

2021 Geauga Gems Trekking Series FAQs

What is the Geauga Gems Trekking Series?

The Geauga Gems Trekking Series (GGTS) is a new and exciting initiative to hike the more than 70 miles of trails in Geauga Park District. Participants will take 30 hikes throughout the year. Three will be naturalist-led treks of your choosing from qualifying park programs, and 27 will be hikes you take on your own. First year finishers of the program will earn a collapsible trekking pole and hiking sticker medallion, second year finishers will earn that year's hiking medallion. These rewards will be presented in January 2022.

NEW for 2021!

Gauga Park District is celebrating our 60th anniversary in 2021! To mark this occasion, we are giving you a new path to complete the trekking program this year: hike 60 miles! Choose any combination of trails listed in the trekking card to achieve the 60-mile goal. There is an easy-to use mileage tracker on the back of the 2021 card. The three naturalist-led hikes are not required if you choose this special anniversary option.

Is this only for Geauga County residents?

Participation is free for Geauga County residents; out-of-county participants will pay \$10 each.

What ages can participant?

Any age can participate, but young trekkers need to be independently mobile and be not carried, nor in backpack carriers, nor in strollers.

How long does each hike have to be?

There is not a set distance for the hikes you take, but we encourage you to increase your trekking distance as you are able throughout the year. Keep in mind, the program tracks hikes, not trails. The hike you take may include more than one trail, especially if you hike several of the smaller trails that are less than ½ mile in one outing.

Do my naturalist-led hikes also count for my self-guided hikes?

No, you will do 27 hikes on your own and 3 hikes with a naturalist. It is possible that the naturalist hikes will be on the same trails that you choose to hike on your own, which is acceptable.

Where do I get a Geauga Gems Trekking Card to track my hikes?

You will receive a printed trekking card when you register in person; if you register online, you will receive an email with a link to the trekking card to print on your own.

Can I attend more than three naturalist-led hikes?

With the reduced group size in keeping with Covid-19 safety protocols, we encourage you to spread your three naturalist-led hikes throughout the entire year. This will enable more people to register for the hikes as well.

Do I have to hike every trail in Geauga Park District?

No, but we encourage you to embrace this opportunity to discover new favorites from the more than 70 miles of trails within Geauga Park District!

Can I hike the same trail 27 times for the hikes I take on my own?

No, each trail can be hiked no more than two times toward the series. If you are following the 60 miles/60th anniversary option, we encourage you to celebrate the Park's anniversary and hike different parks throughout the year.

When should I take my hikes?

We suggest enjoying all the seasons by spreading your hikes throughout all year. Naturalist-led hikes will offered each month.

How can I tell the difficulty level of a trail?

The Geauga Gems Trekking Card notes the distance, accessibility and hiking level of each trail in Geauga Park District.

I have limited mobility. How can I participate?

Paved and accessible trails are noted on the Geauga Gems Trekking Card, and you'll find that many of the listed trails are wheelchair accessible. Contact The West Woods Nature Center's front desk at 440-279-0880 with accessibility questions.

I can't seem to register for any of the naturalist-led programs...what is going on?

Due to the interest in the Geauga Gems Trekking program and reduced hike sizes due to Covid-19 safety protocols, you may find that many of the naturalist-led hikes are filled. We encourage you to add your name to waiting lists so that if a second hike is added, you will be among the first to be called. Meanwhile, we are adding additional hikes each season going forward to accommodate the great interest in hiking at your Geauga Park District.

How do I know which hikes count toward the series as naturalist-led hikes?

For your three naturalist-led hikes, check the *Park Explorer* Activity Guide for the GGTS icon near qualifying programs, or visit the Programs & Events page at www.geaugaparkdistrict.org and use the filtering to search for Geauga Gems Trekking Series. You can always ask the naturalist at a program you attend to see if the hike counts.

How will I track my hikes?

Upon registration, you'll receive a Geauga Gems Trekking Card to help you keep track. Each time you take a hike on your own, mark the date of your hike on the card. For your three naturalist-led hikes, be sure to bring your card with you and the naturalist will punch it after your hike.

Can I ride my bike instead of hike? Or canoe or kayak? Or ride my horse?

Cross country skiing and snowshoeing will count toward the series. However, you cannot bike, canoe/kayak or horseback ride for these hikes – though it's great you're exploring your parks in those ways!

Who do I tell when I am done?

When you have completed all 30 hikes, return the card to The West Woods Nature Center and you will be congratulated for being a Geauga Gem Trekker! We will also note your completion of the program in our records.

When do I get my trekking pole?

Trekking poles and stickers will be presented at an event in early January 2022.

What if I finish early – can I get my pole earlier?

Sorry, all poles will be presented at the same time in early January 2022.

What if I can't attend that event in January 2022?

You will have a month to visit The West Woods Nature Center to claim your 2021 reward.

Will I get a second pole if I complete the series for a second year?

No, each participant can only earn one pole. Subsequent years of participation will result in the next year's annual hiking sticker medallion to add to your pole.

What if I lose my hiking card?

Just visit The West Woods Nature Center's front desk and explain what happened. They'll give you another card; you'll just have to note your progress up to that point from memory.