



Seattle
Parks & Recreation

Go for a Hike (in the City)

Healthy Environment Stories



Are you looking for a place to connect with nature or just relax but can't make a trip to the mountains? Try a trail right in the city! Seattle parks are home to some 96 miles of "soft" trails in forested, beach, bluff, and meadow areas where you can walk, hike, run, and in some cases ride trail bikes.

The U.S. Forest Service has recognized trails for their recreational value since the 1930s, and for their contributions to our health and well-being since the 1960s. The popularity of trails continues to increase. They provide access to environmentally sensitive areas while protecting those areas themselves by encouraging people to stay on their groomed surfaces.



At Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), Chukundi "Trails Guy" Salisbury has tended, created, and overseen our trails for the last 17 years.

Asked what he thinks are the main reasons people use and love their trails, Salisbury says without hesitation, "to get out into the forests and green spaces of the city, to walk or otherwise exercise, and because they're free and accessible – there are trails in parks in every corner of the city."

In 2011, Salisbury brought his brain child to life by creating the Youth Green Corps, a nine-month annual program that recruits youth between the ages of 18 and 24, trains them in trail construction and maintenance, and provides them with a stipend. Many of the youth are homeless, disengaged or from underserved communities, and the program provides them with direction, education, life skills, a love of the outdoors, and a path to a green career.

Salisbury, who prefers to walk and visit the less-crowded of Seattle's 485 parks, says some of his favorites are:

- **Seward Park.** The 2.4-mile loop trail that winds through the forest in this 277-acre park features great views of Lake Washington and Mt. Rainier.

- **Lincoln Park.** This West Seattle gem features a 5-mile loop trail that runs along both the bluff above and the beach below, and minor trails in the interior of the park.
- **Camp Long.** At Camp Long you can hike the trails in this natural West Seattle park and feel like you're a million miles outside the city.
- **Carkeek Park.** This spectacular park on Puget Sound in northwest Seattle features a series of trails that traverse the forest, the beach and Piper's Creek. You can pick up a map at the entrance.
- **Matthews Beach.** This northeast Seattle park is accessible from the Burke-Gilman Trail and features a lifeguarded beach in summer. There are several short trails in the park.
- **Lakeridge Park.** This park in southeast Seattle, home of Deadhorse Canyon, has trails that take you past Taylor Creek and through the forest.
- The serene **Frink Park**, in the Leschi neighborhood, features trails that take you to a ravine, past Frink Creek, and through the woods.
- **Golden Gardens Park.** While people think of Golden Gardens as a beach park, it has a 1.4-mile trail and recently restored wetlands.



Be sure to download the handy app for iPhones and iPads (<http://seattle-trails.appstor.io/>). Then check out one of these, or many other parks with trails, for a mini-vacation from the stress and bustle of the city.

Once you're inspired as to the benefits of exploring these urban trails, maybe you'll consider volunteering to help maintain them or advocating for equitable access to these great resources through the Seattle Trails Alliance (www.seattletrails.org).

Whether it is with a shovel or a pair of walking shoes, we hope to see you on the trail soon!

Learn more

www.seattle.gov/parks/volunteer/trails-program

The Health Benefits of Nature



In addition to providing clean air, clean water, shade, habitat and more, forests are important to human health. Numerous studies have recently documented the health benefits of our urban forests.

- Exposure to forests boosts our immune system.
- Spending time around trees and looking at trees reduces stress, lowers blood pressure and improves mood.
- Spending time in nature helps you focus.
- ADHD symptoms in children are reduced when exposed to forests.
- Patients recover from surgery faster and better when they have a "green" view.
- Exposure to nature reduces violence and creates more constructive conflict resolution.
- Social ties in neighborhoods are improved.

Access to nature also reduces crime, increases job satisfaction, and boosts the economy. Our urban forests are critical to healthy people and a healthy community.

Source: Kathleen L. Wolf, Ph.D., University of Washington College of the Environment; <http://www.naturewithin.info/>