



SAFETY for WOMEN - Out on the Trails

After many suggestions and ideas over the last couple of months, from the members at Hiking Michigan, we have put together a "suggestions sheet", on how women, can have a safe Hike or Bike ride in our local Parks and Pathways. This is not to say that all our Parks are unsafe for women to visit. But rather, these suggestions are ways for women to feel safer when they venture out to the trails alone or with a friend. Just extra security suggestions that should assist in squelching any possible aggressive behavior towards women, out in the Parks.

1. **HIKE OR BIKE WITH A PARTNER:** Use the buddy system when hitting the trails. Take a friend along if possible, or explore the trails with a group in advance.
2. **DON'T BE PREDICTABLE:** Do not Hike or Bike the same trails at the same times on a regular basis. This only sets the stage for those who are watching.
3. **FAMILIAR TRAILS:** Use trails that you are familiar with or have investigated with others. Having a good map will always assist you on a possible wrong turn. Some will say not to venture too far from your car or the parking/gathering place at a Trail-head.
4. **WALK WITH CONVICTION:** When Hiking, walk with a certain conviction of purpose and familiarity of the area. Weakness is sometimes spotted by an undetermined pace or actions.
5. **LEAVE A NOTICE WITH SOMEONE:** If you are Hiking or Biking a trail today, let someone know what trail, what times you are going and ending, and just where you will be Hiking or Biking.
6. **BE AWARE:** Check your surroundings. Be aware of what is in front of you and occasionally, what is behind you. Be aware of places that could be ambush locations or places that others can have privacy in their bad actions possibly towards you.
7. **HIKING STICKS:** A Hiking staff can not only be a helpful item for the walk, but can be an effective defense against someone with bad intentions.
8. **CELLPHONE:** Have 911 already punched into your cellphone, so in case of an emergency all it takes is to press, SEND. On the other hand, talking on your cellphone while out on the trails only takes away your ability to be aware of your surroundings.
9. **WHISTLE:** A "Shrill" style whistle is a great way to make a lot of noise that can be heard for great distances.
10. **PEPPER SPRAY:** pepper spray can be a great defense while either Hiking or Biking. Your Police supply store will have the legal types and the best defensive sprays.
11. **CAR KEYS:** If wandering in close proximity to your car, carrying your keys can save valuable time in an emergency. They can also act in self defense when held in a clenched fist, with a key sticking out between the fingers.
12. **BRING YOUR DOG ALONG:** A Dog can be a great deterrent for someone looking at YOU as being alone on the trail. Training that Dog in certain defensive actions, only helps this logic along.

OTHER ESSENTIALS: Dressing in a non-provative manner can be helpful in not drawing attention to yourself. It is unfortunate that any of these suggestions should have to be something that a women needs to be concerned with while heading out to take in the beauty and relaxation of our trails at the local Parks. BUT....it has been made very clear to us here at Hiking Michigan, that this IS a problem and concern for the vast majority of women who either go into the Parks or have wanted to get outdoors onto the trails and pathways.

A Self-Defense class can give many women the confidence to protect themselves while out on the trails. There are many other ways to be safer for a women out on the trails either Hiking or Biking. Please let us know what you think.



SAFETY for WOMEN - Out on the Trails

The suggestions from page one, are only that....suggestions on possible ways for women to make themselves safer out on the trails. They are unscientific ideas, and come from the experience of the many member here at Hiking Michigan.

There are also many women who do not feel their safety is in any jeopardy, while out in our Parks. There are plenty of males, who feel uncomfortable with either hiking alone, or in areas they have not explored in the past. So this safety issue has many faces and many ways to address them.

We hope that through some of the efforts from the members here at Hiking Michigan, we have given some ideas for all people who may feel unsafe about some places at our Parks. We hope that some of suggestions on how to feel better about venturing out to our Parks, will get more people outdoors.

While we have been collecting your ideas about safety and having open discussions on the subject, a number of specific scenarios came up in these talks. The main scenario was....what to do if a confrontations looks inevitable. We have laid out a scenario that is the worst possible case situation that could occur while out on the trails or out in one of our local Parks. Remember that the ideas expressed here are only suggestions from the experience of many different hikers and bikers in S.E. Michigan.

1. MAKE EYE CONTACT: If confronted out on the trails, it is always a good idea to make eye contact with the aggressive individual. Eyes lowered and shoulders folded downward, shows a very submissive behavior.

2. BODY LANGUAGE: Besides eye contact, how you hold yourself and your body will speak a lot to an aggressor on how hard or easy it will be to do you harm. Find your "MEAN FACE". Discover that look you can put on your face and in your body posture that says, "Don't even think about doing anything here".

3. SPEAKING: If you have to say anything if confronted on the trails, by an aggressive individual, your speech should be strong and definite.

4. DEFENSE: Besides having a legal Pepper spray on hand, remember one of the most vulnerable spots on a male is not between the legs, but rather, the Adams apple. A very slight hit to the throat, will take almost every male directly to the ground. There are many other self defense techniques that can be used, and if you feel better about being able to defend yourself, then a class in self defense will go a long way in providing you with the tools you may need in having a better outdoor experience and feeling safe and secure while doing so.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Everything you have read on these two pages are only suggestions and ideas from hikers and bikers, who have contributed their experience and knowledge about the Parks and trail system. This was not an official scientific study, nor do the ideas here reflect a finite solution for everyone.

Many people have no problems with traveling anywhere in our Parks, no matter how remote they may be. Others would just like to have some of the knowledge and tools available, for that possible rare scenario of being confronted by an aggressive individual while relaxing at a Park. Others feel strongly that there is a definite problem with women traveling out on the trails in our Parks. There are many opinions here and many schools of thought. But what we hope we have at least accomplished here, is to share every ones ideas and experiences in having the safest and most enjoyable experiences possible while visiting our Parks and trail systems.

Most importantly.....Do Not let your fear, stop you from the wonderful and beautiful experiences that await you in the outdoors. No matter what you enjoy doing in our Parks, get out there and do it. Get the tools you need to feel safe and secure and GO GET OUTDOORS. It's for EVERYONE!