

Youth & Families »

Best Summer Ever

Seven steps to a sensational season

Have you found that a bright orb shining in the sky is causing you to squint more often? Have you been hearing bird songs filling the air? Have you looked down at your feet and seen your toes sticking out of sandals? If you answered yes to any of these questions, don't worry, the diagnosis is simple: summer is officially on the way.

And how will you be filling your long summer days? We have a few suggestions for you that just might make the summer of 2011 the best summer ever.

Get your family digging in the dirt. Join one of WTA's family work parties. Volunteering to do trail maintenance is a terrific way to give back to trails. Sign up at www.wta.org/volunteer/trail-work-parties. We'll be working on Cougar Mountain on May 21 and on June 4, which is also National Trails Day.

Meet Joan Burton. The author of *Best Hikes with Kids: Western Washington and the Cascades*, Joan will be partnering with WTA to present **Hiking With Children workshops**. You'll be inspired to get outdoors with your kids, plus learn some fun tips and tricks to keep them safe and have fun along the way. Here are the scheduled dates:

May 16: Bellingham REI, 6 p.m.
 June 7: Tacoma REI, 7 p.m.
 June 14: Olympia REI, 7 p.m.

Camp, camp and camp some more. Pack up the car and leave the city behind for a few days. Camping out means two things—sleeping in tents and roasting marshmallows on an open fire—so kids are pretty much guaranteed to love it, while the adults can look forward to serving dinner on massive picnic tables and romping around the campground on short-but-sweet hiking trails. For car-camping tips and suggested family-friendly locations, visit www.wta.org/kids/children/how-to/car-camping-with-kids.

Share your smarts. When your family returns from a hike, share your experience with others by submitting a trip report. Trip reports provide useful information that helps hikers know the current trail conditions as they plan their hike. Point out the trail features your kids enjoyed on the hike and what advice you would give the next family heading to the trail. Submit your trip report at www.wta.org/go-hiking/trip-reports.



WTA's youth program activities are getting a boost this year, thanks to a grant from The Seattle Foundation.

Experience a sky full of stars. Waking up in a peaceful alpine meadow after watching the sun set behind a jagged peak? Yep, there is pretty much nothing better. Take a family backpacking trip and view the amazing night sky with countless twinkling stars. You might even get lucky and see a shooting star or two. For helpful information from planning your trip to suggested locations, visit www.wta.org/go-hiking/backpacking.

Make your miles count. Enter the family category in WTA's 2011 Hike-a-Thon and hit the trails this August. Not only will you enjoy spending time together as you explore Washington's wild places by trail, but you can earn some great prizes, too! Hike-a-Thon registration begins July 1.

Become the next Ansel Adams. Take your camera along as you are out discovering the wonders of Washington. Photography allows you to capture memorable moments along the trail. Shoot photos all summer long, and you'll have plenty of images to sift through when our Northwest Exposure photo contest opens in mid-August. Deadline for entries is October 16.

Have a wild summer. You won't forget it.♦



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