A Great Way to Kick Off the New Year

The clock strikes twelve and the celebration of the New Year continues, “out with the old and in with the new.” Often times, that mind set includes our habits, in the way of New Year’s Resolutions. A great way to kick off a new year and a healthier, active lifestyle is with a First Day Hike in one of the many beautiful Virginia State Parks! This annual event has grown over the past few years, and many of the parks offer the family-friendly hikes as well as some other activities.

First Day Hikes offer individuals and families an opportunity to begin the New Year rejuvenating and connecting with the outdoors by taking a healthy hike at a state park. First Day Hikes offer a great way to get outside, exercise, enjoy nature and welcome the New Year with friends and family. Ruth Coleman, President of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD), expressed, “Think of it as the start of a new and healthy lifestyle, for the whole family. Whether you’re staying close to home or traveling, join us at one of America’s State Parks on New Year’s Day.” Phil McNelly, NASPD’s Executive Director, states, “Studies have proven that getting outdoors is one good way to relax and recharge the body, mind and spirit. We hope that hiking along a trail in a state park will become part of an individual’s or family’s regular exercise routine.” A First Day Hike may be a great way to get the kids outside and unplugged from video games and other electronic media and create a unique connection with nature that promotes physical and mental well-being and encourages creativity and stewardship of our shared resources.

Our state parks boast a variety of beautiful settings for year-round outdoor recreation, and each First Day Hike will offer an opportunity to explore the unique natural and cultural treasures close to home. Hikers can climb hills and mountain tops, walk along ponds and beaches, and traverse trails through forests and fields. Visitors can appreciate the quieter beauty of nature in the winter and enjoy views that may differ dramatically from those hidden by summer’s greenery. State park staff and volunteers will lead the hikes, which average one to two miles or longer depending on the state park. Find out more about the options nearest you by visiting the Virginia State Parks [website](http://www.virginiaoutdoors.com/): <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/>.

Spend the day in a state park: take a hike, eat a picnic lunch, visitor the nature center, and let the kids play on a playground for a bit before you pack up to leave. What better way is there to start the New Year?

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