

BLAZING NEW TRAILS

Summer is fading fast, but there's still time to enjoy the great outdoors. One of the best ways to do that is to go for a walk, or if you have more time and energy, a hike. September was Pennsylvania Trails Month. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, there are more than 11,000 miles of trails in the state. That means there is a trail near you.

If you don't know any good trails, or you're bored with your usual route, alltrails.com can help you find what you're looking for. The website, which is also available as a mobile app, has a free and a paid version.

You need to create an account to use the site. You can either make a new one or sign up using an existing Gmail, Apple or Facebook account. The free version gives you everything you need to find and review trails. The paid version offers more tools, including offline maps, alerts for wrong turns, more detailed maps, the ability to print maps and 3D maps.

After I created an account, the home page was populated with trails near me. Each suggestion features a photo, a ranking of difficulty (easy, moderate or difficult), the name of the trail, the length and how long it takes. Clicking on a suggestion brings you to more information on the hike. There's a description of the trail, a map, directions to the trail, photos posted by other users and reviews from people who have hiked the trail. There's also links to nearby trails. User reviews are subjective — there are often contradictory statements in different posts — but you can get a pretty accurate picture by listening to the majority.

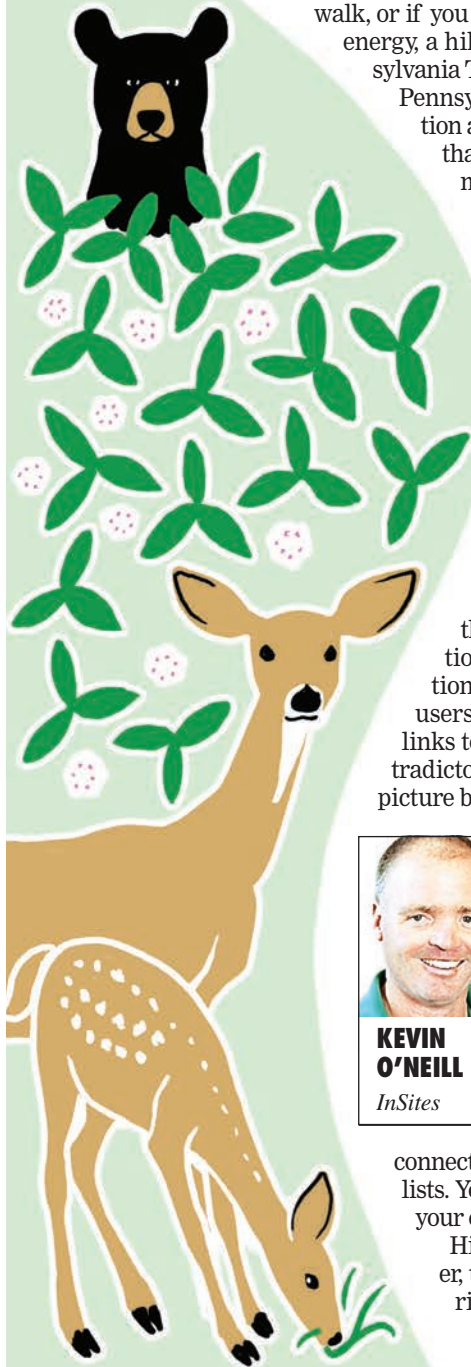
The home page also features a prominent search function that allows you to find trails based on location, trail name or the type of activity you're interested in, such as walking, running, biking, fishing, horseback riding, etc. There's an Explore link at the top of the site. This opens an interactive map that's centered on your location. The map has pins designating trail locations. Clicking on a pin takes you to information on the trail. As you zoom in on the map more pins appear. You can pan and zoom all around the world with the map. This section has additional search filters, such as attractions (lake, waterfall, view, etc.), length, elevation gain, route type (loop, out and back, point to point), difficulty, suitability (dog friendly, kid friendly, handicap accessibility) and more.

The navigation bar also has other features of the site. The Community link lets you connect with other users and view photos they've posted. The Saved link lets you save trails, maps and lists. You can also log activities you've completed along different trails. And you can create custom maps of your own trail. The Shop link takes you to an online store with All Trails gear.

Hiking is not just a summer activity. Autumn is a great time for a walk in the woods. The temperatures are cooler, there's fewer bugs and the foliage makes for spectacular scenery. Winter presents some challenges, but with the right clothing, a hike through snow-covered fields under a bright blue sky on a crisp winter day is exhilarating. Spring hikes are best for viewing waterfalls because the streams are swollen with snowmelt. No matter the time of year, All Trails can help you find your way.

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Site helps you find, navigate routes for hiking, biking, running or walking



KEVIN O'NEILL

InSites

