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## Adventures for Women



Taking a hike is walking, whether on the urban side of the Hudson River or a more adventurous trail in the hills, mountains or valleys of surrounding areas. Hiking in nature usually provides the benefits most associated with the outdoor activity by offering more bucolic sights, sounds, and smells. [Adventures for Women](#), one of the few organizations devoted to female hiking expeditions, covers both terrains. There are other organizations devoted to the female hiker in Vancouver, Colorado and Washington State, and fortunately one in this neck of the woods.

According to the American Heart Association, a person weighing 150 pounds walking a comfortable speed of 2 mph will burn 240 calories in one hour. This is the speed Priscilla Pogact, President of Adventures For Women, recommends for those starting out on the easy hikes. “Women should be able to walk 4 hours, with many stops, at a pace of 2 miles an hour. Some of our members who are not hikers choose instead to go on our City Path events which are day excursions to the parks, museums and neighborhoods of our metropolitan areas.”

Women will find that hiking can help prevent osteoporosis by increasing bone density and slowing calcium loss which makes them less susceptible to breakage. And although the terrain might be less smooth than a walk around the block, the ground is still gentler and more forgiving on the joints than concrete. The American Hiking Society suggests the body and mind are intrinsically linked in the hiking experience and both will benefit. “Your body will feel better, your head will feel clearer, and your stress level will have decreased.” Hiking also releases endorphins, and the natural sunlight—unavailable in a gym—increases serotonin levels. There are numerous health advantages to hiking, but doing so in a group brings with it social and emotional benefits.



Sook-Kuen Chang, one of AFW's Trustees, explains, "Concentrating on the physical challenge ceases my mind of worries and cares and stress and mastering it brings the greatest emotional satisfaction...." "I actually did it!" Through all of this, I'm in the company of other AFW hikers, some stronger and faster hikers, others slower, but all encouraging and supporting one another and having fun together. And this all takes place in the vast expanse of natural beauty and tranquility and I just feel awed, inspired and grateful." Priscilla Pogact finds hiking in the company of other women provides a non-competitive, supportive environment where conversation flows naturally. "The whole gamut of subjects ... from books and movies to their children and family to their jobs to their hobbies and passions to current affairs to food to travels near and far. And sometimes, silence for long stretches ... because they are soaking in the quiet and tranquility of the woods."

As mentioned, Adventures for Women do not limit their expeditions to the natural wilderness. "We define 'wilderness' as not only mountains and forests, but also any part of life where new, exciting and sometimes intimidating opportunities present themselves. Hence, our urban hikes which we call our "City Paths", says Ms. Pogact. The City Paths program is very popular and involves exploring and sightseeing regional metropolitan areas with meals enjoyed at a local restaurant. Recent expeditions have included Manhattan's river side walk and Philadelphia's historic district. The women will often meet at a designated spot and then carpool to the metropolis on the itinerary for that particular trip.



The group regularly schedules workshops hosted by various community organizations, such as St. Alban's, where they held a seminar on exercises and stretches for hikers. Sook-Kuen Chang's favorite workshops included her first, Woodswoman 101, where she was introduced to basic wilderness skills, "As a beginner hiker, I learned several useful skills .... how to read a contour trail map and compass, follow trail blazes and cairns, what to have in my backpack, what to wear and what to eat on a hike, and what to do about ticks, snakes, bears and bees". The Shooting Workshop was one she never expected to find herself attending, "It was my first time ever handling a handgun and a rifle and I learned how to load, aim and fire each one,

following strict safety rules and under the tutelage of experienced instructors of the Easton Fish and Game Association.”

Their hiking expeditions are often local, but also involve regional trips, and they do not slow down in the cold weather. December 20th has scheduled a moderate hike locally at the Ramapo Valley Reservation. This was also the site of some moderate hiking in October during their planned Hike/Potluck BBQ/Social at St. Alban’s which included some fun and food after the hike. Female readers are encouraged to visit the Adventures in Women website to read more about the benefits and offerings, and our male readers are encouraged to consider the nominal membership fee when looking for a gift.

The local organization is comprised of women of many ages, and even older ladies interested can take inspiration from the hikes of Emma Gatewood who was the first person to hike the Appalachian Trail three times. She began her first hike on a lark in 1955 at the age of 67, and then tackled the Appalachian Trail at the age of 69 in 1957. Her other hikes took place in 1960 and 1963, well before an industry supplying freeze dried food and light weight camping gear had captured the American imagination.

Below are a selection of photos from different outings sponsored by [Adventures for Women](#).

