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Get outside

Five outdoor activities that are good for your body and soul

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It has been a long six months in lockdown. Thankfully, we still have the end of summer and all of fall to enjoy many outdoor activities.

Keeping active in retirement is good for your body and mind, says Erin Billowits, a personal trainer and owner of Vintage Fitness in Toronto. “Regular physical activity helps keep your body able to do all the things you want to do.”

Here are a five ways to clear your mind, keep your body moving and enjoy yourself.

HIKE the Bruce Trail

The Bruce Trail is Canada’s oldest and longest footpath, meandering over 900 kilometres across the Niagara Escarpment with lots of side trails and entry points.

The well-maintained trail features waterfalls, quiet streams, pretty meadows, old forest growth, a wide range of flora and lots of wildlife, too.

While most of the regional Bruce Trail clubs are back leading guided hikes, says Michael McDonald, chief executive officer of Bruce Trail Conservancy, anyone can use the trail. Lace up a pair of hiking boots or sturdy athletic shoes and bring walking poles for better balance.

Do it: Visit brucetrail.org, and choose an area on the map that you’d like to explore (“we do encourage hiking as locally as possible at this point”). Download trail maps (for a low cost),

review hiking safety tips on the website and go.

PADDLE the Grand River

The Grand River is a large river in southwestern Ontario. “Here it flows very slowly so it’s a very safe and simple river to paddle,” says Shelley Jo Courtney, owner of Canoeing the Grand in Kitchener. Day trippers average two and a half to three hours on the river. “Some of them fish, some read poetry and some just hang out.”

The river provides an interesting canvas of historic and scenic Ontario. “You pass through some very old communities like Mennonite country. But there are also sections where it feels like you’re in the middle of nowhere.”

Do it: Book a canoe at canoeingthegrand.com (life jackets and basic paddle instructions are provided). Bring padding for sitting on the canoe seat if kneeling is hard on your knees.

WALK Tour of Ottawa

A city walking tour is a great way to explore and see important landmarks.

A guided tour is done at a leisurely pace with a local guide who provides insights and personality, says Craig McDonald of Ottawa Walking Tours. For example, the Historical Highlights Tour — with several stops including Parliament Hill, the National War Memorial and Rideau Canal — is less than two kilometres in length and lasts two hours.

For a longer walk, download the self-guided tour of Ottawa from Gpsmycity (the app turns your mobile device into a personal tour guide) — it is five



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kilometres in length and includes over a dozen attractions.

Do it: Visit ottawawalking-tours.com to book a private tour (the tour is wheelchair accessible). To download a walking tour app, visit gpsmycity.com.

CYCLE in Prince Edward County

Prince Edward County is a perfect cycling destination with gently rolling hills, quiet country roads and a charming rural backdrop.

It is an amazing place to ride, says Katie Misener, co-owner for 31 years of the Bloomfield Bicycle Company in Bloomfield, Ont.

She recommends quieter routes these days such as the newly completed 48-kilometre Millennium Trail. The former railway route crosses farmers’ fields, forests, creeks and marshes. Other less travelled roads like Big Island, Fish Lake Road and Long Point “are beau-

tiful rides, too.”

Do it: Download the PEC Cycling Guide at torontocyclist.com to select a route, and bring your own bike, if possible, at this time. For a less strenuous ride, consider an e-bike — contact pedegoelectricbikes.ca or clossonroadcycles.com.

PLAY pickleball

Pickleball is a racquet sport that is part tennis, part badminton, part table tennis — and all fun.

The game was developed in the U.S. and brought to Canada by snowbirds in the ’70s. Two or four players use pickleball racquets to hit a perforated lightweight ball back and forth over a net. The game requires hand/eye co-ordination and quick reflexes but there is less lateral movement, so it goes easy on hips and knees.

While pickleball is a very social sport, the game has moved outside for right now, says Peter Milovanovic, spokesperson from Pickleball Ontario. There

> COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

- Wear a reusable face mask if in close quarters with others.
- Go during the quieter weekdays.
- Carry disinfectant wipes and sprays, paper towels and hand sanitizer.
- Print out maps and have GPS/road mapping on your cellphone.
- Pack lunch, snacks and water.

are 65 clubs and 423 facilities in the province.

Do it: Purchase equipment online or in sporting goods stores. For the community clubs closest to you, visit pickleballontario.org and check Places to Play.

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