

Like to hike? Try 100 miles in the New River Gorge this year

Staff reports

Looking to get fit in 2016? If you'd rather be in the woods than in the gym, you might consider joining the New River Gorge 100 Mile Challenge. Hikers are encouraged to hike 100 miles in the New River Gorge National River area this year, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service.

While 100 miles may seem like too big a goal to aim for, turnout was strong for the first guided hike of the year in the park.

More than 100 hikers braved sub-freezing temperatures on Jan. 2 during the first ranger-led hike of 2016.

"This year is the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, and our challenge to hike 100 miles in the New River Gorge National River and Bluestone National Scenic River is a way to honor that anniversary," National Park Service Ranger Jodi French-Burr told hikers just before embarking on the program's inaugural event, a 3.5-mile hike along

Grandview Rim Trail.

Among the 110 hikers was Ruth Sheff, of Charleston.

"It's a good way to get people outside and active," Sheff told the Gazette-Mail at the time. "We don't know all the trails and the different areas to hike in the Gorge, and we thought this program would help us learn about them. If you hike just 8 or 10 miles a month, reaching the 100 mile goal is doable."

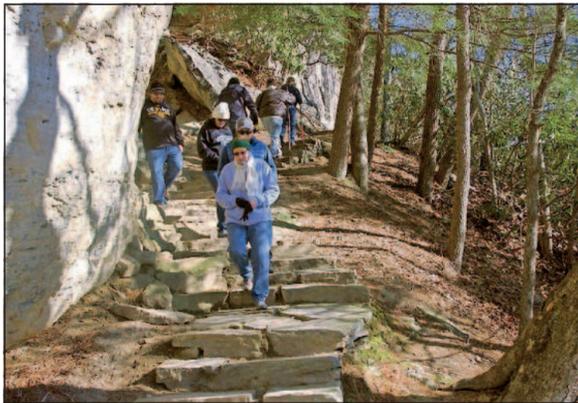
There are about 40 trails of varying difficulties and lengths in the New River Gorge National River. Trails are spread out in the Grandview, Glade Creek, Sandstone Falls, Fayetteville, Thurmond and Nuttallburg areas.

If you go, hikers are encouraged to observe the following etiquette rules: take everything out that you may bring in and properly dispose of any trash, leave any wildflowers, wildlife and historic objects you find where you found them, bicycles are only allowed on designated trails, keep pets on leashes and respect the rights of others.



RICK STEELHAMMER | Gazette-Mail file photos

Hikers taking part in the New River Gorge National River's 100 Mile Challenge take in the view from an overlook along Grandview Rim Trail.



Hikers near the end of trail at the rock steps leading to Turkey Spur Overlook in the New River Gorge National River.

To stay safe, the NPS recommends the following things:

- Know the weather forecast and plan your hike accordingly.
- Wear appropriate clothes and shoes for hiking.
- Carry rain gear; sudden thunderstorms can occur at any time.
- Bring a trail map, available at any visitor center. A compass or GPS is also a good idea.
- Bring water and drink

regularly; bring snacks or lunch for longer hikes.

- Lone hikers should tell a friend where they're going and when they expect to be back.
- Stay on designated trails, and be careful around cliffs and overlooks.
- Check for ticks during summer and spring.
- Watch out for poison ivy, copperheads and timber rattlesnakes. Learn to recognize them.
- Wearing blaze orange

during hunting season is advisable, as hunting is permitted in the park.

- Stay out of any abandoned coal mines and coke ovens, which are common in the area. The openings are extremely dangerous, due to unstable conditions, lack of oxygen in the air and bees and snakes that often inhabit them.
- In case of emergency call 911.

In addition to the National Park Service, the challenge is

also sponsored by Active Southern West Virginia and the YMCA of Southern West Virginia.

Hikers can track their progress with a log found on the NPS website. Completed logs can be turned in to the Canyon Rim Visitor Center in Lansing or the Sandstone Visitor Center in Sandstone. Those who complete the challenge before Dec. 31 earn a decal.

Experts debate role of fun in maintaining exercise

By Leslie Barker
The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS — Some things in life are inherently served with a big scoop of fun: balloons, bubbles, cupcakes to name but a few.

Exercise? Opinions vary. Avid cyclist Marcia Smith of Dallas says her Saturday bike rides "make me feel like a 12-year-old."

Sarah Samaan of Frisco, Texas, knows that riding her horse "is super exercise, but I just don't think of it that way because it is way too much fun."

Dallas triathlete Scott Cessac says going on a four-hour bike ride and one-hour run alone isn't fun. "But having friends there with you doing it alongside you makes it more enjoyable."

Lee Ann Rayburn says exercise in general doesn't equal fun. But, she adds, "I love nothing more than to hike in the woods. To me, it's like nature's gigantic playground."

Anyone who has stepped foot on a trail knows hiking is indeed exercise. But does calling it fun negate its benefits? Or, looking at fun another way, does exercise have to be fun to get people to do it — and to make it a habit?

"There's a really small minority of people who are so disciplined that no matter what, they're going to do it," says Michelle Segar, author of "No Sweat: How the Simple Science of Motivation Can Bring You a Lifetime of Fitness" (American Management Association, \$16.95).

For most of us, that's not true, which makes this fun business a topic of intrigue, and one that researchers take seriously. A sampling of their findings:

■ Think of exercise as fun, and you're more likely to eat healthfully afterward.

A series of studies confirms this, including one where relay runners were asked after the race about their experience. The more negative their experience, the more unhealthy their snack choices.

■ Enjoyment is the best motivator for exercise.

"Logic doesn't motivate us; emotions do," Segar writes in her book. In other words, people who exercise for enjoyment stick with it more than those who do so for medical reasons.

"The problem is that we've turned exercise into a chore," says Segar, who directs the Sport, Health and Activity Research and Policy Center at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. "People feel they have to run intensely; they have to



TNS photo

Molly Setnick (right) leading a workout at her studio, Crowbar Cardio, says fun is a motivator, but people still need to make a commitment to exercise.

sweat; they have to feel uncomfortable. That typically makes, in general, people feel worse and derive less pleasure when the exercise is hard."

But fun alone is not enough, some experts say.

"Unfortunately, exercise is not really fun," says Molly Setnick, owner of Crowbar Cardio in Lower Greenville, Texas. "Some people are so lucky to have found something they love to do that is exercise, whether it's dance or running or swimming. But for the majority of the population, it's a chore."

Exercise at its optimum is a balance of fun, effectiveness and safety, Setnick says. It makes people feel, "I got something out of this and I want to do it again," she says.

"The fun aspect has to be in there, but it can't be the driving force. The driving force is improving health, getting stronger, losing weight, and if you don't get those, you lose the people anyway."

Fun is "a touchy subject for me," she says. "It's true that people are more likely to stick with something they enjoy, whether exercise or food. That's driven a lot of the fitness industry: 'Make it fun and they'll come.' Play music and they'll come."

But the drive to make exercise fun is never ending, she says, and she thinks it can cause people to miss the point. "Let's start bringing giant tractor tires to the gym. Let's start hip-hop

dancing in sync while cycling.' The problem is, unless someone wants to exercise and is committed to it, putting a bike on a roller coaster wouldn't keep them committed and coming in."

The whole make-it-fun idea could be construed as part of our society in general: Keep it interesting so that (heaven forbid) we won't be bored.

"It's like nobody has an attention span," Setnick says. "Everything has to be changing. It's like we're all looking for the next new thing, and there isn't always a next new thing."

Which isn't to say exercise should be drudgery.

"You have to find something you can at least enjoy, and you're more likely to stick with

it if you're having a good time," she says. "But I think sometimes that good time might need to come from a friend going with you as opposed to the class itself."

Her goal in the seven weekly classes she teaches is that people leave "knowing they had a great workout and hopefully it will be one they enjoyed. If they don't have a pleasant time, they won't come back."

One primary thing to keep in mind, Segar says, is that the reason for exercising "has to be truly compelling. It's giving you something positive you can immediately experience."

Maybe it gives you more energy, or helps you manage stress, or gives you time to laugh. Stick with it long enough

Finding a balance

How can you balance fun with fitness? Author Michelle Segar offers these tips:

- Design your own physical activity based on what you want and what feels good to you. Finding that takes "discovery and awareness," she says. If you don't like something, you won't stick to it. And if it doesn't make you feel good, well, "why would you prioritize things that don't make you feel good?"
- Fun might not be enough to keep you going. Does the workout make you feel centered? Does it relax you? Do you enjoy the social aspect, the results? "If it means we have to run faster, be willing to push our-

selves for something that actually isn't joyful so we can get social cohesion benefits, that's OK," she says.

- Give yourself permission to discover the ways that moving your body feels joyful. "We have to let people know that walking is OK and it does count," she says.
- Be realistic. "It's about starting slow and doing it in a way that will eventually lead to institutionalizing it into your life," she says. "Talk to people who own gyms, and they'll tell you that those who come in one or two days are much more likely to stick with it than those who go gangbusters. If we don't work with reality, reality will burst our bubble."

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