

## A Story About a Hike

First comes the vision. A beautiful sunny day out in nature with your family. Your young children happily throwing rocks in rivers, wading in creeks. Oh, look! Little JoJo caught a crawdad! A picnic where everyone enjoys the food and nobody complains because you made the peanut butter and jelly on the dark brown bread (otherwise known as wheat). You cover extensive ground! Your children bask in nature! You get gorgeous pictures to share on social media. Then, the kiddos nap peacefully on the ride home while you and your spouse agree on what music or podcast to listen to.

### *Record Scratch*

Sure, we'd all love for the above vision to be reality, but the truth is a bit messier, potentially whinier (which comes with the territory when doing activities with young kids), and comes with unexpected bumps in the road (also known as surprises, depending on how you look at these kinds of things).

In reality, you might be ready to throw in the towel before you even leave your house. Packing for a day hike seems like it should be simple, but by the time you consider what your family will need and plan properly for the trail you'll be spending time on, you've already expended a lot of mental energy and can't muster up the patience for the car ride to the trailhead.

Once you arrive, the kids are hungry for the forty-third time, the baby falls and scrapes her knee and refuses to go in the carrier pack, and your oldest can't be pulled away from the creek just beyond the trailhead to even start the hike.

We've been there more times than we can count, and have felt more relief in a hike being over than we felt excitement to go on the hike in the first place. However, we've also grown as a family who hikes, honed in on the process, adjusted our expectations, and have built some beautiful memories in the process.

If you're a family who enjoys the outdoors, wants to enjoy the outdoors, and wants to learn more about the family hike adventures that await you, this guide is for you. In this guide, we'll provide hiking and gear recommendations, all designed with young families in mind.

