

# Exclusive Excursions COVID Hiking Guide

## Our Advice to Get Outside, while staying safe

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### **Outside is Still OK!**

It's easy to get caught up in the daily news cycle, which can leave us feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and petrified as we wait to see what will happen next in these uncertain and trying times. Avoiding germs doesn't have to leave us apathetic to outdoor pursuits however, and most guidelines encourage folks to get outside and enjoy some fresh air! Here are some pointers from our guides to safely get outside during the coming weeks.

### **Plan Ahead and Embrace "Bad" Weather**

Chances are we won't be the only persons on the trailhead. Many people are getting out, and trailheads have packed and crowded with everyone having the same idea for escaping

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the house. Before heading out, do some research. How popular is the trail? When is it usually busiest? Are there other options close by? Have a back-up trail in mind should your first option look too busy when you arrive at the trailhead. Take the extra minute to find a trail that might not be as popular or scenic, but will be less traveled.

Do you have a rain jacket? Then use it! Cloudy and rainy days influence most people to stay inside, all the better! Go enjoy fewer crowds and let your gear do what you bought it for. I have always felt a greater sense of adventure during rough weather and come home with a renewed appreciation for the warm, dry environment of my living room.

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/layering-basics.html>

## **Take it Easy, Stay Local**

Now isn't the time to be bagging peaks or traveling to that dream trail. With hospital capacity waning and healthcare workers bravely putting in long hours, we need to avoid giving them another burden. Take the time to enjoy what's around you and have fun getting creative with your route finding.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/if-you-must-venture-out-during-covid-19-heres-how-do-it>

## **Limit Group Size**

Now isn't the time for a family reunion or group shindig. Not only does this make it near impossible to practice responsible social distancing, it makes it difficult for others on the trail as well. Keeping 6 or more feet from passers by isn't difficult if there's one or two of us, but circumnavigating a large group is more difficult and frankly, annoying. Limiting group size is beneficial for everyone looking to get outside and can keep us safer. Taking a solo hike is encouraged as well, just be sure to communicate your plans with someone else before heading out!

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## Face Mask Advice

So we want to get outside, while avoiding getting/giving germs. Wearing a facemask achieves both goals; protecting yourself by keeping stuff out, and protecting others by keeping your germs in. With mask shortages around the world, many great ideas for do it yourself face masks have been popping up. Most of us have a bandana or wind buff we use skiing, is that good enough? What material is best? In short, some protection is better than no protection.

Using a bandana or old shirt made from cotton is a better option than a stretchy synthetic layer made from polyester and/or spandex. The synthetic materials retain germs longer, and the elasticity can lead to larger gaps in the material for germs to get through. Tightly woven fabrics are best, so if you see any light getting through, consider doubling up or a different fabric. Folding or doubling your materials can increase your protection, but remember you still need to be able to breathe! Make sure your mask covers your mouth AND nose, and that you keep your hands off your face while wearing the mask.

When hiking, I have been using a bandana wrapped around my neck. Since we're not always around other people, this allows us to have it down when we're alone, yet easily pulled up when folks get close to our bubble.

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2411426/buff-bandana-face-mask-effectiveness>