

## LEAVE NO TRACE



This year the Friends of the Trails is offering a special program for kids to encourage them to be nature-friendly hikers. Kids who participate will receive a backpack filled with hiking items.

The “Leave No Trace” effort reminds us to protect the earth by making good choices while playing in nature. Ranger Rick says, “Leave only footprints and take only pictures.” Try not to leave any unnatural clues that you’ve been on a trail like candy wrappers, a tree carving, even a painted rock. Remember:

Picking wildflowers removes seeds that animals depend on and that allow more wildflowers to grow next year. If everyone picked them there’d be none left. Remember, they won’t last long once they’re picked.

Carving something into the trunk of a tree can leave it unable to defend itself against insects and disease.

Taking natural objects such as leaves, rocks, fossils or feathers keeps other hikers from enjoying them.

Leaving painted rocks can be dangerous to wildlife who smell and lick them and could get sick from the paint. Also, people may crush fragile flowers and other plants when taking a rock out of its hiding place.

Food scraps left on the trail can be dangerous to wildlife, and trash left on the trail is ugly. Take a small bag with you to carry out your trash. And if you see trash, pick it up and take that also. Be careful not to pick up anything sharp – let grown-ups take care of that.

Fortunately, there are lots of fun things to do while hiking. Below are some games people can play on the trail. There is also an activity sheet of ideas for each of the trails in the marathon to print and take with you. Anyone under the age of 12 can fill out the sheet for either a full or half marathon and turn it in for a free backpack.

There is a nature guide for the Overlook Trail. Before you go out on the trail you might want to look at the guide at <http://time2meet.com/gladetrails/nature.shtml>.

### **Close-Ups Game**

Have someone with a smartphone walk ahead on the trail and take a super close-up shot of an object along the trail: a mushroom, a knot in a tree, a crack in a rock, etc. The close-up should focus on only a small part of the object so it won’t be too easy to find. When the rest of the group catches up to the photographer, see who can find the object first.

### **Hiking Scavenger Hunt**

This one is really simple: Make a list of items everyone has to find, and the first one to find them all wins. (Be sure to leave the item on the trail, unless it’s trash.) Here’s a list to get you started—but get creative! Four different shades of green, something blue, a heart-shaped rock, something made by humans, an acorn, a pine cone, a snakeskin, a yellow leaf.

### **ABCs Game**

Starting with the letter “A,” everyone has to find something along the trail that begins with “A” before moving through the rest of the alphabet.

### **Engage the Senses**

Here’s a game that you can do while resting. Stop and listen. How many different sounds do you hear in 60 seconds? Say what you hear as you hear it.

LET’S ALL DO OUR PART TO “LEAVE NO TRACE.”

