

# Take a Hike! Bring leaf peeping to a whole nother level

RI offers a variety of hiking trails, each with its own style, terrain and level of difficulty. Some trails are ideal for fishing, while others are popular for bird watching or dog walking. Some showcase the area's wildflowers, while others are more accessible to children. The weather has to be pretty severe to keep me out of the woods on my day off, so you can find me wandering around many of these trails in the rain, shine or snow, but the cool air and the colorful landscape of fall make it my favorite time to be outside.

Hiking gear can be fun to shop for, but it can also be expensive. You don't need much. Basic supplies, appropriate clothing and decent footwear will do. I recently emptied out my traditional hiking backpack and moved all of my gear into a sling-style bag. The single strap makes it easier to slide on and off at rest stops. The prolonged weight on one shoulder would likely be a hindrance on a longer excursion, but for an afternoon jaunt, the sling has been ideal.

I always carry a long-sleeved t-shirt in my bag in case the temperature unexpectedly drops. I also bring water, food, a small first-aid kit, sunscreen and various fire starters. A handkerchief is useful to place items on when the ground is wet, and I never go anywhere without a pocketknife.

Appropriate footwear is key while hiking. Running shoes or heavy-duty sneakers have proven to be ideal for most of the marked trails in the area, which are pretty well groomed. If you venture from the beaten path into rugged terrain, you might need hiking boots.

Before tying on those boots and venturing off of a designated hiking trail, go over the lay of the land on a map or your GPS. Familiarize yourself with some landmarks before and during the hike, and orient yourself to them. Drop a pin on your GPS where you park your car in case you get lost. A body of water is a great marker if there is one nearby. Just be careful that you are oriented to the right body of water. I once got lost in the woods around Carr's Pond because I was standing by the nearby Tarbox Pond, thinking it was Carr's pond on my GPS. That's not the first or last time I've been lost in those woods.

If you ever find yourself lost and in a state of duress, stop where you are and take a minute to assess the situation. Try to not let panic send you in circles. Remember that you can hear the highway from many hiking places if you listen closely, and you always can follow the sound of traffic.

If you plan a longer excursion, I recommend buying a parachute hammock because they are sturdy, comfortable and easy to put up and pack away. Purchase straps separately to hang the hammock. Rope will do the trick, but the straps are ideal and not too expensive. And what better way to enjoy the fall than swinging from the trees?

If you're ready to venture into the woods this fall, find hiking spots at [alltrails.com](http://alltrails.com), and [dem.ri.gov](http://dem.ri.gov). Remember that you don't have to go it alone! RI has plenty of hiking clubs.

Hike It, Baby caters to toddlers and their grown-ups: [fb.com/groups/hikeitbabyprovidenceri](https://fb.com/groups/hikeitbabyprovidenceri)

The Rhode Island Hiking Club for beginning hikers to the more experienced:  
[meetup.com/rhodeislandhikingclub](https://www.meetup.com/rhodeislandhikingclub)

Providence Outdoor Adventures for all sorts of outdoor excursions: [meetup.com/providence-outdoor-adventures-ridj-it](https://www.meetup.com/providence-outdoor-adventures-ridj-it)