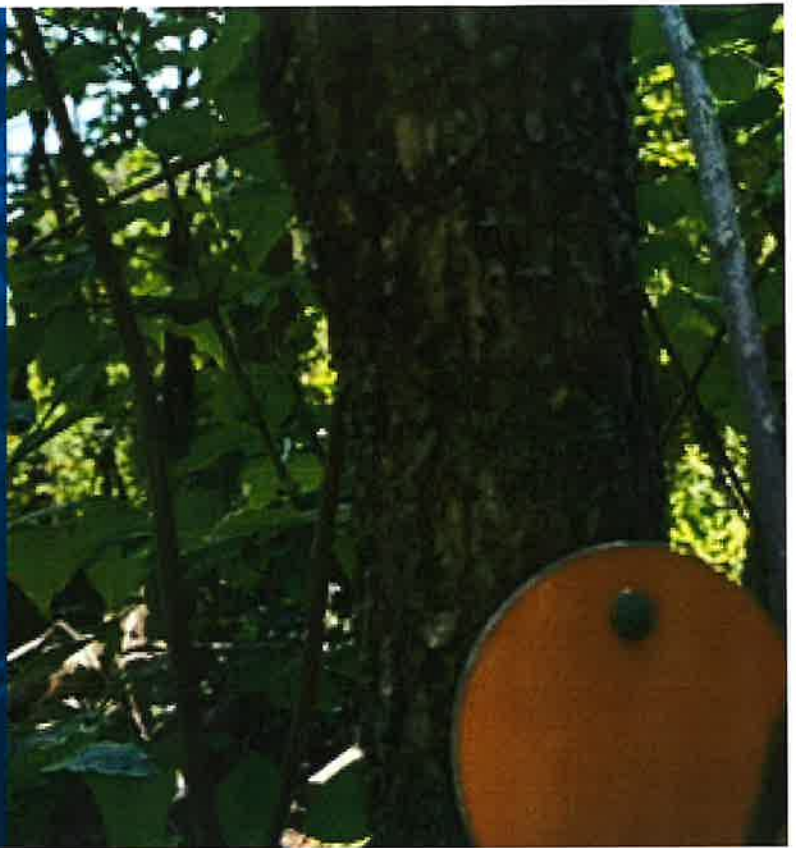


WHY TRAILS MATTER

Trails are more than places to walk — they are community assets that support health, nature, learning, tourism, and local quality of life. Well-used and well-cared-for trails benefit both residents and visitors.



- Trails support physical health by making it easier for people to walk, hike, run, and be active.
- Time outdoors and physical activity can improve mental health and reduce stress.
- Trails connect people with nature, local history, and cultural landscapes.
- Trails create opportunities for families, schools, and visitors to learn outdoors.
- Connected trail systems can improve community livability and strengthen tourism appeal.
- Trails also help build appreciation for conservation and the protection of natural heritage.

Healthy trails help build healthy people, healthy communities, and healthy landscapes

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR A WALK

A little preparation makes every trail outing safer, more comfortable, and more enjoyable. Choosing a trail that matches your group's abilities and checking conditions before you go are two of the most important first steps.



- Choose a route that matches the age, fitness, and experience of everyone in your group.
- Check the weather and trail conditions before leaving home.
- Wear appropriate footwear and dress for the season.
- Bring water, snacks, sunscreen, bug spray, and a fully charged phone.
- Know where you are starting, where you are going, and how long the walk should take.
- Let someone know your plans if you are walking alone or on a quiet trail.
- Start early enough to finish comfortably and safely.

Prepared walkers have safer, happier, and more relaxed trail experiences.

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FAMILY TRAIL TIPS

Trails can be a great family activity when the route, pace, and expectations match the group. Short, interesting walks with time to explore usually work better than trying to cover long distances.



- Pick a short, easy route with a clear start and finish.
- Plan extra time for breaks, snacks, and curiosity.
- Bring water, simple snacks, and a few comforts for younger children.
- Set a relaxed pace and make the walk fun with games like bird spotting or nature scavenger hunts.
- Watch children closely near slopes, roots, bridges, and road crossings.
- Choose stroller-friendly routes only where the surface and width support them.
- Celebrate the outing, not the distance.

**The best family walks are about fun, discovery,
and confidence-building**

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CARING FOR TRAILS

Every trail user plays a part in protecting the places they enjoy. Following simple outdoor ethics helps reduce damage to trails, plants, wildlife, and water.



- Plan ahead and prepare for the conditions.
- Stay on established trails and durable surfaces.
- Pack out all garbage and leave the trail cleaner than you found it.
- Leave plants, rocks, and natural features where they are.
- Respect wildlife and observe from a distance.
- Avoid damaging muddy trails by staying off them when conditions are poor, if possible.
- Use washroom facilities where available and dispose of waste properly.
- Respect volunteers, landowners, and staff who help keep trails open and safe.

Take only pictures, leave only footprints, and help keep trails welcoming for everyone.

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RESPECT WILDLIFE AND NATURE

Trails offer a chance to experience nature up close, but that experience depends on caring for the plants, animals, and habitats around us. Small choices by trail users can make a big difference.



- Watch wildlife from a distance and do not feed animals.
- Stay on the trail to protect plants, roots, soils, and habitat.
- Keep noise low so others can enjoy nature too.
- Leave rocks, flowers, nests, and natural features where they are.
- Keep pets under control so they do not disturb wildlife.
- Pack out all waste, including food scraps.
- Help children learn that observing nature is better than collecting it.

Respect for nature helps keep trails healthy and beautiful.

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TRAILS AND HEALTHY LIVING

Trails make it easier for people to be active close to home, and regular outdoor activity supports both physical and mental well-being. Community trails also give people low-cost, accessible opportunities to connect with others and spend time outside.



- Walking and hiking support heart health, strength, balance, and endurance.
- Time outdoors can reduce stress and support mental well-being.
- Trails encourage active lifestyles for people of different ages and abilities.
- Shared outdoor spaces help strengthen community connections.
- Easy access to trails can make healthy choices more convenient.

Trails are simple infrastructure with big health benefits.

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TICK PREVENTION

Ticks on the trail

Ticks are a common outdoor hazard in many parts of Ontario, especially in grassy, brushy, and wooded areas. A few simple habits before, during, and after time outdoors can lower the chance of a tick bite and help people respond quickly if they find one.



- Wear long sleeves, long pants, closed-toe shoes, and tuck pants into socks. Choose light colours to make ticks easier to see.
- Use insect repellent with DEET and follow the label directions.
- Stay on cleared or marked trails and avoid tall grass, leaf litter, and dense vegetation.
- After being outdoors, check your body, children, and pets, especially armpits, ears, hairline, belly button, waist, behind knees, and groin.
- If you find an attached tick, remove it promptly with clean, fine-point tweezers. Grasp it close to the skin and pull straight out, slowly and steadily.
- After removal, clean the bite area and your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based product.
- Do not burn, squeeze, or smother the tick with petroleum jelly.
- Contact a health care provider if you cannot remove the tick, if part of it is deeply embedded, or if you feel unwell or develop a rash or other symptoms after a bite.

**Tick safety starts with prevention, careful checks,
and prompt removal.**

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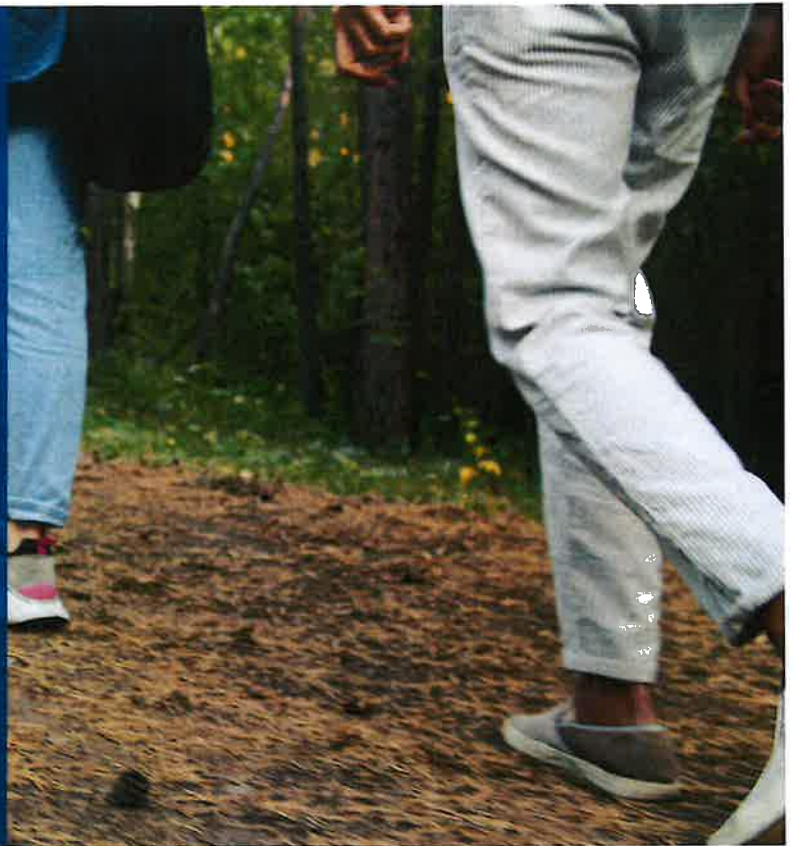


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TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Share the trail

Trails are shared spaces, and good etiquette helps everyone feel welcome and safe. A respectful trail culture also helps protect the land, wildlife, and the experience of other visitors.



- Expect other trail users and treat them with respect.
- Stay to the right and pass on the left when safe to do so.
- Give a friendly verbal signal or ring a bell before passing.
- Travel at a safe speed, especially around corners and busy sections.
- Walk or ride single file, even when trails are wet or muddy.
- Uphill users generally have the right of way; cyclists should yield to hikers, and hikers should yield to horseback riders where horses are permitted.
- Keep dogs on leash and clean up after them.
- Keep noise low and respect nearby residents, wildlife, and the natural soundscape.

A little courtesy goes a long way on the trail.

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BE DOG FRIENDLY

Dog friendly trails

Dogs can be great trail companions, but responsible dog handling is essential for the safety of other visitors, wildlife, and your pet. Many trail systems require dogs to be leashed and under control at all times.



- Confirm that the trail is dog-friendly before you go.
- Keep dogs on leash unless a trail specifically allows off-leash use.
- Clean up after your dog and pack waste out properly.
- Keep your dog close when others are passing.
- Do not allow dogs to chase wildlife or disturb vegetation.
- Bring water for your dog, especially in warm weather.
- If your dog is tired, overheated, reactive, or overwhelmed, shorten the outing.

**Responsible dog owners help keep trails
welcoming and pet-friendly**

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