

D O G G I N ' A M E R I C A

Great Vacation Ideas For You And Your Dog

GRAB THAT LEASH **AND HIT THE** **TRAIL**



A Primer For Hiking With Your Dog...

BONUS INCLUDED:

WHERE CAN I HIKE WITH MY DOG?

Doug Gelbert

*"Dogs are our link to paradise...to sit with a dog on a hillside
on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing was not boring - it was peace."
- Milan Kundera*

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Why Hike With Your Dog?

You say the idea of fun isn't enough for you? Consider this, what's more important to your overall health - your dog or a personal trainer?

According to Texas A&M University, numerous studies show that pets provide undisputed medical benefits:

(1) Dog owners have lower blood pressure. It only takes 10 minutes in the company of a dog to significantly reduce blood pressure rates.

(2) Owning a dog is estimated to decrease heart attack mortality rates by 3% - many thousands of lives a year.

(3) Dog owners have lower triglyceride and cholesterol levels than non-dog owners.

(4) In a study of Medicare patients, dog owners made 21% fewer trips to a physician.

(5) Children exposed to dogs during their first years of life have a lower frequency of some allergies and asthma.

(6) Pet owners have better overall physical health due to exercise with their pets.

So what's your excuse? Dogs make wonderful trail companions and it is a hobby you can do anywhere, at anytime of the year.

For dog owners it is important to realize that not all parks are open to our four-legged friends. It is sometimes hard for dog owners to believe but not everyone loves dogs. We are, in fact, in the minority when compared with our non-dog-owning neighbors. As such, rules can change rapidly to ban dogs from even more of our public parks. It doesn't take a referendum or a ballot count for "NO DOGS" signs to appear overnight.

So make sure your dog is a good citizen on the trail - don't bother other hikers and pick up after him - and you will be embarking on a passion that will last a lifetime.

Every time you hike with your dog you are an ambassador for all dog owners.

So get fit - grab a leash and hit the trail!

The First Steps

You already walk your dog every evening, so you must be ready to start hiking with your dog as you travel this summer, right? Perhaps, but a deep-woods nature walk isn't always a stroll around the neighborhood block...

START WITH YOUR DOG

Before you plunge down any trail, make sure you tailor your plans to your dog's capabilities. Are you mapping out a 12-mile day hike that will tag the peaks of three mountains? Not all dogs are bred for that kind of long-term exertion. It is especially important not to overtax your dog on a hike because she will soldier on in an effort to please you and never let on to any pain. Hiking can be a wonderful preventative for any number of physical and behavioral canine disorders and running up trails and leaping through streams is great exercise for that one in every three dogs that is overweight. But just like us, a dog used to being a couch potato can't be expected to easily complete a five-mile loop trail. Have your dog checked by a veterinarian before significantly increasing his activity level.

LOW IMPACT HIKING WITH YOUR DOG

Every time you hike with your dog on the trail you are an ambassador for all dog owners. Some people you meet won't believe in your right to take dogs on a trail. Be friendly to all and make the best impression you can. Practice low impact hiking with your dog by:

- * packing out everything you pack in.
- * not leaving dog scat on the trail.
- * hiking only where dogs are allowed.
- * staying on the trail and not allowing your dog to trample vegetation.
- * not allowing your dog to chase wildlife.
- * stepping off the trail and waiting with your dog while horses and other hikers pass.
- * not allowing your dog to bark - people are enjoying the trail for serenity.

One of the best ways to practice low impact hiking is to use a leash. This will guarantee that your dog will not unnecessarily disturb the environment or other people - and keep her safe on the trail.

TRAIL HAZARDS

Dogs are naturally curious and left to their own devices will almost certainly stick a nose where it doesn't belong. Dogs can't get poison ivy but they can transfer it to you. Other nuisance plants include stinging nettle that lurks on the side of many trails and even the slightest brush will deliver troublesome needles into a dog's coat. Nasty thorns can also blanket trails that we in shoes may never notice. If your dog has tender paws, dog booties are available to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces. Used in winter, dog booties provide warmth and keep ice balls from forming between toe pads when hiking through snow.

THE WEATHER AND YOUR DOG

Hot, humid summers do not do dogs any favors. With no sweat glands and only panting available to disperse body heat, dogs are much more susceptible to heat stroke than we are. Unusually rapid panting and/or a bright red tongue are signs of heat exhaustion in your pet. A good rule of thumb is to carry 8 ounces of water for every hour of planned hiking - your dog can even learn to drink happily from a squirt bottle. Beware of allowing her to drink too generously from surface water since even fast-flowing streams can be infested with a microscopic protozoa called *Giardia*, waiting to wreak havoc on your dog's intestinal system. Some of your most rewarding hikes with your dog will be in the mountains where the weather can change in a moment's notice. It may be cooler at higher altitudes but the sun will burn more intensely. When hiking in extremes of temperature remember that a hike is not a race and rest often - for both your sake and your dog's.

Outfitting Your Dog For A Hike

These are the basics for taking your dog on a hike:

* Collar.

* A properly fitting collar should not be so loose as to come off but you should be able to slide your flat hand under the collar.

* Identification Tags. Get one with your veterinarian's phone number as well.

* Bandanna. Can help distinguish him from game in hunting season.

* Leash. Leather lasts forever but if there's water in your dog's future, consider quick-drying nylon.

* Water. Carry 8 ounces for every hour of hiking.

I want my dog to help carry water, snacks and other supplies on the trail. Where do I start?

To select an appropriate dog pack measure your dog's girth around the rib cage. A dog pack should fit securely without hindering the dog's ability to walk normally.

Will my dog wear a pack?

Wearing a dog pack is no more obtrusive than wearing a collar, although some dogs will take to a pack easier than others. Introduce the pack by draping a towel over your dog's back in the house and then having your dog wear an empty pack on short walks. Progressively add some crumpled newspaper and then bits of clothing. Fill the pack with treats and reward your dog from the stash. Soon your dog will associate the dog pack with an outdoor adventure and will eagerly look forward to wearing it.

How much weight can I put into a dog pack?

Many dog packs are sold by weight recommendations. A healthy, well-conditioned dog can comfortably carry 25% to 33% of its body weight. Breeds prone to back problems or hip dysplasia should not wear dog packs. Consult your veterinarian before stuffing the pouches with gear.

How does a dog wear a pack?

The pack, typically with cargo pouches on either side, should ride as close to the shoulders as possible without limiting movement. The straps that hold the dog pack in place should be situated where they will not cause chafing.

What are good things to put in a dog pack?

Low density items such as food and poop bags are good choices. Ice cold bottles of water can cool your dog down on hot days. Don't put anything in a dog pack that can break. Dogs will bang the pack on rocks and trees as they wiggle through tight spots in the trail. Dogs also like to lie down in creeks and other wet spots so seal items in plastic bags. A good use for dog packs when on day hikes around Long Island is trail maintenance - your dog can pack out trash left by inconsiderate visitors before you.

Are dog booties a good idea?

Although not typically necessary, dog booties can be an asset, especially for the occasional canine hiker whose paw pads have not become toughened. Even trails that are soft under paw can have places with broken glass or roots. Hiking boots for dogs are designed to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces.

What should a doggie first aid kit include?

Even when taking short hikes it is a good idea to have some basics available for emergencies:

- 4" square gauze pads
- cling type bandaging tapes
- topical wound disinfectant cream
- tweezers
- insect repellent - no reason to leave your dog unprotected against mosquitoes and biting flies
- veterinarian's phone number

9 Ways To Practice Low Impact Hiking With Your Dog

Every time you hike with your dog on the trail you are an ambassador for all dog owners. Some people you meet won't believe in your right to take a dog on the trail. Canine hikers have all had the experience of returning to a familiar trail and encountering a brand new NO DOGS ALLOWED sign at the trailhead. When you hike with your dog, be friendly to all and make the best impression you can by practicing low impact hiking with your dog:

1 - Pack out everything you pack in. Your dog can help with this. Train your dog to wear a dog pack that can serve two purposes - helping you with the burden of food and drink and also to haul away trash you find or create on your hike.

2 - Do not leave dog scat on the trail; if you haven't brought plastic bags for poop removal bury it away from the trail and topical water sources.

3 - Hike only where dogs are allowed.

4 - Stay on the trail. Do not allow your dog to trample plants by running through the woods.

5 - Do not allow your dog to chase wildlife. This is as much for your dog's safety as for the wild animals. Small mammals may be sick with rabies and a frightened deer can kill your dog with one swift kick. You don't want to think about dealing with a dog after an encounter with a skunk or porcupine.

6 - Step off the trail and wait with your dog while horses and other hikers pass. Non-dog owning trail users will appreciate this simple act of courtesy.

7 - Control your dog when approaching other dogs and people. You know your dog is friendly but others don't.

8 - Do not allow your dog to bark - people are enjoying the trail for serenity.

9 - Have as much fun on your hike as your dog does.

Let's Talk Ticks

TALL TICK TALE #1 - Removing Ticks From Your Dog (or yourself)

How many times have you heard that the proper method - the ONLY safe way to remove ticks - is with tweezers. Smearing vaseline on the tick first is even better. This is supposed to guarantee the tick's head will not stay embedded in your dog. Well, how many times do you have vaseline and tweezers at the ready when you find a tick on your dog? The ONLY safe way to deal with a tick is to get it off as quickly as possible. A tick (and we're talking deer ticks, not the much more common dog tick) cannot infect your dog with Lyme Disease until it is embedded for some time (usually more than 24 hours). So don't be shy about removing a tick with your fingers. Get in there and get it out.

TALL TICK TALE #2 - Leave As Little Of Your Skin Exposed As Possible To Keep Ticks Off You

It didn't take many trips into the woods to realize that wearing long sleeves and tucking long pants into socks to stave off ticks was just plain ridiculous. All you do when you load up on clothes in the summer - besides sweat - is give your tiny enemy a lifetime's worth of hiding places. When a tick hitches a ride on you or your dog it doesn't settle in for a meal immediately. It checks out the new digs by wandering around for awhile. Are you more likely to detect a tick crawling on your bare leg or sneaking up your shirt sleeve? So you don't need to dress like a beekeeper outdoors to detect ticks - just check your skin and your dog regularly as you walk. Catching a tick at this time is the easiest way to combat it.

TALL TICK TALE #3 - The Best Way To Avoid Ticks In The First Place Is To Stay Away From Trees

What is it with irrational fears we harbor about our hair? Bats don't fly into our hair and ticks don't lurk on tree limbs eyeing the tops of our heads like tycoons checking out oceanfront property. Leave your tick-fighting hat at home. Ticks spend most of their time clinging to wispy blades of long grass waiting for a warm-blooded passerby to hitch a ride. The best place way to avoid ticks is to keep your dog and yourself out in the middle of a trail as much as possible. If you want to be outdoors, you aren't going to avoid all ticks. But if you deal with them a little more realistically, you don't need to avoid the outdoors, either.

Your Dog And Bears

It is getting goofy out there - coyotes are living in New York's Central Park and bears are showing up in people's back yards. Are you likely to see a bear while out hiking with your dog? No, it's not likely. It is, in fact, quite a thrill if you are fortunate enough to spot a black bear on the trail - from a distance.

Black bear attacks are incredibly rare. In the year 2000 a hiker was killed by a black bear in Great Smokey National Park and it was the first deadly bear attack in the 66-year of America's most popular national park. It was the first EVER in the southeastern United States. In all of North America only 43 black bear mauling deaths have ever been recorded (through 1999).

Most problems with black bears occur near a campground (like the above incident) where bears have learned to forage for unprotected food. On the trail bears will typically see you and leave the area. What should you do if you encounter a black bear (this does not apply to the larger, meaner, more unpredictable grizzly bear although common sense is the rule there as well)? Experts agree on three important things:

- 1) Never run. A bear will outrun you, outclimb you, outswim you. Don't look like prey.
- 2) Never get between a female bear and a cub who may be nearby feeding.
- 3) Leave a bear an escape route.

If the bear is at least 15 feet away and notices you make sure you keep your dog close and calm. If a bear stands on its hind legs or comes closer it may just be trying to get a better view or smell to evaluate the situation. Wave your arms and make noise to scare the bear away. Most bears will quickly leave the area.

If you encounter a black bear at close range, stand upright and make yourself appear as large a foe as possible. Avoid direct eye contact and speak in a calm, assertive and assuring voice back as you back up slowly and out of danger.

Your Dog And Snakes

At the movies we've seen the problems snakes can cause on a plane. But what about for your dog on the trail? Especially if Samuel L. Jackson isn't around to take care of the problem.

Rattlesnakes are found in every state in America, not just the rocky desert. Timber rattlers predominate in the east and the vipers in the Midwest are most likely to be the Prairie Rattlesnake, found at elevations under 5000 feet. It is not a particularly aggressive animal (if you have seen the movie *SNAKES ON A PLANE*, the cinematic snakes were given chemicals to make them nasty to humans) but you should treat any rattlesnake with respect and keep your distance.

A rattler's colors may vary but they are recognized by the namesake rattle on the tail and a diamond-shaped head. Unless cornered or teased by humans - or dogs, a rattlesnake will crawl away and avoid striking. Avoid placing your hand in rocky areas and crevasses and hiking in areas where the ground cover (weed or grass) prevents you from seeing the ground. These are all places where snakes are likely to hang out.

If you hear a nearby rattle, stop immediately and hold your dog back. Identify where the snake is and slowly back away. If you or your dog is bitten, do not panic but get to a hospital or veterinarian with as little physical movement as possible. In many cases the rattlesnake might give "dry bites" where no poison is injected (got to save that for a meal), but you should always check with a doctor or veterinarian after a bite even if you feel fine.

An anecdote that demonstrates that you can find rattlesnakes just about anywhere but a bad encounter doesn't mean you or your dog is a goner. In Palisades State Park in New Jersey (within sight of New York City) a dog happened upon a rattlesnake and tried playing with it - as dogs are wont to do - before his owner could reach him. The dog was bitten and in panic ran off. It took an hour to find the scared dog and begin the trip to the veterinarian. Due to the long delay, the dog was forced to lose a leg but was otherwise fine.

Keep in mind that snakes fill an important function in the ecosystem; without them we would drown in mice and other rodents, so there is no reason to harm them. If you anticipate hiking extensively in remote areas there are professional snake-avoidance trainers who can "snake-break" your dog - train her to stay away from rattlesnakes.

Your Dog And Porcupines

What would you reckon is the most dangerous wild animal that is waiting for your dog on the trail? Bears? Wolves? Snakes? How about porcupines?

The docile porcupine is slow-moving and easy to catch. Wouldn't you be too if you were covered with a coat of sharp quills? The porcupine is actually a rodent, the world's fourth largest. It is a good climber and is found in forest across temperate climates throughout America and Canada but can also be found in desert scrubland.

A balled-up porcupine is a magnet for a curious dog. And a disaster in the waiting if he catches one. If your dog gets quilled try to pull out the sharp quills with whatever tool is available (if you are near home or car, a pair of pliers is your best bet). If you cannot extricate the quill, do not cut it. When cut, the barbed portion of the quill imbedded under the skin is likely to swell, making complete removal extremely difficult.

If you cannot get the quill out, seek professional help as quickly as possible. Try and prevent your dog from rubbing the affected area as this will push the quills in deeper. Easier said than done. The veterinarian will probably anesthetize your dog to accomplish the task and treat the wound with antibiotics. If you do a lot of hiking in porcupine territory and are worried about your dog's chasing a porcupine you can carry mild tranquilizer tablets.

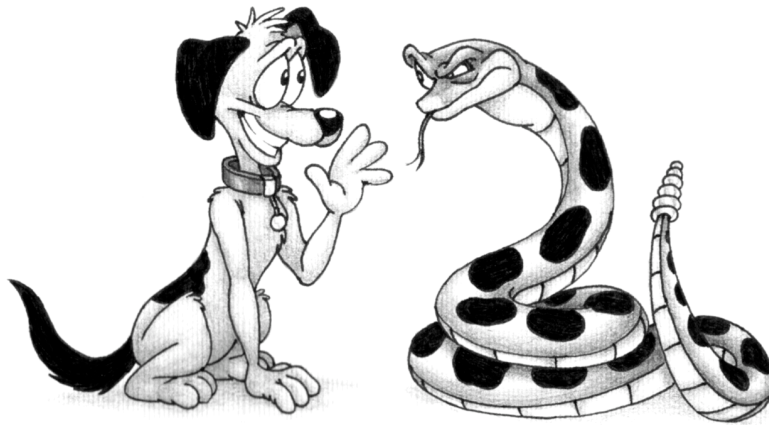
Like any trail hazard the best solution is prevention - keep your dog in sight and under control.

Your Dog And Alligators

The recovery of the American Alligator is one of conservation's great success stories. The gator is not only no longer endangered but the sale of alligator meat is now being planned. If you plan to hike with your dog near the coasts anywhere from North Carolina to Texas, alligators are a definite trail hazard you need to account for.

Alligators are found in marshes, swamps, rivers and lakes as well as neighborhood drainage ditches and canals. Use common sense and do not allow your dog in waters where alligators may be lurking. Don't walk your dog close to water if you can avoid it.

But the danger is only in the water. If you see an alligator on land, just walk your dog away from the alligator - alligators do not run down prey on land. They may run on land to escape danger or protect a nest but will not come after you if it has an escape route to the water. Make sure you give him one.



Your Dog And Skunks

Your dog won't meet many skunks on the trail since they are active by night and reclusive by day. Your dog is more likely to encounter a skunk in your own back yard or near a garbage pile in a campground. What should you do if your dog comes out the loser in a scrape with this weasel?

First of all, time is not on your side. Do your best to keep the spray wet before you actually deal with it. If you wake up in the morning and your dog has been skunked during the night and the spray is no dry you will have a dickens of a time ridding your dog of the odor. Every time he gets wet for the next two years you may still detect a whiff of that night with the skunk.

The story you may have heard is to attack the stench with tomato juice. That may mask the smell for an hour but otherwise it won't do anything beyond turning your dog red. To best neutralize a skunk's spray try the following mixture:

- * 1 quart (or liter) of 3% Hydrogen Peroxide, H₂O₂.
- * 1 / 4 cup (50 ml.) of Baking Soda
- * 1 teaspoon (5 ml.) of Liquid Soap

The Hydrogen Peroxide and baking soda combine to neutralize the smell; the soap breaks up the oils in the skunk spray, allowing the other ingredients to do their work. Wash your dog in the solution and let it sit about ten minutes before rinsing. You still may detect a wisp of skunk but it will be better.

Unfortunately you cannot pre-mix this solution and store it in anticipation of a skunk problem - if kept bottled up it will explode. Also, if your Hydrogen Peroxide has been sitting on the shelf for awhile it may have already turned to water so you may have to run out and get a fresh bottle.

Skunks can be particularly nasty varmint. If you do run into a skunk on the trail during the day or see one that is aggressive it could well be rabid. The occurrence of rabid skunks appears highest from February to May, when they breed and give birth to their young.

Your Dog's Feet In Winter

The ground doesn't need to be covered with snow for you to pay extra attention to your dog's feet on a winter hike. Dogs can get frostbite on unprotected feet in very cold weather - frostbite can also affect ears and tails. And when it is cold and wet and out always take a moment to dry and clean your dog's paws to help avoid tiny cuts and cracked footpads. The rock salt that is used to melt ice on paved surfaces may also irritate footpads which is another reason to keep your dog's paws clean.

Most dogs love to romp in the snow. Before the drifts pile up clip the hair around your dog's paw pads to ease snow removal and help prevent ice balls from forming. You don't want to use powerful hot-air dryers to melt those little ice balls because you can burn your dog's skin. And one last things - like people, dogs seem to be more susceptible to illnesses in the winter so if you notice any suspicious symptoms with your dog put that big cold-weather hike off for a day or two.

You are out on a hike with tough hiking boots and after a long day on a rocky trail your feet are screaming at you. Did you ever wonder how your bare-footed dog manages out there?

A dog's foot pads are composed of several layers of keratin, a harder form of skin cells. You can actually build up the toughness of your dog's pads. If you have a big trip or hike planned you can treat your dog's pads in the weeks before with a product called Pad-Tough. It is a botanical product with aloe and comfrey. It comes in a spray form and simply coat your dog's paw pads liberally before any rigorous activity. A four-ounce bottle cost s between \$10 and \$15.

Hiking With Your Dog In The Mountains

Some of your most rewarding hikes with your dog will be in the mountains. Oft times you can reach a memorable destination with an elevation gain of less than 1,000 feet. Other times you will be on the trail for hours as you ascend more than 3,000 feet (about the equivalent of climbing the Empire State Building three times). Either way, it is best to plan ahead for your hike with your dog in the hills.

1 - Learn to pace yourself. Don't let your eager dog set the pace in the early going. There is a truism in hiking that you get tired going up the mountain but you get hurt going down. In other words, don't go so fast going up that you will be exhausted and don't go so fast coming down that you will fall. The descent is also hard on your knees and a walking stick can relieve the pressure on your legs on the mountain slopes.



2 - Pay attention to the effects of altitude. Regardless of your physical condition, it is common to begin feeling the effects of low air pressure at altitude at about 10,000 feet; even lower for some canine hikers. As you take in less and less oxygen you can begin to feel nausea, dizziness, headaches or heart palpitations. Never go higher should you encounter any of these symptoms. Take a rest and if the symptoms disappear, continue on. If they persist for more than a few minutes, turn back. You are most at risk for altitude sickness if you climb too quickly.

3 - Rest often. A mountain climb is not a race and not a place for pride. Rest often - for both you and your dog. And resting is not just an option on the way up.

4 - Drink plenty of water - before and during your climb. Always have plenty of drinking water on hand for you and your dog. Climbing burns a lot of calories and you will work up quite a sweat, even as the temperature drops. Proper hydration also lessens your chances of suffering altitude sickness.

5 - Be careful of mountain streams. The water in rushing mountain streams is often ice cold and after a quick swim your dog is likely to emerge into cold air. Pack a towel for your dog on mountain hikes to keep him dry.

6 - Protect yourself from the sun. Above the tree line the rays of the sun intensify on a mountaintop. Take along the sunscreen even if the temperatures are bone-chilling. Sunglasses will not only help with the bright sunshine but also with snow blindness.

7 - And a quick word about hiking in canyons. For canine hikers, remember that canyons are simply mountain climbs in reverse. The big difference obviously is that you finish with the climb, when you may already be tired from the hike to the canyon floor.

Hiking With Your Dog In Summer

Summer's the season to be outdoors. But for dogs the warm weather isn't necessarily the best time for a hike. Keep these 9 tips in mind when you make that summer hike with your dog:

1 - Coats matter. Long-haired breeds will overheat quicker and dark-coated dogs will absorb the sun's heat. Short-haired dogs and light-colored breeds can get sunburn.

2 - Beware of insect bites. If your dog is bitten or stung, remove the stinger and watch the site for an allergic reaction. If this occurs or there have been multiple wasp, bee or mosquito bites, take the animal to the vet.

3 - Pay attention to your dog as you hike along. Dogs don't sweat; their only way to reduce body heat is by panting. While normal panting on a hot day is to be expected for just this reason if your dog begins to labor or his tongue gets abnormally pink - cut your hike short.

4 - Check your dog after your hike for fleas and ticks.

5 - If you hike with your dog near residential property be aware that most lawn and garden products may be hazardous.

6 - The Great Outdoors exposes dogs to the elements. Dogs may need extra brushing and bathing to keep their coats clean and healthy.

7 - Tailor your summer canine hikes to the heat. Try to avoid strenuous exercise with your dog on extremely hot days and refrain from physical activity when the sun's heat is most intense.

8 - Always, always make sure your dog has access to fresh water. Always.

9 - Of course, never leave your dog unattended in direct sunlight or in a closed vehicle. Heatstroke can occur and lead to brain damage or death. Signs of heatstroke are excessive panting, drooling, rapid pulse and fever. Immediately immerse the dog in cool water and seek emergency veterinary assistance. If you absolutely must leave your dog in the car, park in the shade, make sure the windows are slightly ajar so he can get air, and leave some fresh water.

Is Your Dog Overheating?

You may have noticed your dog panting a lot this summer. But just because it is hot and your dog is panting doesn't mean he is in trouble on the trail. Aside from a few, mostly useless, sweat glands on her feet your dog doesn't have any sweat glands and must rely exclusively on panting to breathe off excess heat. This is obviously not very efficient and makes your dog more susceptible to heatstroke much quicker than we are in hot summer weather.

Heatstroke is nearly always preventable - it's biggest enemy is common sense. Don't plan long, tough hikes in the heat of the day. Leave the big hikes with your older dog for cooler weather. If you are hiking with your dog this summer, don't leave the trail-head without an inexhaustible supply of drinking water. On the trail with your dog - in any weather, but especially in the summer - if he drops behind you, stop and take a break. If you have a short-nosed breed like a Boxer or a double-coated breed like a German Shepherd, heat will be even more of a factor on a hike.

It can be difficult to differentiate between normal heavy panting and the rapid panting that is a sign of heatstroke. If his eyes become glassy or the gums turn bright red, take action immediately. Cool down your dog as fast as possible. Use cool water - icy water can cause too drastic a body temperature change - applied directly or with soaked towels to the head, neck, chest and abdomen. Take your time and sit in the shade awhile - don't rush your dog back on the trail.

Most times heatstroke is an isolated incident and your recovered dog will not have any lasting problems. You may want to take her to the vet for a check-up just to be on the safe side, however.

Taking Your Dog To The Beach

There are few places your dog is happier than at a beach. Swimming, running, hiking, fetching, digging - yes, indeed a beach has it all for a dog. But there are some things you need to keep in mind to make sure your dog returns from his first visit to the beach safe and sound.

1- The majority of dogs can swim and love it, but dogs entering the water for the first time should be tested; never throw your dog into the water. Start in shallow water and call your dog's name - or try to coax him in with a treat or toy. Always keep your dog within reach.

2- Another way to introduce your dog to the water is with a dog that already swims and is friendly with your dog. Let your dog follow his friend.

3- If your dog begins to doggie paddle with his front legs only, lift his hind legs and help him float. He should quickly catch on and will keep his back end up.

4- Swimming is a great form of exercise, but don't let your dog overdo it. He will be using new muscles and may tire quickly.

5- Be careful of strong tides that are hazardous for even the best canine swimmers.

6- Cool ocean water is tempting to your dog. Do not allow him to drink too much sea water. Salt in the water will make her sick. Salt and other minerals found in the ocean can damage your dog's coat so regular bathing at the shore is important.

7- Check with a lifeguard for daily water conditions - dogs are easy targets for jellyfish and sea lice.

8- Dogs can get sunburned, especially short-haired dogs and ones with pink skin and white hair.

9- Limit your dog's exposure when the sun is strong and apply sunblock to his ears and nose 30 minutes before heading for the sand.

10- If your dog is out of shape, don't encourage him to run on the sand. Running on the beach is strenuous exercise and a dog that is out of shape can easily pull a tendon or ligament.

That's about it - so grab a leash and hit the beach!

Help! My Dog Can't Swim

Most dogs are good swimmers - but not all. Dogs can get in trouble if they fall into a lake or a river or a backyard swimming pool. Water is always a potential hazard that should be respected. Even strong swimmers should wear a life jacket in a boat or canoe.

If you find yourself facing an emergency with a dog floating unconscious in the water, pull him out and suspend him in the air by his rear legs. Gently swing him back and forth to drain the water from his lungs. If he is too heavy, rest the front legs on the ground like a wheelbarrow as you swing him. This, incidentally, is similar to the procedure to perform the Heimlich maneuver on a choking dog without the added step of wrapping your arms around your dog's belly and thrusting forcefully.

After swinging your dog by the legs, lay him on his side with his head slightly lower than the rest of his body. This will allow any additional water to drain from his lungs. Hopefully this will be enough to revive your dog - if not, get him to a vet as soon as possible.



Can I Lose My Dog In Quicksand

Going for a hike with your dog in the desert has its special challenges, but is quicksand one of them? The image is in all our heads from so many old Westerns. The bad guy takes a misstep in the desert and falls into a puddle of quivering quicksand. Just out of the reach of the nearby tree, the struggling outlaw is sucked slowly but surely to his doom in the merciless quagmire.

Could it happen to you - or your dog?

Quicksand is not really any special kind of sand, it is actually a condition that is happening to a patch of sand. Beneath the surface is a constant flow of water, typically an underground spring, that agitates the grains of sand, weakening them and lifting the grains apart. Each grain of sand is surrounded by a thin film of water and as the grains lose friction with each other, the solid mass breaks asunder. The water is not strong enough, however, to completely disperse the sand and the resultant soupy pool therefore can look like solid ground. Although the condition is most familiar in sand, any soil can become "quick."

Quicksand is found most anywhere water and sand mix every day. Good places to find quicksand are on ocean coasts, near sandy creek beds and area of sand over an impervious clay substructure. Another good place to find quicksand is in hilly country with abundant caves and underground springs lurking beneath. The desert country of the southwest is such a place and, since there is often no apparent source of water nearby, the unexpected quicksand was a natural to catch the devious fancy of a Hollywood screenwriter.

OK, that's what it is and where I'll find it but can it make my dog disappear?

No. Unlike the bottomless pits of doom depicted in the movies, most patches of quicksand are only a few inches to several feet deep. And quicksand does not pull its victim down to lethal depths like a deranged Hoover. It is, however, possible to perish in quicksand but, just like drowning in vegetable soup, you really have to work at it.

Should you stumble into quicksand you will sink just as you sink in water. If the quicksand is shallow, you can retrace your steps and extricate yourself from the sandy tentacles. But if the quicksand is deeper there is still little to worry about. Since the water is slightly more dense than the human body it is possible to float in quicksand just as you would in a swimming pool. Your dog will no doubt adjust immediately to auto-swim in a pool of quicksand.

In fact, since quicksand is saturated with liquid it is far heavier than water and will allow you to float even higher, provided you move slowly and allow the sandy potion to flow under your body. As it is, do not thrash about as you position yourself into a floating posture. If you are traveling with a hiking stick, and it doesn't reach the bottom of the quicksand, you should lay the pole on the quicksand and pull your body over it until it rests beneath your back. Use the pole for leverage to eventually raise your leg out of the quicksand as you reach friendly turf. You may even be able to swim to firmer ground by dog-paddling as if you fell into a mountain lake.

Just don't let your dog see you.



How to Follow A Trail

The more you take your dog hiking, the more you are exposed to the different ways parks mark their trails. The best parks will provide you with a mapboard to study, a trail map to take along, brief trail descriptions - including distances - of what to expect, well-marked trails, and junction signs.

Most parks won't give you all that - you'll get some items from the menu or maybe none at all. The more you hike with your dog the more you will find yourself making a wrong turn somewhere. Even when you are really paying attention it is surprisingly easy to miss a turn out in the woods. Unless you are looking for a true wilderness experience with compass and wayfinding aides you are not going to want to go into the woods unless you have a trail map. A trail map, even if it is a bit sketchy, will keep you from getting lost if you find the trails not enthusiastically marked.

Once on the trail you will be following colored blazes painted on trees. The very best trails will be blazed often enough that you will see the next blaze immediately after passing the previous one. This is seldom the case, however. Trees with blazes fall over, paint fades from trails that are not maintained or blazes are just applied sparingly. This is why it is important to start with a map - to reinforce your confidence on poorly marked trails.

Big parks can have an elaborate trail system with many colored trails - the most I have ever seen is 23 trails all blazed in different solid or multi colors. The same path may be used by several trails so pay attention. On many long-distance, multi-day trails (the Appalachian Trail, for instance) the main trail is marked in white and EVERY side trail is blazed in blue.

Some parks don't blaze their trails at all - they rely on signposts at trail junctions to guide you here and there. Again, a map is a must at these parks since you don't want to come to a junction where a signpost has disappeared or been stolen by vandals. Incidentally, trail junctions at parks that don't use signs are indicated by two blazes one on top of the other. The higher of the two blazes is offset in the direction you want to go, ie., if the upper blaze is a bit further left than the bottom, turn left. On the best-marked trails you will also sometimes find three blazes in the shape of a triangle - that marks the end of a trail. Congratulations - you made it back, and hopefully you didn't have to rely on your dog's nose.

Make Your Own Map

One of the most frustrating hiking experiences is arriving at a park and not finding any trail maps at the trailhead. Even if the trail is blazed and you are up for a little exploring how do you know how far it goes? Some park trails are merely segments for multi-day, long distance trails.

The State of Connecticut, for instance, has embraced the Internet age and encourages the printing of maps off the website rather than supply printed maps in the parks. Which is fine if you know that in advance or are carrying an I-Phone.

If a park doesn't provide trail maps, a map is often posted on information boards. For this reason you want to always keep a pad of paper, or even a trail notebook, in your vehicle so you can sketch out a copy of the map to take with you. It's a simple thing but can make or break your canine hiking day.



The Perfect Dog Bath

Most pet owners do not think twice about spending big dollars to buy their dog premium dog food, the best health care or even blissful days at a doggie day care facility. Most pet owners also don't think twice when it's time to give Bowser a bath. Grab the Head and Shoulders and fire up the backyard garden hose.

But a proper dog bath is key to maintaining your pet's vigorous good health. The skin is the body's largest organ and a perfect dog bath is key to stimulating blood circulation and keeping the skin healthy. Improper bathing can cause a matted condition in the coat which is uncomfortable to your dog. The first step in the perfect dog bath is a good brushing.

For short-haired dogs brush in a circular motion with a curry comb made of rubber with teeth cut into the edges. It will pull the dead coat out. Slicker brushes will take out the dead undercoat. Start on the legs and hold the outer hair so that you can brush from the skin outward. If it is not removed, the coat will easily mat. Use this technique all over the dog - legs, body and tail. Dogs resent the tail being brushed so save it for last. For fine-haired dogs use a natural bristle brush. Moisten the area to be worked with a good coat conditioner.

For long-haired dogs use a pin brush if the coat is not tangled, a slicker brush if the coat is tangled. Start at the legs, again brushing from the skin out and brushing only a few hairs at a time. The secret to thorough brushing is to brush only a few hairs at a time. Check each area with a comb; if the comb goes through without stress continue all the way up to the middle of the dog's back. Go to the loin area and to the back legs; then move to each side of the back of the dog.

You are now ready to wash. Never use human shampoos to wash your dog. Dog shampoos are specially formulated to match the pH level of a dog's skin. Human shampoos can strip a dog's coat of essential oils.

The right way to bathe a dog is determined by the texture and length of the coat. Short-haired dogs are washed with a vigorous circular motion which will pull out the dirt. On dogs with a medium-length coat, use a back-and-forth motion. As the hair gets longer, go only in the direction the hair grows.

Step 1. Rinse the dog completely.

Step 2. Apply the shampoo along the back, working up as much lather as possible; do the same with the belly, legs and tail.

Step 3. Rinse the coat with one hand to run water on the dog and the other hand in a kneading fashion to work the soap out. Make certain all the soap is out as dried soap will dull a coat and cause skin problems.

Step 4. Before towel-drying, squeeze as much water out of the coat as possible by pulling the hair straight out and squeezing at the same time.

Step 5. Use a washcloth to clean the dog's face and avoid getting water in his ears. Moisture inside the ears provides the conditions for fungus infections.

Step 6. Towel dry your dog and use a hand-held hair dryer on thick-coated dogs but never use a human hair dryer as they run too hot and can burn the dog and damage the coat.

Voila! A clean, healthy dog - until the next hike.

BONUS: Where Can I Hike With My Dog?

While most hikers head first for America's National Parks, as a general rule, dogs in national parks are welcome only "anywhere a car can go." This means your dog can hike only along roadways and walk around parking lots. In most national parks dogs can also go in picnic areas and stay in campgrounds. If you are hiking in Canadian national parks, bring your dog along - there are few prohibitions against dogs there. You will find National Monuments are a mixed bag for active dog owners. Some, like Dinosaur National Monument or White Sands National Monument, allow dogs on most trails while others, Devil's Tower or Cedar Breaks for instance, ban canine hikers from all trails. National Forests, under the stewardship of the Department of Agriculture and not the Department of the Interior like national parks, offer the meatiest hiking opportunities for dog owners. Dogs are permitted on most national forest trails, although access can sometimes be remote. Many times national forest lands surround national parks so you can get your dog on a trail after being cooped up there. National Grasslands are cousins of national forests and you can expect to have your dog accompany you on your hike. Hiking opportunities are limited, however, as there typically aren't many trails in a national grassland. National Recreation Areas, as the name implies, are managed to maximize public use - for humans and dogs. Many trails in national recreation areas are open to off-road vehicles, mountains bikes, and horses. These types of trails will invariably be open to dogs as well. You can expect to find good canine hikes in almost any national recreation area. Dogs are seldom allowed on trails at National Seashores but happily most (the southeastern national seashores are an exception) allow dogs on the beach year-round. National Lakeshores are good bets for canine hikers as dogs are allowed on many trails in these parks along the Great Lakes. National Historical Parks are hidden gems for canine hikers. There are few bans on dogs in national historical parks. In addition to learning a thing or two about American history, these parks often feature interesting hiking: the rolling hills of eastern Pennsylvania in Valley Forge Historical Park, the mountains of Harpers Ferry Historical Park, the wild Potomac River of the Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park to name a few. State Parks are always a good bet for canine hikes; California being the most critical exception. Dogs are not allowed on trails in California state parks. With spectacular state parks like Ricketts Glen in Pennsylvania, Hocking Hills in Ohio and Custer in South Dakota, your dog can vacation happily without the national parks. So grab that leash and hit the trail! And have as much fun as your dog.

Wherever you travel chances are good that you will find yourself with your dog on land owned by the federal government at some point. Every state in the Union has at least one national park or forest or shoreline or wildlife refuge beckoning summer ad-

venturers. With that mind here is a quick primer on what to expect when taking your dog to our national lands.

National Parks

As a general rule, dogs in national parks are welcome to go "anywhere a car can go." This means your dog can hike along roadways and walk around parking lots. In most parks dogs can also go in picnic areas and stay in campgrounds. Occasionally dogs will be permitted on short trails around a Visitor Center or a campground. Two of the best national parks to hike with your dog are Acadia National Park in Maine and Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. If you are traveling in Canada this summer, you will find most of their national parks extremely dog-friendly.

National Monuments

These parks are a notch below national parks in terms of prestige and are a mixed bag for active dog owners. Some, like Dinosaur National Monument or White Sands National Monument, allow dogs on most trails while others, Devil's Tower or Cedar Breaks for instance, ban canine hikers from all trails.

National Forests

National forests, under the stewardship of the Department of Agriculture and not the Department of the Interior like national parks, offer the meatiest hiking opportunities for dog owners. Dogs are permitted on most national forest trails, although access can sometimes be remote. Many times national forest lands surround national parks so you can get your dog on a trail after being cooped up when visiting there.

National Grasslands

These parks are cousins of national forests and you can expect to have your dog accompany you on your hike. Hiking opportunities are limited, however, as there typically aren't many trails in a national grassland.

National Recreation Areas

As the name implies, these lands are managed to maximize public use - for humans and dogs. Many trails in national recreation areas are open to off-road vehicles, mountains bikes, and horses. These types of trails will invariably be open to dogs as well. You can expect to find good canine hikes in almost any national recreation area. Do your research, however, as many national recreation areas are developed primarily for boating and fishing.

National Seashores and Lakeshores

Dogs are seldom allowed on trails at a national seashore but happily most (the southeastern national seashores are an exception) allow dogs on the beach year-round. National lakeshores are good bets for canine hikers as dogs are allowed on many trails in these parks along the Great Lakes.

National Wildlife Refuges

Although these lands are managed primarily for the protection of birds and animals, most have trail systems ideal for short day hikes. Expect your leashed dog to be welcome at most of the more than 500 national wildlife refuges in America.

National Historical Parks

These parks are hidden gems for canine hikers. There are few bans on dogs in national historical parks. In addition to learning a thing or two about American history, these parks often feature interesting hiking: the rolling hills of eastern Pennsylvania in Valley Forge Historical Park, the mountains of Harpers Ferry Historical Park, the wild Potomac River of the Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park to name but a few. National Battlegrounds are also good places to get out and explore with your dog.

National Trail Systems

The United States Congress has designated more than 900 trails as "National Trails." Such trails can be recognized as Historic Trails for their significance to our heritage, as National Recreation Trails or as National Scenic Trails. The most famous of the National Scenic Trails, that must be 100 miles long, are the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail that crosses the spine of the Pacific Cascade Mountains from Canada to Mexico. National trails often include local and even private land and while dogs are often welcome throughout, check before setting off on a multi-day adventure to make sure your dog can legally complete the trek.

Bureau of Land Management Lands

If you've ever spent hours driving "in the middle of nowhere" out West chance are much of the land around you was under the control of the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM is responsible for 262 million acres of land - the largest chunk of public land left in America. Most of the BLM lands are from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast and there are plenty of recreational opportunities for your dog - mostly under-publicized. If you want to explore BLM lands look for a book written, edited and illustrated by BLM staff - *Adventures on America's Public Lands*.

