

Your First 30 Days on Trail

A Beginner Hiking Plan for Women — by Sophie at PackedTrails

HOW THIS PLAN WORKS

Two hikes per week for four weeks. Each week builds on the last. Start easier than you think you need to — the goal is to fall in love with hiking, not to prove anything on week one.

WEEK 1 — First Steps

Hike 1 4-6km • Easy • Under 150m elevation

Your very first trail. Walk at a pace where you can hold a conversation. Focus on enjoying it, not finishing fast.

Hike 2 4-6km • Easy • Different location

Try a different setting — forest, coast or country park. Two hikes this week builds momentum fast.

WEEK 2 — Building Confidence

Hike 3 6-8km • Easy • Gentle hills OK

A little longer than last week. Notice how much more comfortable this feels compared to Hike 1.

Hike 4 Repeat a Week 1 trail

Walk the same trail faster than before. Seeing your own progression is genuinely motivating.

WEEK 3 — First Real Challenge

Hike 5 7-9km • Moderate • 200-300m gain

Your first proper climb. Short steps, steady pace on ascents. The view from the top is earned.

Hike 6 7-9km • Moderate • Second climb

Second moderate trail this week. Pack a proper lunch. Take a proper break at the top.

WEEK 4 — You're a Hiker Now

Hike 7 First solo or longer approach

Download the map, tell someone your plans, turn around at halfway time. Confidence is the goal.

Hike 8 Your choice

Pick the trail that excites you. You've been hiking a month. You know your pace and what you love.

Pre-Hike Checklist

Run through this before every hike — especially your first few

GEAR

- ☐ Supportive footwear with grip (hiking shoes or sturdy trainers)
- ☐ Merino or synthetic socks — never cotton
- ☐ At least 1.5L water for a 2-3 hour hike
- ☐ Snacks (trail mix, banana, energy bar)
- ☐ Lightweight rain layer in your pack
- ☐ Fully charged phone with offline trail map downloaded
- ☐ Blister kit (Leukotape, small scissors)

SAFETY

- ☐ Tell someone: trail name, location, expected return time
- ☐ Download the trail map offline on AllTrails or Gaia GPS
- ☐ Check the weather forecast — have a turn-around plan
- ☐ Know your turnaround time (halfway in time, not distance)
- ☐ Carry a whistle clipped to your pack strap

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- ☐ Boots laced properly and checked for hot spots
- ☐ Sunscreen applied (reapply every 2 hours)
- ☐ Phone battery 100% and in low-power mode if needed
- ☐ Spare socks packed for longer hikes

Sophie's Top 5 Tips for Beginner Women

What I wish someone had told me before my first hike

- 1 Start easier than you think you need to.** Your first hike should feel achievable, not brutal. Easy trails build the habit. Hard trails break it.
- 2 Never wear cotton socks.** Merino or synthetic only. Cotton holds moisture and causes blisters. This one change prevents most first-hike misery.
- 3 Bring more water than you think.** 1.5 litres minimum for a 2-3 hour hike. By the time you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated.
- 4 Tell someone where you're going.** Trail name, location, expected return time. Takes two minutes. Non-negotiable.
- 5 Go again within a week.** The habit forms fastest when the gap between hikes is short. Plan your second hike before you do the first.

Read the full beginner hiking guide at packedtrails.com/hiking-for-beginners-women

More guides, honest gear reviews and Sophie's trail tips for beginner women