



Tu B' Shvat Nature Walk Ideas For Grown-Ups and Kids

This year for Tu Bshvat, Or Shalom would like to invite you to go for a walk with the children you love to a nearby park or forest and engage in some contemplative nature fun!

Nature Walk

Some tips: Kids can get chilly on winter walks, which makes them unmotivated. In order to keep them moving, bring a flask of tea or hot chocolate. This is great for warming kids up but also for motivating them to the next stop.

As for warm clothing, thermals are really useful in winter. Separate layers are essential for trapping the air and keeping the skin dry and warm. With the majority of your body heat escaping from your head, the best way of ensuring that your kids are as toasty and comfortable as possible is to pop a hat on them. Gloves are also necessary for little hands. The best kind are ski gloves that don't get wet even when your kids are collecting treasures or playing around with snow. You might also like to take a basket/bag to collect things. Kids might like binoculars or a magnifying glass to look through. A kids' identification book for birds or bugs is also useful.

Keep a change of clothes and a towel in the car just in case your kids decide to play in mud or water.

WHAT DO YOU DO ON A NATURE WALK?

Nature walks of course need no agenda. You can just stroll, breathe deep, and enjoy the fresh air, weather, and sounds of nature. That said, kids can sometimes benefit from guided activities, art projects and lists of things to find. Here are some suggestions:

1. START A NATURE COLLECTION

Bring a bag and invite your child to start a nature collection by gathering interesting items that have fallen to the ground. Pine cones, bark, leaves, sticks, small stones, and seeds can all be saved and used for nature crafts.

2. PRACTICE MINDFUL LISTENING

Mindful listening is being fully present and aware of yourself and the sounds around you. Ask the kids to listen, report on, and identify what they can hear. The variety might be surprising!

NATURE WALK ACTIVITIES

1. CREATE NATURE ART

Make a mandala out of twigs or stones, decorate with leaves, acorns, and whatever else is found. Build a symbol that can be seen from the sky (at least in your imaginations).

2. PLAY A GAME

Giddy Up makes hiking more fun by riding “horsies” down the trails, making “gates,” and using secret passwords to go through. For the intrepid, try **Follow the Leader**: encourage your child to “lead” you through the trail, over, around, and under obstacles, incorporating as many trees, shrubs, and rocks along the path as possible.

Ninja Nature Scavenger Hunt is pretty brilliant. It consists of activities instead of things to collect: 1. Find a log to balance on; 2. Find a tree to climb; 3. Find a puddle to jump over (or into); 4. Find a rock to throw into a creek; 5. Find an incline to climb up; 6. Find a path to skip down; 7. Find an open area to run in; 8. Find a grassy hill to roll down; 9. Find a rock to jump off; 10. Find a shady tree to rest beneath.

Quarter Hike is a good way (for those who don’t mind getting a little lost) to keep kids interested on a long hike and actively looking forward to your progress. Before you begin, assign heads to left and tails to right (or visa versa) and then every time you arrive at a junction – flip your penny to decide whether you’ll turn left or right on your walk. Kids will love being in control of your destination and not knowing ahead of time which way you’ll go!

3. BUILD A LOG FORT OR LEAN-TO

Kids love to work with friends and siblings to build log forts or a simple lean-to. This requires a forest where you can move things around and is a good reason to light out for Lynn Canyon!

THINGS TO LOOK FOR ON A NATURE WALK

There is so much to see and discover outdoors! Here is a ready made list. Place an X beside which of the following you find:

1. PLANTS

- Deciduous trees
- Evergreen trees
- Leaves
- Flowers
- Buds

- Sticks
- Pine needles
- Edible plants
- Aromatic plants, such as wintergreen
- Bark
- Sap
- Acorns
- Pine cones
- Maple keys (helicopters)
- Mushrooms

2. ANIMALS

- Mammals, such as squirrels, dogs, and cats...and bears?
- Birds, such as ravens, pigeons, seagulls and woodpeckers
- Reptiles, such as lizards and turtles
- Amphibians, such as frogs and salamanders
- Insects

3. EVIDENCE OF ANIMALS

- Nests, such a bird and squirrel
- Cracked seeds or shells
- Munched leaves (leaves with holes)
- Spider webs
- Shells
- Exoskeletons
- Scat (wild animal droppings)
- Feathers
- Bones
- Dens
- Burrows
- Anthills
- Woodpecker holes
- Animal tracks
- Cocoons and chrysalids
- Beehives and hornet nests

4. LANDSCAPE

- Rocks and minerals
- Rivers, creeks, streams, and freshwater springs
- Rotting logs
- Ice and/or icicles
- Snow
- Rain
- Puddles
- Mud
- Dew drops
- Sunsets and/or sunrises

Enjoy and Tu B'Shvat Sameach!! Enjoy Hag Ha'ilanot (The Festival of Trees)!