

2024 Geauga Gems Trekking Series FAQs

What is the Geauga Gems Trekking Series?

The Geauga Gems Trekking Series (GGTS) is an exciting and engaging way to hike parks and trails in the Geauga Park District. First-year finishers of the program will earn a collapsible trekking pole and hiking sticker medallion, repeat finishers will earn that year's hiking medallion. Awards will be presented beginning November 1, 2024, when you turn in your completed trekking card.

What is NEW for 2024?

Starting Jan 1st, participants will 'hike the seasons' by exploring a minimum of four trails each season from a list created by Park District naturalists. If you attend a naturalist-led hike, you can count that as one of your trails for that season. If you don't see your favorite trail, you can add it to your card. If you hike 16 trails over four seasons by 12-31-24, you will have completed the program! Alternatively, you can also hike 60 miles on any combination of trails in the parks.

Are Naturalist-led Hikes required in 2024?

No, they are not required. However, you may count a naturalist-led hike for one of your hikes for each season.

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?

The trail distance for each of the seasonal trails is listed on the trekking card. There is a range of distances for each season. You only need to complete a minimum of FOUR trails from the eight possible options for each season. We encourage you to increase your trekking distance as you are able throughout the year. The hike you take may include more than one trail. NOTE: Some trails are accessible from the parking lot, while some trails are accessed by other trails. This means your hike may be longer than the listed trail length. Please, consult www.geaugaparkdistrict.org for the map of each park to plan your trek.

Does a naturalist-led hike count as one of my four hike options?

Yes, if you attend a naturalist-led hike each season you will only have 3 more trail hikes to check off for that season.

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, or you can stop by the front desk at The West Woods or The Meyer Center at Big Creek Park to pick up a hard copy.

Do I have to hike every trail on the card?

No, but we encourage you to embrace this opportunity to discover new favorites from the more than 85 miles of trails within the Geauga Park District! The Naturalist staff chose trails to highlight the best of each season, and to share some hidden gems with you!

Can I hike all 8 trail options in one season?

Yes! That would be amazing. Get out there and be a TRAILBLAZER!

Can I hike the same trail 4 times in one season?

No, each trail can only be counted as one hike choice in the series. If you are following the 60-mile option, we encourage you to hike a trail no more than two times and hike about 15 miles per season throughout the year.

Can I hike my favorite trail each season as an option?

Yes, it's your favorite trail! What a nice way to see it throughout the year.

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 the 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 440-226-2841 with accessibility questions.

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

Our naturalist-led hikes are very popular and tend to fill quickly. We encourage you to add your name to the waiting list so that if a second hike is added, you will be among the first to be called. Remember, this is just 1 of 8 options to complete each season. Also, more and more hiking programs are moving back to open registration, so you can just show up and check off a naturalist-led hike for that season.

How do I know which hikes are naturalist-led hikes?

For naturalist-led hikes, check the *Park Explorer* Activity Guide for the Geauga Gems Trekking Series (GGST) 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, mark the date of your hike on the card.

Can I ride my bike instead of hiking? 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 a minimum of 4 hikes per season, 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. At that time, you will also receive awards for completion. (Hiking pole and medallion sticker for first-time finishers, medallion sticker for repeat finishers.)

When do I get my trekking pole/medallion sticker?

Trekking poles and stickers will be presented upon turning in your completed trekking card starting November 1, 2024.

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

Sorry, awards will be presented beginning November 1, 2024.

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. However, a second pole can be purchased on request at the West Woods Nature Store upon request for \$16 a 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.