

Take a Hike

Bust out your backpack. Become a trekker. Take a hike. There are all kinds of ways to get out there and enjoy a day on the trails. Backpacking, trekking, and hiking are three great outdoor activities, and while they may seem the same, there are subtle differences to each.

As far as outdoor adventurers are concerned, hiking and trekking are basically the same. The differences lie in the origin of the words. The term "hike" is derived from the Middle English word "hytchen" which became the English word "hitch". The word "trekking" is borrowed from the African term for ox-cart transport. Those taking part in a hiking adventure through the Himalayas could safely use the term "trekking" without literary repercussions.

Backpacking

The term "backpacking" is much less exotic. You'll use this term when you walk to a nearby place, over a day or two. Generally "backpacking" involves hauling some gear in a package on your back # a backpack. If you do want to walk on the wild side, but you're not quite ready for the Himalayas, backpacking through somewhere like the Grand Canyon can fit the bill.

When telling people you're about to take a hike, they will likely imagine you traversing miles of trail. Your audience will picture you traversing miles of trails, winding through forests, scaling mountains, and stopping only to admire the scenic vistas waiting you encounter along the way. It's no wonder that hundreds of hikers spend their vacations on trips like these. From leisurely self-guided winery tours, to rugged backcountry travels through pristine wilderness, outdoor itineraries are limited only by the traveler's imagination.

Itinerant hikers have tons of options available. You may have dreamed of standing at the foot of Mount Everest and reliving the moments when the first climbers reached its peak. Perhaps you'd like to witness sunrise over Africa from atop Mount Kilimanjaro. Those adventures are available to you. One of the most exciting aspects of planning and taking a hiking trip is that you can visit places that are otherwise remote and isolated from civilization.

Guided Hiking

Most guided hiking trips are basically the same, but the location and the level of strenuousness can vary. There is also a bit of variety in the styles of treks, all having affect on the difficulty or degree of adventure that your trip will hold.

A traditional hiking trip is often expedition-style, which means that it involves a crew including guides, porters, and cooks. This support team will prepare meals, set up or take down camp and even carry your hiking gear.

If you want fewer people along for the journey, consider taking a lodge-to-lodge hiking trip. Take this style of hike and you'll stay in alpine huts or rustic mountain lodges, with no cook or porter. A limited number of support staff may accompany you on your expedition, but the group will be substantially smaller than in the traditional style of hiking. Lodge-to-lodge hiking usually costs a bit less than fully catered alternatives, but they can be inconvenient. Many hikers would rather focus all their energy on completing the hike, rather than worrying about their next meal.

Hard-core adventurers also have a hiking style just for them. Mountain climbing treks and the exploratory hiking trips, while offered by only a few adventure travel companies, are trips on routes not previously offered by that company. These trips offer genuine adventure, since even the guides aren't sure what to expect around the next bend.

Hiking, trekking, or backpacking. Choose your term, then choose your adventure and get ready to experience the pure beauty of nature. When your friends ask where you've booked your next vacation, tell them you're just going to take a hike.