

Hiking with Dogs

Taking your best buddy on the trail.

A dog can be a built-in companion for outdoor adventures, and is always ready, willing, and eager to hit the trail. Hiking with a dog even provides health benefits to both, the pet and the owner.

Below are some simple "Petiquette" guidelines to remember as you get ready to hit the trail with your dog:

1. **Make sure that dogs are allowed** on the land where you will be hiking and obey any restrictions concerning areas that are off limits.
2. **Keep your dog on a leash.** This one important guideline helps to ensure that other hikers will feel comfortable when they meet you on the trail. It also prevents your dog from chasing wildlife and reduces the habitat damage that occurs when dogs run off the trail. Dogs can leave behind a predator scent that disrupts wildlife and may hinder nesting and feeding activities.

Keeping your dog on a leash also helps to ensure his safety, since the leash keeps him under control and by your side. Unleashed dogs can quickly run off when tracking a scent and may disappear from your view very quickly. Always use a leash so that you and your dog will finish your hike together safely and can hike again at another time.

3. **Plan for your dog's needs** on the trail as well as your own. Be sure to pack food, water, and accessories that will keep your dog energized, hydrated, and comfortable. Check out our 10 Essentials for Hiking with Dogs. And remember to pre-treat your dog with heartworm preventative medication as well as insecticides to prevent flea and tick infestation.

4. **Practice Leave No Trace ethics** and clean up your dog's waste. Either carry along a small spade and bury the waste or pack it out with you in plastic bags. Dog waste contains fecal coliform bacteria, which can cause disease and pollution. Dogs can also carry salmonella and giardia.

5. **Don't assume that every hiker you meet on the trail will like your dog.** Be sure to keep your dog well controlled so that other hikers don't feel frightened or threatened. Also, don't assume that other dogs you might meet on the trail are friendly, even if they are wagging their tails.

6. **Never leave your dog in a closed vehicle** when traveling to the trailhead. Oven-like temperatures can build up in minutes, even on cool days.

