

Tips for Hiking with Kids

- ◆ Have contingency plans – one kid might have the ability but just plain stops and won't go any further. Are some family members going to go on, while others wait or walk back? What's the plan?
- ◆ Take plenty of water and snacks. Carry a water filter and show the kids how to use it.
- ◆ Carry small trash bags so the kids can clean the trail as they hike. However, bending over and picking up something in the woods may be harmful. Perhaps have kids point it out and Mom or Dad, wearing gloves, checks for things that bite and puts it in the bag of the little one who saw the trash. Biggest bag at the end of the hike wins. Be aware, Mom, Dad or both will end up carrying all the bags after about a mile in.
- ◆ Have a change of clothes, dry shoes and towels in the car.
- ◆ Point out “walk arounds” and encourage them not to use them. A “walk around” is where the trail has been obstructed by a tree or standing water and a hiker will walk around creating a wider trail, thereby increasing erosion. Also discourage kids from taking a shortcut across switchbacks. This is dangerous and leads to severe erosion problems.
- ◆ Encourage them to remove sticks and branches on the trail so that the next hiker will have a clear pathway. And kick those “rollers” off the trail! A “roller” is a small, round branch that, when stepped on by a hiker, will roll, possibly causing the hiker to fall or sprain an ankle.
- ◆ Carry a small first aid kit, whistle and bug spray.
- ◆ No flip flops ... everyone should wear sturdy shoes.



- ◆ Feel and smell the leaves and wood, but please don't pick the wildflowers. There also is a fair amount of poison ivy in the Cherokee National Forest. Point it out and tell your kids not to touch it.
- ◆ Point out obvious signs of trail maintenance, like trees cut out of the path or trails dug into the side of a mountain. Explain that these trails are taken care of by volunteers – which means they come out in the mountains and woods to work on the trails and don't get paid.
- ◆ Plan on bringing your kids on a trail work day.
- ◆ Last, but not least, check for the latest trail conditions [HERE](#).



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