours) are undertaken along long-distance paths, including the National Trails in England and Wales, the National Trail System in the United States and the Grande Randonnée (France), Grote Routepaden, or Lange-afstand-wandelpaden (Holland), Grande



The Appalachian Trail provides the opportunity for a 3,500-kilometre (2,200 mi)-long hike.^[23]

Rota (Portugal), Gran Recorrido (Spain) is a network of long-distance footpaths in Europe, mostly in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain. There are extensive networks in other European countries of long-distance trails, as well as in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Nepal, and to a lesser extent other Asiatic countries, like Turkey, Israel, and Jordan. In the Alps of Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland, Germany, France, and Italy walking tours are often made from 'hut-to-hut', using an extensive system of mountain huts.

In the late 20th-century there has been a proliferation of official and unofficial long-distance routes, which mean that hikers now are more likely to refer to using a long-distance way (Britain), trail (US), *The Grande Randonnée* (France), etc., than setting out on a walking tour. Early examples of long-distance paths,

include the Appalachian Trail in the US and the Pennine Way in Britain. Pilgrimage routes are now treated, by some walkers, as long-distance routes, and the route taken by the British National Trail the North Downs Way closely follows that of the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury.

Hiking times can be estimated by Naismith's rule or Tobler's hiking function.

Equipment

The equipment required for hiking depends on the length of the hike, but day hikers generally carry at least water, food, a map, and rain-proof gear.^[4] Hikers usually wear sturdy hiking boots for mountain walking and backpacking, as protection from the rough terrain, as well as providing increased stability.^[4] The Mountaineers club recommends a list of "Ten Essentials" equipment for hiking, including a compass, a trekking pole, sunglasses, sunscreen, a flashlight, a first aid kit, a fire starter, and a knife.^[24] Other groups recommend items such as hat, gloves, insect repellent, and an emergency blanket.^[25] A GPS navigation device can also be helpful and route cards may be used as a guide.



A simple dry magnetic pocket compass

Proponents of ultralight backpacking argue that long lists of required items for multi-day hikes increases pack weight, and hence fatigue and the chance of injury.^[26] Instead, they recommend reducing pack weight, in order to make hiking long distances easier. Even the use of hiking boots on long-distances hikes is controversial among ultralight hikers, because of their weight.^[26]

Environmental impact

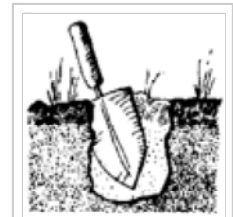


Parts of many hiking trails around Lake Mohonk, New York State, US, include stairways which can prevent erosion

Natural environments are often fragile, and may be accidentally damaged, especially when a large number of hikers are involved. For example, years of gathering wood can strip an alpine area of valuable nutrients, and can cause deforestation.^[27] and some species, such as martens or bighorn sheep, are very sensitive to the presence of humans, especially around mating season. Generally, protected areas such as parks have regulations in place to protect the environment, so as to minimize such impact.^[27] Such regulations include banning wood fires, restricting camping to established camp sites, disposing or packing out faecal matter, and imposing a quota on the number of hikers. Many hikers espouse the philosophy of Leave No Trace, following strict practices on dealing with food waste, food packaging,

and other impact on the environment.^[28]

Human waste is often a major source of environmental impact from hiking,^[27] and can contaminate the watershed and make other hikers ill. 'Catholes' dug 10 to 25 cm (4 to 10 inches) deep, depending on local soil composition and covered after use, at least 60 m (200 feet) away from water sources and trails, are recommended to reduce the risk of bacterial contamination.



A cathole for human waste

Fire is a particular source of danger, and an individual hiker can have a large impact on an ecosystem. For example, in 2005, a Czech backpacker burned 7% of Torres del Paine National Park in Chile by knocking over a portable stove.^[29]

Etiquette

Sometimes the action of hikers may come into conflict with other users of the land. Hiking etiquette has developed to minimize such interference. Common hiking etiquette includes:

- When two groups of hikers meet on a steep trail, a custom has developed in some areas whereby the group moving uphill has the right-of-way.^[30]
- Being forced to hike much faster than one's natural pace can be annoying, difficult to maintain consistently, and increases fatigue; it may also cause injury. But if a group splits between fast and slow hikers, the slow hikers may be left behind or become lost. Therefore, a common custom is to encourage the slowest hiker to lead and have everyone match that speed. Another custom is to have experienced hiker(s) sweep up the rear on a rota, to ensure that everyone in the group is safe.
- Hikers generally avoid making loud sounds, such as shouting or loud conversation, or the use of mobile phones.^[30] or music. However, in bear country, hikers make noise as a safety precaution through the use of whistles or bells.
- Hikers tend to avoid impacting on the land through which they travel. Hikers can avoid impact by staying on established trails, not picking plants, or disturbing wildlife, and carrying garbage out. The Leave No Trace movement offers a set of guidelines for low-impact hiking: "Leave nothing but footprints. Take nothing but photos. Kill nothing but time. Keep nothing but memories".

- The feeding of wild animals is dangerous and can cause harm to both the animals and to other people.

Hazards

As discussed in Hazards of outdoor recreation, hiking may produce threats to personal safety, from such causes as hazardous terrain, inclement weather, becoming lost, or exacerbation of pre-existing medical conditions. These dangerous circumstances and/or specific accidents or ailments that hikers face may include, for example, diarrhea, for example, one of the most common illnesses afflicting long-distance hikers in the United States.^[31] (See Wilderness acquired diarrhea.)

Additional potential hazards involving physical ailments may include dehydration, frostbite, hypothermia, sunburn, or sunstroke, or such injuries as ankle sprains, or broken bones.^[32]

Other threats may be posed attacks by animals (such as mammals (e.g., bears), reptiles (e.g., snakes), or insects) or contact with noxious plants that can cause rashes (e.g., poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, or stinging nettles). Attacks by humans are also a reality in some places, and lightning is also a threat, especially on high ground.

The crossing of glaciers is potentially hazardous because of the potential for crevasses. These giant cracks in the ice are not always visible as snow can be blown and freeze over the top to make a snowbridge. To cross a glacier the use of a rope, crampons and ice axes are usually required. Deep, fast flowing rivers pose another danger that can be mitigated with ropes.

In various countries, borders may be poorly marked. In 2009, Iran imprisoned three Americans for hiking across the Iran-Iraq border.^[33] It is illegal to cross into the US on the Pacific Crest Trail from Canada. Going south to north it is more straightforward and a crossing can be made, if advanced arrangements are made with Canada Border Services. Within the Schengen Area, which includes most of the E.U., and associated nations like Switzerland and Norway, there are no impediments to crossing by path, and borders are not always obvious.^[34]

See also

- Bivouac shelter
- Outdoor literature

Types

- Dog hiking – hiking with dogs that carry a pack
 - Llama hiking
- Nordic Walking – fitness walking with poles



Animals may attack humans who disturb them

- Scrambling – "non-technical" rock climbing or mountaineering, or "technical" hiking
- Swimhiking
- Waterfalling – aka waterfall hunting and waterfall hiking, is hiking with the purpose of finding and enjoying waterfalls

Trails

See: List of long-distance footpaths

- Grande Randonnée

Related activities

- Cross-country skiing – a form of travel on skis that is equivalent to running or hiking in snow
- Fell running – an English and Welsh sport of running over rough mountainous ground, often off-trail. Known as hill running in Scotland and Ireland. Similarities exist with mountain running
- Geocaching – an outdoor treasure-hunting game
- Orienteering – a running sport that involves navigation with a map and compass
- Peak bagging – hiking to the summits of mountains
- River trekking – a combination of trekking and climbing and sometimes swimming along a river
- Rogaining – a sport of long-distance cross-country navigation
- Snow shoeing – a way of hiking in deep snow
- Trail blazing – known as waymarking in Europe
- Trail running – running on trails

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External links

- Recreation: Outdoors: Hiking (<https://www.dmoz.org/Recreation/Outdoors/Hiking>) at DMOZ

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