

TRAILS MIX

VOLUME TWO ····· ISSUE NO.2





Hello.

Welcome to Trails Mix, an extra helping of Family Trails goodness. Each quarter, our #FamilyTrails community will receive a digital edition of the Trails Mix bundle packed with ideas and inspiration designed to spark more family adventuring and learning together. We'll also feature highlights from the best of Family Trails – the stories shared by our families around the world.

From recipes to activities to expert interviews, we hope you'll find that Trails Mix encourages your family to get out and get going – wherever the trail may lead you.

Have an idea for an upcoming edition of Trails Mix?
Email us at **community@familytrails.com**.

To connect with thousands of other families learning through adventure, join the **#FamilyTrails** conversation on Instagram by following us **@FamilyTrails**.

We'd love to hear from you!



TOYOTA FAMILY TRAILS

TOYOTA FAMILY TRAILS is an adventure brought to life thanks to a partnership between the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) and Toyota. Since 1989, NCFL has helped more than two million families make educational progress. We believe that all parents can help their children succeed in school and in life. The family unit is the one constant across the educational spectrum, but family engagement in education doesn't happen on its own. NCFL pioneered Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time,[®] bridging the gap that often exists between school, home, and community.

At Family Trails, we believe your family is the best teacher your child will ever have. Together, we hope to inspire parents and kids to let their imaginations lead them on a daily exploration and adventure through the world around them and the classroom of life.

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STORIES FROM THE TRAIL

Family stories are the heart and soul of Family Trails. Check out these two amazing stories contributed by the Family Trails community and get to know the rest of our contributors by visiting familytrails.com/blog.

Interested in submitting your own family adventure story? Visit familytrails.com/share.

featuring



as told by CARLA CUARES



The weather was perfect, and it been almost two years since we embarked on a short family adventure. My littlest one loves to explore and has shown marked interest in the outdoors. We also wanted to give the older children a break from social media and video games. (Of course, the parents also need to stay fit.) Hiking and a photo/nature walk with the kids seemed like the best thing to do on the last Sunday before the official start of spring.


We decided to hike one of the shorter trails in the neighborhood at Towsley Canyon Trail Park. It was a mere 1.1 mile trail, but the climb to the top proved to be a little challenging when carrying a toddler in a carrier backpack. My heart rate went up into the 140s during the ascent, and we had to stop and rest a few times just to catch our breath.

“The view at the top was gorgeous, though, and made the little climb worth it.”

CARLA CUARES
@wandermom28

The view at the top was gorgeous, though, and made the little climb worth it. Plus there was the feeling of exhilaration having achieved something. Southern California has been blessed with so much rain these past few months, adding more vibrancy. The hillsides are teeming with various plants and colorful wildflowers. It was a treat to see and hear the creek bubbling with water again.

Along the way, we taught the older kids about safety and poisonous plants. It almost turned into a mini science class when we asked them how plants defend themselves from predators. The hike was completed in less than two hours. That may not be a lot of time, but I honestly think it was two hours well spent, creating scenes and childhood memories.



the
VIEW
at the
TOP



as told by ADDIE MORIZIO

I have four children under the age of five. I like to call our everyday life ‘controlled chaos,’ but in reality, crazy is our normal and we just own it. (Most of the time.) With four kids, sleeping in to double digits is something I can only dream about. By 6:30 a.m. all four are not only awake, but also unapologetically energetic.

The outdoors has become our sanity. It has been the most wonderful gift to witness my children fall in love with the sounds of the waves pulling back along the rocks on the shore. Or seeing their curiosity and love for each insect they stumble upon. Or witnessing them putting together how everything is intertwined and perfectly paired within nature.

Earlier this year, I was handed two of the sweetest gifts. I was given a day in Massachusetts where temperatures reached the mid 60’s, and I was able to spend that day at the ocean, alone, with only my daughter Nora. Being a mom to four is so much fun. It is magical, sweet, full of so much unexpectedness

and joy. But it can also be overwhelming. I sometimes feel that in meeting everyone’s daily needs, I lay down my head at night feeling a little bruised. I know they were fed three meals but were their little hearts fed? Did I spend enough time with each of them? Did they all feel loved and heard?

To be able to participate in my kids’ love of the outdoors, to see their wonder and how they learn to navigate nature, has truly been one of my favorite aspects of motherhood. It is a true treat to share with them my love of the outdoors and all of the activities that I adored as a child myself. So this opportunity to not only be outside, but to escape to my favorite spot with my daughter for the day made my heart sing. I only had one child to buckle up in a car seat. We could stop wherever we wanted because getting out and holding the hand of only one child is easier than getting into my jeans. I could even comfortably do so while holding a hot coffee in my free hand. And I only had to worry about one child having to go to the bathroom.

I felt as if getting to the ocean couldn't come fast enough. It has a tendency to wash away my stress. My soul finds a sense of calmness, wonder, and clarity at the edge of the ocean's vastness. Witnessing Nora's joy and delight for not only being there, but also being there with me, became a moment that I will cherish and vividly hold onto for the rest of my life.

Moments after we reached the beach, without a second of hesitation, Nora stripped off her shoes, grabbed my hand, and asked me to do the same. She wanted to stand in the water. She wanted to feel the tug of the waves and the pebbles roll across her feet. Being February in New England did not phase her. In that moment, I could not have been more proud to say she was my daughter. We share the same love for the outdoors and water. My head feels most free and my heart feels most content when I am lost in nature's arms.

Nora and I were able to spend our day together, removed from the normal loudness that fills our days. I felt as if I truly got to hear her and love on only her. That day ended up being more filling for me than I could have ever dreamed. Real life – messy, messy life – is beautiful, too. But being able to step outside of our normal, slow down, and experience that day at one of my most beloved spots with my daughter was unforgettable for us both. The number of times she broke into the most contagious giggle or countless "I love you's" was perfection. We scoured the beach for heart rocks and filled her bag with treasures. We counted periwinkles and traced their trails with our fingers. I was able to witness a love for the ocean sprout in my daughter's heart that day.

*"My head feels most free and my heart feels most content
when I am lost in nature's arms."*

ADDIE MORIZIO
@morizibrood



EXPLORE FURTHER

EXTENDED LEARNING *with* THE CUARES FAMILY

- 1. Collecting wildflowers is one of the most enjoyable parts of a spring or summer hike!**
To preserve the flowers and your memories, place the flowers between sheets of paper and then place something heavy, such as a stack of books, on top for a week. Once the flowers have been dried and pressed, consider displaying them by framing them or creating laminated placemats. Or share the beauty by making customized floral notecards.
- 2. Plants have a variety of ways to defend themselves and ensure their survival.** From thorns and spines to toxins and poisons, plants are well-prepared with a variety of defensive weapons. Check out your local library for books such as *How Do Plants Defend Themselves?* by Ruth Owen or *Prickly Plants: Stuck!* by Ellen Lawrence, and on your next nature walk, see how many defenses you can spot on the flora in your region.
- 3. Explore Wonder of the Day® #263 “What Does Poison Ivy Look Like?” with your family at [Wonderopolis.org](https://wonderopolis.org).**

EXTENDED LEARNING *with* THE MORIZIO FAMILY

- 1. The ocean is full of treasures, so what better place to go on a treasure hunt than the beach?**
Before you leave the house, make a word or picture list of all the things you might spy on your day at the beach – seagulls, sand fiddlers, shells, seaweed, driftwood, and more. Bring along a tote bag or bucket to collect your treasures for more fun at home.
- 2. After a day of digging in the sand and building castles at the beach, expand on your child’s learning about where sand comes from.** Collect some pebbles and place them in a container with a lid. Let your children shake the pebbles vigorously. After shaking for a few minutes, open the container and note that as the rocks were shaken, they began to break up, forming smaller bits or grains. Discuss how rocks are weathered naturally to form sand.
- 3. Explore Wonder of the Day® #64 “Why is Sand Scratchy?” with your family at [Wonderopolis.org](https://wonderopolis.org).**



MORE TRAILS & STORIES➤



MORE TRAILS & STORIES➤



THE BEST.
DAY. EVER.
The Hughes Family

MT. RAINIER
IN A DAY
The Edwards Family

CEDERBERG
NATIONAL PARK
The Pirlot Family

STARTING A
NEW JOURNEY
The Mayr Family

ROAD TRIP
FOR TWO
The Delisser Family

THE SOURCE OF
THE RIVER SEVERN
The Zervas Family

AN AFRICAN FARM
The Pirlot Family

OUR FIRST
FAMILY SKI TRIP
The Rasmussen Family

ADVENTURING
WITH NO LIMITS
The Zimmerman Family

➤ A YEAR ON THE ROAD
The Levy Family

TOYOTA
FAMILY
TRAILS

Social Challenges

MAR.

APR.

MAY

JUN.

JUL.

AUG.

Each month we're issuing a new inspiration challenge to the Family Trails community.

The monthly challenge may come in the form of a visual prompt, question, or activity, and will always be designed to spark family exploration, adventure, and learning.

We'll collect the best of the best to share via social, on **FamilyTrails.com**, and in Trails Mix. To participate, look for the monthly challenge prompt on Instagram. Maybe you'll see your family adventures in an upcoming issue of Trails Mix!

Check out some of the highlights from our last few months ➤

CHALLENGE
NO.1

MARCH

Forts



Cold weather has many of us seeking indoor adventure as we wait on the arrival of spring. But why should warm weather months have all the fun? Our theme for March was “Forts.” This month, we challenged you to explore the experience of building something together, then share your stories with us on Instagram by using #FT_Forts.



PHOTO AT LEFT: [@justbethwithaj](#)
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: [@jessieemslie](#), [@lilbirdyphotography](#), [@tales_of_boyhood](#)

CHALLENGE
NO.2

APRIL

Fresh



Spring is finally here and everything is popping up green. Whether you're taking a nature walk, planting a pizza garden, or digging in the dirt, we want to see how your family rings in spring! Share your stories with us on Instagram by using #FT_Fresh.

PHOTO AT LEFT: @roaminggonzalez
CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: @natureplaysignv, @littlepinelearners, @thehouseofwildhearts

CHALLENGE
NO.3

MAY

ماما



May is all about moms. This month, we want to hear from you, adventure moms! Why is family adventuring important to you as a mother? How did your own mom inspire you to make family exploration a legacy you pass down to your children? Share with #FT_Moms on Instagram.



PHOTO AT LEFT: @findingourpark
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: @boys_run_free, @thekinfolkadventure, @kes1988

TRAILS MIX RECIPE #6

Baked Apples



by JESSICA PAHL

DIRECTIONS

8 Apples
1/2 c flour
1/2 c quick oats
1/2 c brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1/3 c butter

1. Halve the apples and take out core. In a bowl mix everything else until crumbly.
2. Scoop the mixture into the apple halves and wrap each one individually in foil.
3. Take with you camping! Over the campfire place on a rack over hot coals and cook about 20 minutes or until soft.



JESSICA PAHL

IMPERFECTHOUSEWIFE.ORG
@RESPLENDENTLIFE

I'm a homeschooling mom of four, who loves simple living. A cup of coffee while I write or paint makes me happy. My surfer husband and I desire to pass down our love of the wild outdoors to our children with the hope they will always see the beauty.



GUEST TRAIL GUIDES AHEAD

Attention Hikers:

You are about to embark on a journey
that will impact your family activities
for generations to come.

Proceed with extreme excitement.



featuring

ANDREA
RASMUSSEN

At Family Trails, we believe all families
can learn and grow together through
exploration and adventure. In this spirit,
in each edition of Trails Mix you'll find
feature pieces spotlighting a diverse
range of adventurers from around the
country, blazing their own trail.

A HIKE *for the* BOOKS

as told by ANDREA RASMUSSEN

On most weekends you can find our family out hiking around different parts of Colorado. Hiking allows us to slow down, explore, and enjoy time as a family. There are no distractions or places to be, just the mountains and our family.

We feel very lucky to live in such a beautiful place and explore it with our kids. Between the landscape, the colors, the textures, and the wildlife, hiking allows for a different experience each time we go. I don't know how anyone could ever get bored! However, hiking with toddlers can sometimes be a whole different story!

We like to be creative with our hikes and find trails that offer more than just walking. We find trails that allow our kids to explore lakes, waterfalls, rock formations, and wildlife. I think kids (or at least my kids) are more than just visual. They like to touch, climb, throw, and explore. Throwing rocks into the water, playing in the river, and climbing on boulders are the moments that my kids remember.

This past weekend we went to a Devil's Head Lookout trail where there is a Fire Lookout Tower at the top of the mountain. We decided to do things a little differently and actually tell our boys (who are four and two) about the Lookout Tower. We showed them pictures and shared a little bit of history about this place. From that moment on they were excited. The boys couldn't wait to go explore and "look" for fire. At that moment, I think they thought it was their very own fire tower. (Our boys are big fans of firemen!)



“Hiking allows us to slow down, explore, and enjoy time as a family.”

ANDREA RASMUSSEN
@hikingtheglobewithkids



On Saturday morning, we set out for the trail. Devil's Head is located in Pike National Forest about 60 minutes from Denver. It has amazing rock formations and offers incredible views of the foothills, Pikes Peak, Mount Evans, and downtown Denver. The hike is beautiful and a constant gain of 900+ feet in elevation the entire way. For toddlers, it's a little bit of a strenuous hike.

About halfway, I asked our oldest, who was crying at that moment (due to falling), if he want to turn around and head down the trail. In his tiny voice he responded, "No, I want to keep going to see the fire station." Their determination and perseverance paid off. They knew what was waiting for them at the end of the trail and they pushed through the hard, rough terrain and completed what they started!

Our boys' reaction when they reached the Fire Lookout Tower was priceless. This is definitely a hike that will go down in the books for them. They are still talking about how cool it was and asking when we can go back. I don't think they remember the five hours it took for us to complete the hike, but they'll remember the memories we created and the feeling of accomplishment and victory they experienced at the top of the mountain. And because of that, I would hike five hours all over again just for them to have those memories!

FINGERPRINT DANDELION

SEEDS OF ADVENTURE

Much like seeds on a dandelion, there are a million different ways for families to learn and explore together. No two adventures are ever exactly the same. In this craft, you'll embark on a family creativity adventure. Grab a little paint and get ready to make your mark! Using your finger tips as your paint brushes, fill in the dandelion seeds and caterpillar's body with color.



LET'S CREATE!

TOYOTA
FAMILY
TRAILS

DOWNLOAD ► familytrails.com/dandelion

Lost in NATURE'S ARMS

Instagram icon @FAMILYTRAILS



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