



Recreating Responsibly during Covid

May 4, 2020

Recreating Responsibly during Covid

All of us are going stir crazy at home right now, the springtime weather is beautiful, and nothing says social distancing like heading for the trails! After weeks of getting creative to stave off cabin fever — backyard campouts and trail riding at home, video based trail riding and horse camping clinics — horse based outdoor adventurers are hearing good news. Across the country states are starting to open up for recreation.

But as riders oil their saddles and schedule trims and shoes from their ponies, this early experiment with resuming everyday activities in the midst of a pandemic is going to look and feel different from other years. For starters, most outdoor events and camping will remain prohibited across the nation. I don't plan on roasting s'mores over a fire at Haney Meadow, packing in Montana, or horse camping in Ohio for the foreseeable future.

Staying safe while enjoying the outdoors

How should equestrians behave on the public lands that will soon open? In large part the same way we were asked to behave earlier in the year, when public health measures like physical distancing were brand new.

Stick to day trips with immediate household members and don't meet up with ride buddies just yet.

"Be prepared" has never been more important: Take your own hand sanitizer and toilet paper. Don't expect bathroom facilities to be open. Bring your own food and drink to avoid visiting businesses far from home.

These recommendations are bitter but a public health necessity to minimize the risk of viral transmission between communities. A real challenge for us is going to be showing that we can use our trails safely and responsibly. Overcrowding at the trailheads, once just an annoyance, is now a public health liability that could lead our public land access being shut down again.

Get creative beyond your usual crowded trailheads. The www.TrailMeister.com extensive library of horse trails offers many options to explore.

Stay close

I was starting to plan a pack trip, outside of my local community, where my only contact would be a stop on the drive for the gas pump. I had to reconsider.

For those of us who feel healthy it can be tempting to get back to life as normal. But we must remember that all of us could be carriers. Until we have universal testing, or a vaccine for COVID-19, we have to continue to practice good hygiene, wear masks in public, and continue social distancing.

The coronavirus spreads through close contact between people, or the surfaces they may share. It looks like more of us than previously thought may be asymptomatic carriers. By avoiding travel, we avoid spreading the disease. Additionally, traveling to camping destinations naturally involves passing through small communities.

Back to that trip. What if I got into an accident? I could expose first responders and tax already strained healthcare resources.

All of us want this situation to be over as soon as possible, so that our country and economy can recover and we can enjoy normal activities like camping trips once again. And that's why it's so important that all of us participate in the solution, not the problem.

Think twice before traveling outside of your local community. If you can abide by the rest of the rules for going outdoors during the pandemic, and have access to legal, open areas within that community, then by all means go. But think about how you can practice recreating responsibly during Covid before heading further afield for now