



# YORK REGION'S ULTIMATE HIKING GUIDE

*Tips and tricks for navigating York Region's trails*



**Reconnect**  
York Region



## Welcome to **Reconnect York Region!**

We're thrilled to have you join our growing Reconnect community, where dynamic connections and experiences await. To express our gratitude, we've designed this exclusive hiking guide just for you! Discover York Region's hidden gems and family-friendly outdoor adventures. Best of all, this is just the beginning. At Reconnect York Region, we are dedicated to connecting you to exciting local events, nature, and your neighbours.

Visit [ReconnectYorkRegion.ca](https://ReconnectYorkRegion.ca) to see our interactive map of events happening in our city. Contact me to learn about the exciting events I am planning and for ways you can get involved in the Reconnect experience.

*Let the adventure begin!*



Sincerely,  
**Brenda**

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## Types of Trails in York Region

York Region has various trail options—some urban, and others that are off the beaten path. These trails are interwoven with some breathtaking water bodies. We have parts of the Humber River, Don River, and Rouge River watersheds—flowing towards Lake Ontario in the south and towards Lake Simcoe in the north.

Types of trails include:

- **Multi-Use Paths:** These paths often wind through subdivisions, with both paved and unpaved sections. They are designed for pedestrians, in-line skaters, and cyclists.
- **Bike Lanes:** Dedicated portions of the road surface exclusively for bicycle use, ensuring bikers can safely share the paths with pedestrians.
- **Forested Trails:** Created in parks and conservation areas, these trails allow safe travel through forests and around bodies of water while protecting the surrounding wildlife.



## Enhance Your Hiking Experience with Apps

How can you bring your experience in the outdoors to life and connect more to the plants and animals around you?

Here are my recommendations for some great apps I always have ready on the go:



### Merlin Bird ID app

Hear a bird chirping or cawing and don't know who the sound belongs to? Pull out this app and record what you hear. The app will identify the birds around you and play sounds to learn about different communication patterns. It also offers a photo ID feature which scans your image and offers potential matches.



### Geocache

Find hidden treasures along your walk by following clues in this app! You can also create a cache of your own to hide in your community. Most caches have a logbook that you can sign, and see who else found it before you. They can be large and hidden in logs, or 'micro' and disguised on park signs. Whichever you decide, geocaching is sure to add some adventurous fun to your next walk.



### iNaturalist

Walking by a new plant or animal you haven't seen before? Upload a photo of it on this app, and you can contribute to citizen science by identifying it from a list of recommended species. Your observation will be confirmed by scientists and naturalists worldwide, and you are supporting scientific data!



### All Trails

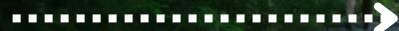
This app is great for finding new trails near you, wherever you are. If you find yourself already on a trail, you can measure the speed of your hike and track your route so you can safely make your way back to your starting point. This app features a collection of reviews, recommendations, and terrain details — there is always something new to explore!

# Our Trail Recommendations

**Here are our top recommendations for trails to visit. Have you explored any of these before?**

This guide was created with care by Environmental Defence Canada to help you explore and connect with nature. Hiking comes with inherent risks, so please assess your own abilities, prepare appropriately and make informed decisions on the trail. Environmental Defence Canada cannot be held liable for injuries, accidents or incidents that may occur while using this guide.

While we strive to provide accurate and current information, this guide may contain errors or omissions. Please also keep in mind that trail conditions can change due to weather, season and other factors, so always check local conditions before heading out.



# My Trail Recommendations



Photo: OntarioBikeTrails.com

## Nokiidaa Trail

(including Tim Jones Trail and Arboretum in **Aurora**, Tom Taylor Trail in **Newmarket**, Rogers Reservoir and Nokiida in **East Gwillimbury**)

 **Address:** Multiple trail entrances (Starts at Saint John Sideroad and Industrial Parkway. Finishes at Mt. Albert Road and Yonge St.)

 **Trail Length:** 20 km out-and-back trail with loop options

 **Features:** Holland River, Fairy Lake, Bailey Ecological Park, Aurora Arboretum, 2 off-leash dog parks (Aurora, Newmarket), skating rinks, parks, and picnic areas

 **Cost:** Free

 **Bike:** Yes

 **Parking:** Yes, free many locations along the trail

 **Transit:** Yes, GO Transit and YRT

This trail links to other smaller trails and includes two beautiful boardwalks alongside wetland habitats. You can find cultural and historic sites along the way, as well as beautiful indigenous Totem trail markers in the Newmarket/Tom Taylor section. The Newmarket and Aurora sections are paved.



Photo: Tripadvisor

## 99 steps (Thornton Bales Conservation area) Newmarket/King


 **Address:** 1260 19th Sideroad, King City

 **Trail Length:** 1.1 km

 **Features:** Rugged terrain, boardwalk, lookouts, Greenbelt

 **Cost:** Free

 **Bike:** Yes

 **Parking:** Yes, free (small lot off Mulock Dr/19th Sideroad)  
Transit: No

*Famous for its steep staircase—be prepared for the 54 metre elevation change—the 99 steps trail is part of Oak Ridges Moraine. This trail can also be accessed via Jokers Hill (Koffler-Bales side trail) and leads to Jokers Hill hiking area (3.1km of trails).*



Did you know that a proposed new mega-highway could destroy the habitat of 29 species at risk in York region? [See them here.](#)

Learn more and stand up for them at [StopHwy413.ca](http://StopHwy413.ca)








**STOP** HWY  **413.CA**

# My Trail Recommendations



Photo: Hiking the GTA

## Gatehouse Trail at Seneca King Campus - King

-  **Address:** 13990 Dufferin St., King City
-  **Trail Length:** 1 km linear trail
-  **Features:** Seneca King campus offers 14km of trails
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes, paid
-  **Transit:** Yes, YRT Route 88

Follow the historic pathways of Eaton Hall, as part of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail system. You'll Experience old-growth forests, hills, and wetlands. Many trails provide various options, such as following the wide, old York Radial Railway path.



Photo: Ontario Travel Blog

## Sheppard's Bush - Aurora

-  **Address:** Industry St, South of Wellington St. E., Aurora
-  **Trail Length:** over 3km of trails
-  **Features:** Soccer fields, historic buildings
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes, free in large lot off Industry St. at Mary St.
-  **Transit:** Short walk from Aurora GO station; or YRT bus along Wellington to Industry St.

Hit the trails at Sheppard's Bush whether you are looking for a leisurely stroll or to take advantage of the outdoor fitness amenities. You'll find wide trails, mature pine plantations, and an old sugarbush. You can also enjoy a walk along the East Holland River. This trail connects to Nokiidaa Trail and Oak Ridges Trail.










# My Trail Recommendations



Photo: McMichael Canadian Art Collection








## Sonoma Heights Neighbourhood Walk

-  **Address:** 100 Sunset Ridge, Woodbridge
-  **Trail Length:** 2.6km of walking
-  **Features:** Sports fields, skate park, playground, splash pad, Sonoma Heights District Park
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes, free at Sonoma Heights Park
-  **Transit:** Yes, YRT along Rutherford, route 85

This is a lively spot in the summer with concerts and soccer games. Take advantage of easy walking on paved, well-lit trail. Check out the side trails to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and Kleinburg Main St.



## Sugarbush Heritage Park - Vaughan

-  **Address:** 91 Thornhill Woods Dr, Thornhill
-  **Trail Length:** 2.4 km looped circuit
-  **Features:** Playground, fenced off-leash dog park, seasonal indoor washrooms
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes, free
-  **Transit:** Yes, YRT, ~700m walk from nearest stop








Enjoy a leisurely hike on these flat dirt and woodchipped trails in the heart of Vaughan. You'll find the Historic Baker family house along the way, as well as a recently retired 150-year-old sugarbush. Discover 100-year-old maple trees, and keep your eyes open for signs of the still visible tap-holes in many of them.



# My Trail Recommendations



## Jefferson Forest - Richmond Hill

-  **Address:** Stouffville Rd and Bayview Ave
-  **Trail Length:** 5.8 km loop, many trail options
-  **Features:** Norton Place playground, near Bond Lake
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes, free road parking off Bethesda Rd
-  **Transit:** YRT along Yonge St to near Bond Lake. Or Bayview Ave to Bethesda Sideroad. Trail heads ~1-2km from nearest transit stop.

Jefferson Forest offers moderate to challenging hikes, and a good mix of hills, grass and wetlands. It's a well-trafficked spot that's popular for mountain biking. The trail is part of the Oak Ridges Moraine and neighbours Wilcox Lake and Bond Lake. Don't forget your binoculars because this is a great spot for bird watching!.

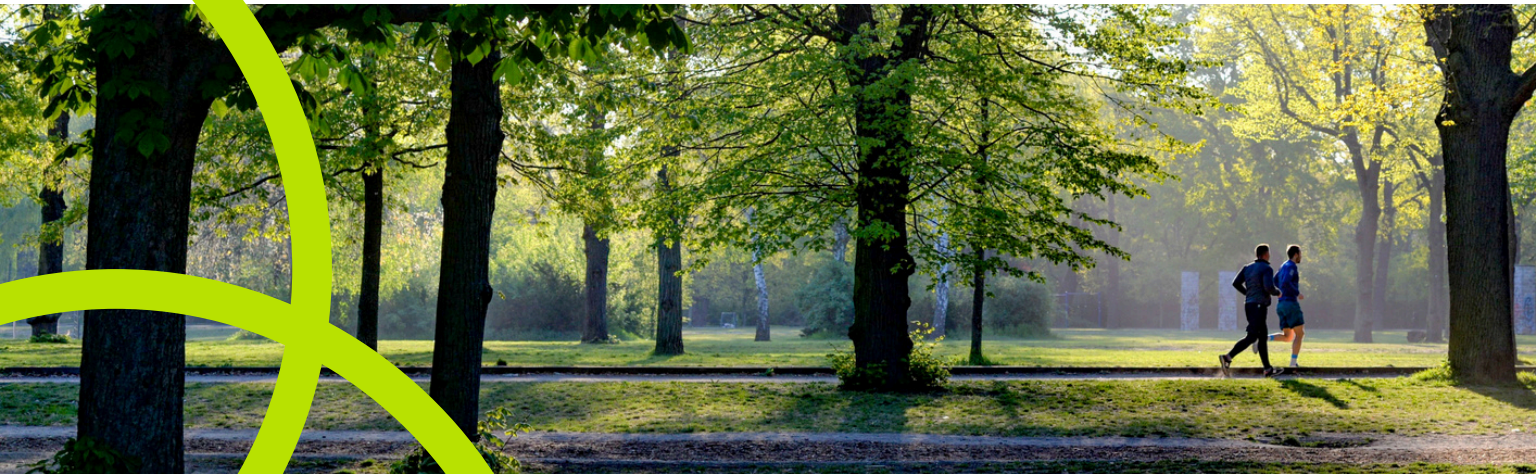


Photo: AllTrails.com

## Elgin West Greenway - Richmond Hill

-  **Address:** 68 Canyon Hill Avenue; 11099 Bathurst St. Richmond Hill
-  **Trail Length:** 4 km one-way
-  **Features:** Boardwalk, playgrounds, wetland views
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes, free at Elgin West Community Centre on Bathurst St.
-  **Transit:** Yes, YRT along Bathurst St.

The Elgin West Greenway follows a branch of the Don River, with views of meadows and mature hardwood forest. With a mix of gravel and paved surfaces, it starts at Elgin West Community Centre (drop in to learn about local archaeology!) and continues through to Twickenham Park. Enjoy the beautiful boardwalk and plenty of wildlife.










# My Trail Recommendations



Photo: Hiking the GTA

## Nashville Conservation Reserve








-  **Address:** Kirby Road and Huntington Road, Vaughan
-  **Trail Length:** 3.5 km loop
-  **Features:** Steep stair climb, beautiful views
- Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** No
-  **Parking:** Yes, free road parking
-  **Transit:** No
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This challenging hike meanders along the Humber River. Enjoy the change in scenery as you move up in elevation starting beside the Humber, and then up the hills for great views. Be forewarned, this hike can be icy and muddy in winter and spring, but the trails are fairly well-marked and maintained by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority.



Photo: AllTrails.com

## William Granger Greenway Nature Walk - Humber Trail

-  **Address:** 8739 Islington Ave, Vaughan
-  **Trail Length:** 6.4km
-  **Features:** Side trails connect to McMichael Canadian Art Collection, as well as Kleinburg Main St., sports field, washrooms
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Free in Bindertwine Park; or Rutherford Road Trailhead; Paid at Boyd Conservation Area
-  **Transit:** Many access points, YRT transit from Islington closest stop ~1.5km

The Humber Trail offers a moderately difficult hike between Boyd Conservation Park and Kortright Centre for Conservation (visit the TRCA website for a full list of trails). Side trails will lead you to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection property which has a series of free-to-use trails, with art installations and historic artifacts along the way.

**!** Highway 413's proposed route will go directly through Nashville Conservation and cut through hundreds of waterways outside of the park, causing damage to critical watersheds in York Region, like the Humber River. Visit [StopHwy413.ca](http://StopHwy413.ca) to learn more.



# My Trail Recommendations



Photo: AllTrails.com

## Unionville Valleylands Trail, Markham

- Address:** 280 Main St, Unionville
- Trail Length:** 5.1 km loop
- Features:** Wetland and Toogood Pond views, ice skating in winter
- Cost:** Free
- Bike:** Yes
- Parking:** Yes, free public parking along Main St.
- Transit:** YRT along 16th Avenue/Yorkton Blvd

Located near the bustling Main St. in Unionville, you'll enjoy an easy hike along a combination of paved trails and boardwalks. This route is popular for biking, running, walking and bird watching. The trail is well-shaded, offering a welcome respite on hot summer days.

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## Hollidge Tract Accessible Trail



Photo: AllTrails.com

- Address:** 16389 ON-48, Whitchurch-Stouffville
- Trail Length:** 5.8 km, many side trails
- Features:** Wetland, accessible trail, viewing area, Vivien Creek
- Cost:** Free
- Bike:** Yes
- Parking:** Yes off ON-48, Bill Fisch Forest Centre
- Transit:** No

This popular trail boasts a 1 km stretch that is one of the most accessible in York Region. A variety of trail types are available and the tall red pines offer a beautiful, shady walk.

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## Forest Therapy Trail (part of Rouge Valley Trail system)



Photo: Yelp

- Address:** Tuclor Lane, Markham
- Trail Length:** Forest therapy (1.8km), connects to over 7km of trails
- Features:** Pomona Mills Park, boardwalks, large staircase
- Cost:** Free
- Bike:** Yes
- Parking:** Yes, free along the road
- Transit:** YRT along Hwy 7, 900m walk from Markham Village Library

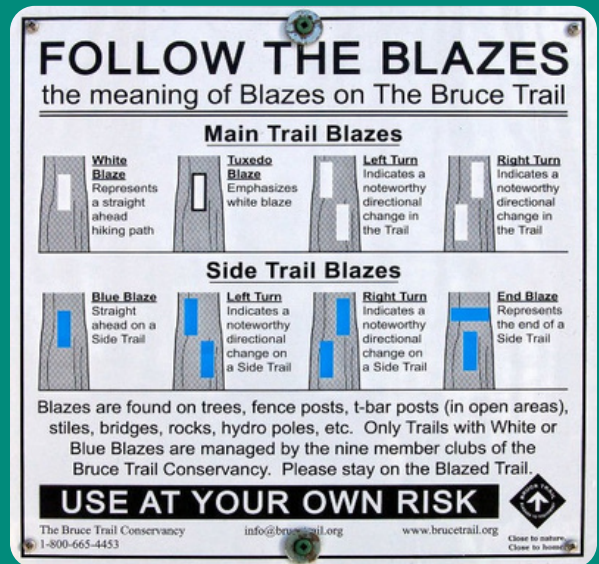
This trail is perfect for beginner hikers. Wide trails make for a leisurely stroll as you follow along the Rouge River and enjoy views of the Milne Dam.

# Hiking Etiquette

Did you know that there are ‘unspoken’ rules to follow when hiking in nature? Following them ensures that you are respecting nature and other guests.

Here are my top tips:

- **Follow the trailblazes:** You may have noticed white or blue rectangles painted on tree trunks. These are important markers that will guide you to stay on the trail!
- **Respect wildlife:** Avoid disturbing wildlife. Observe from a distance and do not feed animals. Sticking to designated paths helps protect plants and ecosystems.
- **Leave what you find behind:** Do not pick plants, disturb wildlife, or remove rocks or historical artifacts. Leave natural and cultural features as you found them for others to enjoy.
- **Dispose of waste properly:** Pack out all trash, litter, and leftover food. Do not leave anything behind. Use designated waste disposal facilities or carry a trash bag to pack out your garbage.
- **Observe park signage:** Trail signs provide important information about the route, including directions, distances, and points of interest.



# Explore in the Winter

Winter doesn't mean that we need to hide from the outdoors! It doesn't mean we need expensive sports gear either. There are plenty of ways that we can connect with the outdoors during this time:

- **Birding:** With the leaves gone on the trees, the birds that live in our community are much easier to spot! Use Merlin Bird ID or other apps to identify their calls or appearance.
- **Tracking:** See who shares your habitat! When there is snow on the ground, it is a great chance to discover who shares our backyard or trails with us. When we are inside, we wouldn't know whether a mole or owl crossed our path just moments before, but thanks to winter, we can!

## WINTER WILDLIFE

### Who's been visiting your neighbourhood?

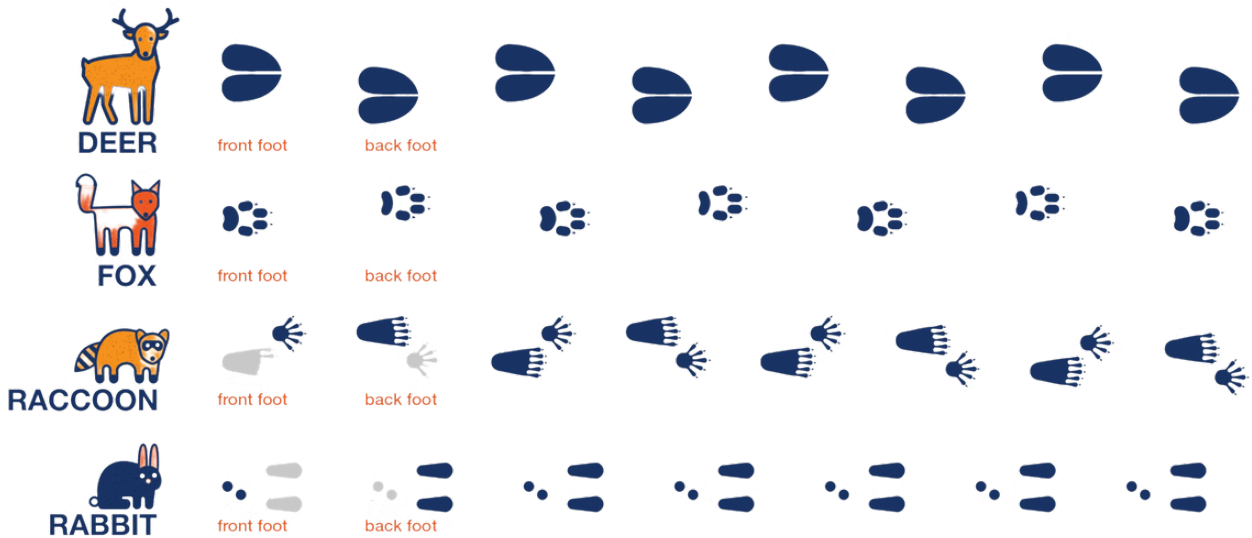


Photo credit: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry





- **Winter Art:** There are fun ways to make art in the snow and ice. Whether it's a snowman, igloo, or snow angel, you can elevate your experience by adding spray paint!

**Steps:**

- Fill spray bottles with water and just a dash of alcohol to prevent freezing
- Add drops of food colouring or create your colours with vegetables like beets
- Take your spray bottles outside and begin spraying in the snow



**Photo credit:** <https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/snow-paint/>

- **Dress well:** We need to show up in our best for Mother Nature —and by that, we mean: layer up! Many people cut their fun outdoor experiences short when they are underdressed for the cold. If possible, investing in quality winter gear can protect you from wind and freezing temperatures, but having many warm layers covering your feet, hands, and face, works just as well. Winter boots are a must. Ensure your face is moisturized with a thick lotion to protect skin from the wind too!



## What are the Animals Up To?

Hiking throughout the year allows you to witness and appreciate the changing seasons, from the vibrant colours of fall foliage to the quiet beauty of snow-covered landscapes.

Observing wildlife activity can also add a special dimension to your hiking experience in different seasons.

**Did you know that climate change is making Ontario winters much warmer and wetter? Unfortunately, this is good news for ticks who relish in these conditions. Be sure to do a “tick check” with your friends and family after you’ve enjoyed the great outdoors!**

### Spring

- Many bird species migrate during spring. Look for flocks of birds travelling to their breeding grounds.
- Spring is a time when many animals, such as birds and mammals, engage in nesting behaviours. Keep an eye out for nests in trees and on the ground.
- Reptile Activity: Warmer temperatures in spring may encourage reptiles like snakes and salamanders to become more active.

### Summer

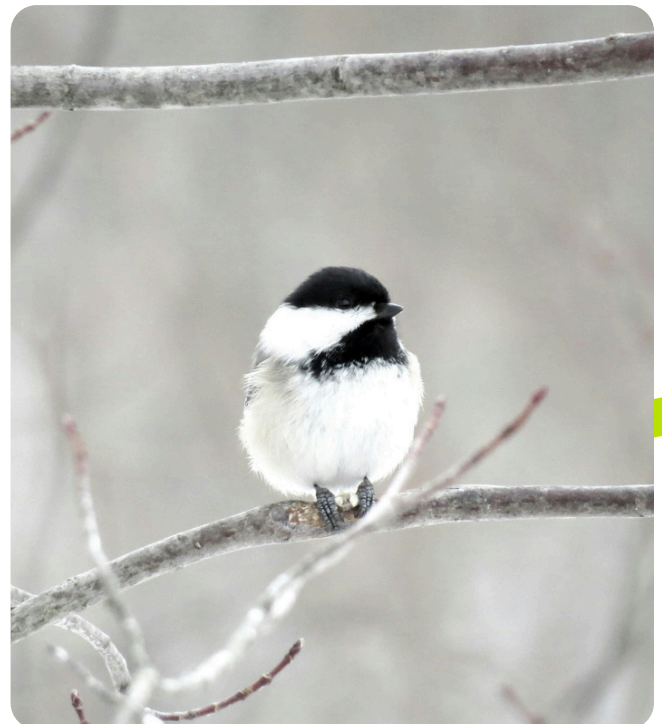
- Many bird species are actively vocalizing to attract mates or establish territories—listen to their songs!
- Summer is peak insect season. You may see butterflies, bees, and other pollinators, as well as spiders and other incredible insects.
- Some mammals give birth in summer, and you may come across some young animals.

### Fall

- Prime time to view bird migrations as they head south for the winter.
- Many animals start preparing for winter by foraging and storing food. For example, squirrels may be actively collecting and burying nuts.
- Of course, the incredible changing colours of the tree canopy foliage

### Winter

- Snow provides an excellent canvas for tracking wildlife. Look for tracks of animals like deer, rabbits, foxes, mice, and birds.
- Some mammals, such as certain rodents, change their fur color in winter to blend in with the snowy surroundings—can you spot them?
- Many birds choose to stay right here in York Region, all winter long. Take some binoculars and have a look!



# Hiking Bingo

Transform your hike into an engaging scavenger hunt, making every trail more exciting!

<p><b>SQUIRREL</b></p> 	<p><b>BIRD HOUSE</b></p> 	<p><b>GUST OF WIND</b></p> 	<p><b>POLLINATOR</b></p> 	<p><b>DOG WALKER</b></p> 
<p><b>MAPLE LEAF</b></p> 	<p><b>BIRDS NEST</b></p> 	<p><b>ANIMAL BURROW</b></p> 	<p><b>TRAIL MARKER</b></p> 	<p><b>PINE CONE</b></p> 
<p><b>CONIFEROUS TREE</b></p> 	<p><b>MUSHROOMS</b></p> 	<p><b>FREE SPACE</b></p>	<p><b>FLOCK OF BIRDS</b></p> 	<p><b>OAK LEAF</b></p> 
<p><b>ACORN</b></p> 	<p><b>BIRD HOUSE</b></p> 	<p><b>THE SUN</b></p> 	<p><b>HOLE IN TREE</b></p> 	<p><b>BERRIES</b></p> 
<p><b>ANIMAL TRACKS</b></p> 	<p><b>Y-SHAPED TWIG</b></p> 	<p><b>BIRD CALL</b></p> 	<p><b>RABBIT</b></p> 	<p><b>BIG ROCK</b></p> 



## Before You Go... Here are My Quick Tips

- In colder weather, wear layers to trap and retain body heat, while in warmer conditions, choose lightweight and breathable fabrics to stay cool.
- In conditions of low visibility, wearing bright or reflective clothing enhances your visibility to others, reducing the risk of accidents.
- Hiking boots help prevent slips and give great ankle support on rugged terrain.
- Protect yourself from UV rays all year round. Wearing non-toxic sunscreen, a hat, and long sleeves helps prevent sunburns and long-term skin damage.
- Stay hydrated — take a reusable water bottle or a water bladder.
- Bring snacks to sustain your energy level throughout the hike.
- Some trails may be closed or have limited accessibility in winter. Check with local authorities or park services for trail conditions.
- Always check the time of sunset so you can plan when you should stop hiking and your route back home.
- Stay safe. Let someone know where you've gone and when you expect to be back home.
- Have fun!

## Until Next Time

Connect with me, Brenda, for more things to do in York Region. Send a photo of your trail experience — I'd love to see it, and it just might be featured in our next newsletter!

*See you on the trails!*

