

In light of the easing of stay-at-home restrictions across the United States, the CDC is encouraging people to use parks, trails and open spaces safely while following current guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Walking and hiking provide opportunities for physical activity while also providing opportunities for a break, health and wellness.

After several months of either no events or virtual events, our local chapters are starting to host physical events. This is a welcome advent, as physical activity provide opportunities for a break, health and wellness.

American Pilgrims on the Camino expects all chapters to adhere to all applicable state and local guidance and laws when contemplating chapter events and hikes. Please also refer to CDC guidance concerning "[How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)".

Similar to the [Appalachian Trail Conservancy](#) and the [Pacific Crest Trail Association](#) recommendations, American Pilgrims encourages all chapters to use the following social distancing and wellness guidance to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to ensure the health and safety of participants:

- Pre-register all participants and limit the overall number. For example, Hike groupings should not exceed 10 people. Staggering start times, hiking opposite directions on loop hikes, offering shorter and longer hike options, or dividing groups into faster, moderate or slower pace walkers are ways and strategies to disperse hikers.
- Advise participants to avoid carpooling with others (except for members of your own household).
- Hike in lower-density population areas within reasonable driving distances.
- Require all participants to:
 - Stay home if sick or not feeling well.
 - Bring and wear cloth face coverings, like masks or buff/bandanas. Encourage hikers to use masks while walking and require their use when stopping or conversing with others when less than six feet apart.
 - The following Scientific American article provides useful instructions on how to use masks properly: [How to Use Masks during the Coronavirus](#)
 - For hikes, bring hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol especially for use in restroom facilities. Often restroom facilities without running water, such as portable toilets and vault toilets, are not stocked with hand hygiene products.
 - Bring your own water bottle and food. Don't share food, clothing or equipment.
- Hike leaders should inform participants of the adequacy and availability of restroom facilities. While hiking, leaders should also ensure everyone maintains appropriate distancing and etiquette.
- Avoid congregating. This includes parking areas and points of interest like overlooks and waterfalls. Don't linger if others want to appreciate it, too.
- Avoid shared facilities such as picnic tables, group campsites, cabins, toilets, bear boxes and fire-rings. If they are closed, please don't use them.

This guidance encompasses and applies for all chapter events involving physical contact.

Please keep in mind that the Health and safety of everyone is critically Important. Given the ability of the virus to spread rapidly, Chapter Coordinators should remain flexible and prudent regarding physical events and cancel them where conditions and circumstances deteriorate or worsen.

All questions should be directed via email to chapters@americanpilgrims.org.

As always, we wish you a Buen Camino!

Board of Directors - The American Pilgrims on the Camino

