



HAMILTON'S ULTIMATE HIKING GUIDE

Tips and tricks for navigating Hamilton's trails



Reconnect
Hamilton



Photo of Smokey Hollow

Welcome to Reconnect Hamilton!

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 Hamilton's hidden gems and family-friendly outdoor adventures.

Best of all, this is just the beginning! At Reconnect Hamilton, we are dedicated to connecting you to exciting local events, nature, and your neighbours. Visit ReconnectHamilton.ca to see an 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 community.

Let the adventure begin!



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Enhance Your Hiking Experience with Apps

How can you bring your outdoor experience to life and better connect with the plants and animals around you? Here are my recommendations for some great apps that are helpful for new explorers, experienced outdoor adventurers, and everyone in between:



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 that scans your photo of a bird 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. 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. A great way to support scientific data collection!



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!



DID YOU KNOW: The Niagara Escarpment creates its very own microclimate! As one of nineteen biosphere reserves in Canada, it is home to over 1,500 species of plants and animals. This microclimate also allows for specialty crops to be grown locally. The Greenbelt was established in 2005 to help protect this rich farmland!



Need A Hiking Buddy?

The best way to maintain your new hobby is to surround yourself with people who love the same activity!

To help you get started, I found some hiking groups in Hamilton you can join for outdoor adventures:

1. The Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club: This is one of Bruce Trail's Chapters, responsible for maintaining the Iroquoia section, which runs through Hamilton. Check out their calendar, where they post organized hikes led by experienced volunteers.
2. Happy Hikers Hamilton: A welcoming group open to all skill levels. They host regular hikes in and around Hamilton, ranging from evening strolls to endurance challenges. Valuing inclusivity and safety, they are a great group to connect with.
3. Steel Town Athletic Club: A group that brings active people together; they host events on Hamilton trails for running, hiking, and cycling. From small group walks to competitive trail runs, they've got it all for those looking to get moving outdoors!
4. Hamilton Trailblazers (HTB) Hiking & Outdoors Club: A dedicated group that explores trails and waterfalls around the city. They offer well-planned hikes, including weekend events, and a strong community!
5. Halton Outdoor Club: This club hosts regular hikes around Hamilton and also gets together for a wider variety of outdoor activities, such as snowshoeing, skiing, kayaking, and cycling. They've got lots of ways to get to know Hamilton and beyond!
6. Everybody Crew: A crew that encourages movement of all forms and all bodies! They meet to walk, run, and roll in Gage Park, and foster an inclusive and supportive environment. If you're looking to meet others who just want to get outside and have fun, this is the group for you!



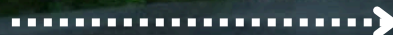


My Trail Recommendations

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

Disclaimer: Environmental Defence Canada is not responsible for the safety of hikers or anyone following this guide.

Environmental Defence Canada is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this guide. Trail information is subject to change.












My Trail Recommendations












Photo: <https://tourismhamilton.com/partner/eramosa-karst-conservation-area/>

Eramosa Karst Conservation Area

-  **Address:** 86 Upper Mt Albion Rd, Stoney Creek
-  **Trail Length:** Loops ranging from 1.5km to 7km
-  **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Rock formations, caves, streams, meadows, forests
-  **Cost:** \$8.50 for admission
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes
-  **Transit:** Yes, 21 Southbound, 43 or 44 Westbound

This hike is perfect for those looking to explore some truly unique geological features, right in the city! The trails are wide and well-maintained, making this a great choice for families, biking, or taking the dog out for an adventure!

Red Hill Valley Recreational Trail

-  **Address:** Albion Falls - Parking Lot, Hamilton
-  **Trail Length:** 10.5km (one way)
-  **Difficulty:** Intermediate to Difficult
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Indigenous Gathering Places, wetlands, waterfalls, forests, birdwatching, lakefront views
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes
-  **Transit:** 21 to Mud & Pritchard or 11 to Stone Church at Redhill Valley

This trail network is a great way to get to know all that Hamilton has to offer; starting at Albion Falls, you can get a sense of the whole scope of this watershed as you follow it to the Lake. You'll also come across four Indigenous Gathering places.



DID YOU KNOW: “Urban Sprawl” is a term that describes unrestricted housing and road development over large expanses of land. Sprawl is a major threat to farmland and biodiversity on trails and parks close to urban areas.










**STOP
DESTRUCTIVE
SPRAWL**

My Trail Recommendations












Photo:
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KingsForestParkF.JPG>

King's Forest Loop

-  **Address:** Greenhill Bowl Park Rosedale Park, Hamilton
-  **Trail Length:** 3.2 km
-  **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Stream, forests, escarpment
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes
-  **Transit:** Yes; 5 to Greenhill at Cochrane

A subset of the Red Hill Valley Trails, this is a great way to get to know the area if you are looking for a loop that goes in and around the Red Hill Valley. Perfectly tucked away, you can get enveloped by the tall sides of the escarpment and stroll along the riverside.

Dundas Conservation Area - Canterbury Falls

-  **Address:** Heritage Trail off of Old Dundas Road at Ontario St
-  **Trail Length:** 2.9 km
-  **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Waterfalls, streams, meadows, Carolinian Forest
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** No; Street Parking along Old Dundas Rd.
-  **Transit:** Yes; 5 to Rousseaux at Wilson

A trail in the Dundas Conservation Area network. This loop is a relaxing way to visit one of Hamilton's lesser-known waterfalls on a picturesque trail. To get to the trailhead, there is an entrance to the Heritage Trail off of Old Dundas Road at Ontario St. Dundas Conservation Area is 1,200 hectares and has over 40 km of trails.



DID YOU KNOW: Climate change is making Ontario winters warmer and wetter? Unfortunately, this is good news for ticks. Be sure to do a “tick check” with your friends, family, and pets after you’ve enjoyed the great outdoors!












My Trail Recommendations



Photo:
<https://nature.mcmaster.ca/area/princess-point/>

Cootes Paradise - Princess Point

-  **Address:** RBG Parking - 335 Longwood Rd N, Hamilton
-  **Trail Length:** 5.6 km
-  **Difficulty:** Easy
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Wetlands, shoreline, lookouts, wildlife, boardwalk
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** No
-  **Parking:** Yes
-  **Transit:** Yes; 6, Princess Point Loop

Cootes Paradise is an incredible wildlife sanctuary that is particularly great for birdwatching as it is a migratory bird stopover. This trail takes you to two different lookouts, and hugs the side of the harbour.

Bruce Trail - Iroquoia Heights Loop










-  **Address:** 1031 Old Mohawk Rd, Hamilton
-  **Trail Length:** 5.8 km
-  **Difficulty:** Moderate
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Lookouts, wildlife sightings, Bruce Trail, meadows
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Street parking
-  **Transit:** Yes; 41 to Mohawk opposite Old Mohawk



Photo:
<https://nature.mcmaster.ca/area/iroquoia-heights/>

The Iroquoia Heights Conservation Area offers sweeping views of the city, meadows, and a woodland walk, with the chance to see some wildlife! This is a great medium-length hike to get acquainted with the Bruce Trail, which runs over 900 km from St. Catharine's to Tobermory.



Hamilton is home to many wildlife species that depend on our forests and wetlands for survival. Urban sprawl threatens many of these plants and animals.

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My Trail Recommendations



Photo:
<https://nature.mcmaster.ca/area/mcmaster-forest/>

McMaster Forest Nature Preserve

-  **Address:** [1105 Lower Lions Club Rd](#), Hamilton
-  **Trail Length:** 3.5 km total; smaller loops available
-  **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
-  **Accessibility:** No
-  **Features:** Bird sanctuary, old growth forest, ravines, prairie habitat
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** No
-  **Parking:** Yes
-  **Transit:** Yes; 5 to Wilson at West Hamilton Loop

This trail winds through a variety of habitats that are studied at McMaster University. Due to the sensitive nature of this area, it is important to stay on the paths. It is a real treat to be able to trek through such a diverse natural area, and one that provides important research opportunities for our community.

Chedoke Radial Trail










-  **Address:** [534 Dundurn St S](#), [65 Beddoe Dr](#), or [1180 Scenic Dr](#)
-  **Trail Length:** 9.7 km
-  **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
-  **Accessibility:** Yes, if parking at Beddoe Dr. entrance
-  **Features:** Lookouts, waterfalls, shaded areas, wide paths
-  **Cost:** Free
-  **Bike:** Yes
-  **Parking:** Yes
-  **Transit:** Yes



Photo:
<https://nature.mcmaster.ca/area/c/chedoke-radial-trail/>

This trail offers incredible views of the city, and has a couple of different entry points. You can really get to know the edge of the escarpment by following it along this wide, flat pathway. This is a great option for a city stroll, while still being enveloped in a forest canopy.



DID YOU KNOW: A healthy forest canopy has almost endless benefits! Trees can capture up to 50% of polluting particulate matter in the air, provide cooling, and have been proven to reduce stress. Not all areas of Hamilton benefit equally from tree cover—often lower income areas do not have the same access to green space. Read more about “tree equity” [here](#)!



My Trail Recommendations



Photo:
<https://www.blogto.com/travel/2023/10/felkers-falls-ontario/>

Felker's Falls - Peter Street Trail

- Address:** [43 Ackland St, Stoney Creek](#)
- Trail Length:** 0.7 km
- Difficulty:** Easy
- Accessibility:** Yes
- Features:** Waterfalls, accessibility features, forested area
- Cost:** Free
- Bike:** Yes
- Parking:** Yes
- Transit:** Yes; #11 bus to Paramount at Apex

This trail is specifically designed with accessibility in mind. With packed stone dust and a wide path, it is wheelchair accessible. There are also wayfinding stations along the trail made out of interlocking patio stones for those who are visually impaired.

Bruce Trail - Felker's Falls to Devil's Punchbowl

- Address:** [43 Ackland St, Stoney Creek](#)
- Trail Length:** 9 km
- Difficulty:** Moderate
- Accessibility:** No
- Features:** Waterfall, mountain brow, lookouts, Bruce Trail
- Cost:** Free
- Bike:** No
- Parking:** Yes
- Transit:** Yes; #11 bus to Paramount at Apex



Photo: <https://conservationhamilton.ca/conservation-areas/devils-punchbowl/>

This hike features two waterfalls! You can start on the viewing platform to see an impressive ribbon waterfall, then you'll follow the Bruce Trail until you reach the Devil's Punchbowl waterfall. This waterfall tends to dry up sooner than others, so be sure to go after some rain or in the spring.



DID YOU KNOW: Ontario farmland is one of our most precious resources and is considered world class! But, EVERY DAY, we lose 319 acres of farmland due to urban sprawl. Protecting our farms is essential to creating a strong local food system and more resilient communities.

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My Trail Recommendations



Photo: <https://syderoad.com/is-mccormack-trail-the-prettiest-hiking-trail-in-hamilton/>

McCormack Trail to Christie Conservation Area

- Address:** Governor's Road, east of Weir's Lane
- Trail Length:** 12.7 km
- Difficulty:** Difficult
- Accessibility:** No
- Features:** Lake, boardwalk, farmland, old growth forest, marshes
- Cost:** Free; admission fee for Conservation area use
- Bike:** Yes
- Parking:** Not at trailhead, but at Dundas Valley Conservation Area
- Transit:** Yes; #5 bus to Governor's at Pirie

On the outskirts of the city, this trail offers a trek to Christie Lake, which you can make a day trip out of! With some challenging elevation changes at the start, reward yourself at the halfway point, by taking a dip at the beach or having a picnic. The trail goes by farmland and old growth forests, truly showing off Southern Ontario's natural beauty.

Bruce Trail - Smokey Hollow and Clappison Woods

- Address:** 80 Mill St S, Waterdown
- Trail Length:** 11.3 km
- Difficulty:** Moderate to Difficult
- Accessibility:** No
- Features:** Waterfall, lush forest, streams, ravine, Bruce Trail
- Cost:** Free
- Bike:** No
- Parking:** Yes
- Transit:** Yes; #18 bus to Mill at Mountain Brow



Photo: <https://naturamagna.com/smokey-hollow-waterfall-hamilton>

This is a section of the Bruce Trail that really immerses you in the biodiversity of the area! Starting at a waterfall, you head down into a ravine full of moss, ferns, and lush trees.

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DID YOU KNOW: 20% of Hamilton is covered by tree canopy! The city is currently working to double this amount, as trees can reduce the impact of urban heat islands, and air pollution from industry and wildfire smoke. Sometimes the simplest solutions can be the most effective!



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.
- **Keep your dog(s) out of trouble:** Clean up after your dog and always keep them on a leash. In sensitive areas, dogs are a bigger threat to conservation efforts than people are.
- **Leave what you find behind:** Do not pick plants, disturb wildlife, or remove rocks or 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. Use designated waste disposal facilities or carry a bag to pack out your garbage.
- **Observe park signage:** Trail signs provide important information, including directions, distances, and points of interest.



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.

(Note: Safe and friendly wildlife interactions are done from far away. Please do not touch or feed any animals, as it puts their ability to survive in the wild at risk.)

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, you can't miss the incredible changing colours of the tree canopy.

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 Ontario 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!

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



Before You Go... Here are My Quick Tips

- In warmer conditions, choose lightweight and breathable fabrics to stay cool. In colder weather, wear layers to trap and retain body heat. Also, make sure you're not so toasty that you sweat a lot—this can make you even colder in the long run!
- 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 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 levels throughout the hike.
- Check the trail status: 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 make your way back home.

Until Next Time

Hamilton is full of hidden gems, which I can't wait to uncover and share with you!

To see what I've found, check out our website and newsletter at ReconnectHamilton.ca.

If you enjoyed this guide, you can send a photo of your trail experience and we might feature it in our next newsletter.

See you on the trails!

