

Dayton Daily News

Take a hike! Seriously, it is good for you.

Fall is a great time to go solo or in group, plus it's easy to get started.

By [Debbie Juniewicz](#) - Thursday, November 14, 2014



John Tierney leads a group of Dayton hikers at Carter Caves State Park in Kentucky during the annual Winter Adventure Weekend. CONTRIBUTED

Cool, crisp air and clear views of the expansive landscape with just a touch of color — fall is a perfect time to take a hike.

“No heat, no humidity, no bugs and no poison ivy, late fall is a great time for hiking,” longtime hiker Andy Niekamp said. “And with most of the leaves down, you can see the hills and topography better and really get a lay of the land.”

Niekamp, who established the Outdoor Adventure Connection in 2013, is also a founding member of the Dayton Hikers, a group that offers hiking opportunities almost

daily throughout the Miami Valley. Just ask Huber Heights resident Ben Kendrick, who recently participated in nine hikes over eight days with the Dayton Hikers.

“It’s fun getting out there,” Kendrick said. “I like having the opportunity to explore new parks.”

He also enjoys the camaraderie.

“I used to hike by myself all the time,” the 36-year-old said. “I decided to join the Dayton Hikers to meet new people.”

Whether you want to take a peaceful solo hike or are looking for a group of like-minded outdoor adventurers, fall is an ideal time to get out and enjoy the still mild weather. And getting started is easier than you might think.

What to wear

Layering is always a good rule of thumb, but especially this time of year when temperatures can change drastically, especially after dark.

Niekamp says it’s all about the 3 W’s.

“You start with a wicking layer, then you have a warmth layer — like fleece — and then the weather layer, like a rain jacket or shell,” he said.

Niekamp also suggests carrying an extra layer in your daypack as well as a hat and gloves.

“It could be warm and sunny in the parking lot and then you hike into a ravine and it’s 10 degrees colder,” he said.

And what about footwear?

Veteran hiker Yvonne Entingh has seen it all on the trails.

“I have seen people taking a day hike in flip-flops,” she said. “Seriously, flip-flops.”

According to Entingh, who completed a 750-mile hike this summer, rookie hikers don’t need to make a big investment in hiking shoes to get started.

“Just a good closed toe shoe, a decent tennis shoe with some support is fine,” she said.

What to bring

Traveling light is important, but not too light as there are some hiking essentials.

A small, lightweight backpack can carry everything you will need. That packing list should include extra clothes, hat and gloves, water, snacks, a map, flashlight or headlamp and a whistle.

With darkness coming earlier this time of year, a light source is essential. And if you take a wrong turn, blowing a whistle beats yelling for help and it will save your voice.

While hydration may not seem as critical in cooler weather, it is no less important this time of year.

“One thing I always tell people is ‘eat before you get hungry and drink before you’re thirsty,’” Entingh said. “That’s very important.”

Getting started

“We are very blessed in Dayton to have such a great MetroParks system as well as wonderful community parks,” Niekamp said. “There is no lack of choices.”

If you are looking for a group to get started with, the Dayton Hikers Meetup page offers countless local hiking opportunities. If you are looking for a place to hike, the Five Rivers MetroParks website details the various hiking trails as does the Ohio State Parks website.

Want to learn more? Outdoor Adventure Connection, the MetroParks and local outdoor outfitters sponsor a variety of events, presentations and workshops on various hiking and backpacking topics.

“Just get out and try it,” Kendrick said.

And there is no time like the present.

“I hear people all the time say ‘when I lose some weight...when I get off my medication...when I get in better shape,’” Entingh said. “Don’t let fear keep you from trying.”

Contact this contributing writer at djuniewicz@gmail.com.

Upcoming events

Monday, Nov. 17: A Get Fit Hike at Taylorsville Dam (any speed) with hikes of 1, 3.2 or 4.46 miles at 9 a.m. Information: www.meetup.com/DaytonHikers/.

Tuesday: Fast Hike (5.2 miles) with the Dayton Hikers at Sugarcreek MetroPark at 5 p.m. Information: www.meetup.com/DaytonHikers/.

Tuesday: Learn to Night Hike with Andy Niekamp and Yvonne Entingh at Cox Arboretum, 6 p.m. Free, registration is required, www.outdooradventureconnection.com.

Wednesday: An Appalachian Trail Southbound Adventure — Free presentation at True Heights Outfitters at 7 p.m. Information: www.outdooradventureconnection.com.

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