

Trail Usage Tips During the Coronavirus Crisis
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This document is unofficial. It is based on my experience, opinions, common sense, and common etiquette. It only applies to Santa Clara County and jurisdictions with the same rules.

There is currently a stay at home order in Santa Clara County and other areas because of the Coronavirus crisis. However there are exceptions. This is excerpted from the FAQs document released by the Santa Clara County Public Health Department, so it is official:

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/phd/DiseaseInformation/novel-coronavirus/Pages/frequently-asked-questions.aspx>

The Order prohibits non-essential travel on foot or bike -- does that mean that I can't go on a walk or take a bike ride?

No. The Order allows you to go outside for exercise so long as you maintain social distancing (more than 6 feet from persons who are not part of your household). This includes activities like walks or hikes or bike rides or going to a park.

Can I leave home to exercise?

If you will be outdoors and not in close contact with other people, yes. Otherwise, no. Fitness centers, exercise gyms, recreational centers, golf courses, and public pools are not allowed to operate.

Can golf courses remain open?

No.

I become anxious when cooped up in my house. Am I allowed to go to a park or on a hike? Can I travel to a County park or open space?

Yes. Spending time outside improves mood and well-being, and is particularly beneficial to children. You can go for walks, go to the park, and engage in other similar activities, but you should maintain social distance (more than six feet away from persons who are not part of your household) to avoid spread of the virus.

Can I walk my dog/pet?

Yes. Be sure that you distance yourself at least six feet from others who are not part of your household.

So, interpreting this, it means you and members of your household can drive to a park or trail and go for a hike, walk, run, skate, or bike ride. You can walk your dog. Presumably, you can also ride your horse. You can even meet up with friends, as long as you stay 6 feet away from them. Who qualifies as a member of your household? That can be complicated and is outside the scope of this document. Basically, it's people who live with you, regardless of their relationship to you. Conversely, people who are not in your household are those who don't live with you, no matter how closely they are related to you. You can't go to their house to pick them up to go to a park. However, you can arrange to rendezvous at a park and go for a hike, as long as you stay 6 or more feet apart.

Staying 6 or more feet apart is called social distancing. How do you maintain social distancing in parks and on trails? Here are some tips:

- Choose parks/trails close to home. It's not the distance that's a problem, but what you have to do when you travel long distances: use restrooms, drinking fountains, picnic tables, restaurants, gas stations, etc., where you can be exposed to infection.
- Choose wide trails instead of narrow single-tracks. While it's easy to provide social distancing in terms of inline separation on any kind of trail, it's much easier to provide lateral separation on wide trails, especially those with shoulders.
- In wet weather, paved trails are better. Dirt trails may effectively become narrowed because of mud, water, or erosion. Vegetation growth can also narrow dirt trails.
- Walk/ride as far to the right side of the trail as possible. Leave plenty of room for others to pass you on the left.
- If people are passing you too close on the left, step off the trail to the right if possible.
- When passing from behind, go as far to the left as possible.
- Bike riders passing pedestrians from behind should announce themselves (call out, ring a bell, etc.). This is a common safety rule, not just during this crisis.
- If you're in a group, walk single-file. If you have to walk abreast, quickly switch to single-file when others are passing.
- Anything that other people have touched can pass on viruses. Be aware of them. That includes door handles, gate latches, fences, drinking fountain knobs, park benches, picnic tables, traffic light buttons, mapboxes, signs and signboards, restroom fixtures, parking ticket machines, playground equipment, fitness/parcourse equipment, bridges, stair handrails, bollards, trash can lids, doggie bag dispensers. Use appropriate hygiene practices, like not touching them with bare hands, wearing gloves, wiping surfaces with sanitizing wipes, washing your hands or using sanitizer after touching them.