



How to Walk Outdoors Safely During COVID-19 FAQ

Is it safe to go outside?

Can we go for walks if we are sheltering in place?

Yes, it is safe to go outside and take walks as long as you follow CDC's social distancing guidance. Staying active and maintaining your physical and mental health is really important while you "shelter in place." Taking walks and enjoying outdoor spaces helps reduce stress and anxiety and cures cabin fever.

People have always gone to parks, other conservation lands and trails to find respite, seek solitude and restoration. We need these places now more than ever and they are getting unprecedented visitation.

Easy guidelines for safely taking walks during this crisis:

- **Stay home if you are sick** or feeling any COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, coughing and or trouble breathing.
- **Stay local** – take your walks in outdoor spaces that are close to home.
- **Only walk with people who live in your household.**
- **Maintain distance from others** in parking lots, at trailheads and scenic views and places where people tend to congregate. **Don't form groups** or gather with others on the trail.
- Avoid close contact, such as shaking hands, hugging or high-fives. **Practice social distancing to stay 6 feet from everyone** who does not live in your immediate household.
- **Keep visits short. Leave room for everyone to take walks** and spend time in outdoor areas without causing trails and parks to become too crowded for safety.
- If you arrive at a trail or outdoor area and crowds are forming because everyone has decided to go there, choose a different place or return at another time to visit.
- **If parking lots are full**, please do not park along roadsides or in other undesignated areas. **Please choose a different area to walk or return when parking is available.** Parking overflowing onto nearby streets creates tensions with neighbors who may seek to have the outdoor areas closed.
- Consider avoiding the most popular places to walk and use this opportunity to explore trails and areas that are not as well known. **See ExploreRI.org to find other nearby trails.**

It is important that everyone does their part to use these places in a way that respects each other and follows public health guidance.

Together we can ensure that everyone stays safe and healthy!

If spending time outdoors and taking walks is safe, why did Rhode Island close the State Parks?

During the first couple of weeks of shelter in place, crowds gathered at state parks and beaches and people were not practicing social distancing. This led RIDEM and the Governor to close state parks to access by cars as a precaution to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Beginning May 9, RIDEM began reopening parks while limiting parking to prevent crowds. State beaches will be the last areas to open. All parks are still accessible by bicycle and walking. RIDEM Wildlife Management Areas such as Acadia Management Area, George Washington Management Area and many others remain open for walking. Bicycle paths throughout the state area also open. Again, It is important that everyone does their part to use Wildlife Management Areas and bicycle paths in a way that respects each other and follows public health guidance or they too will be closed.