

MUD, MUCK, AND SUNSHINE

A NOTE ON SPRINGTIME TRAIL ETIQUETTE

By Sarah Griffin



Photo by [David Marcu](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The birds are singing. Green sprigs of grass are breaking through that last, resilient layer of crusty snow. People are coming out of the woodworks to celebrate spring's long-awaited arrival!

Trust us, we get it.

Your t-shirts are calling from the totes under your bed. Toes, fighting to free themselves from snow-boot prisons. Translucent legs begging for a little sunshine. Your lungs yearn to dust out winter's shelves and stock up on some fresh air.

But here's the deal...

We've gotta talk about taking care of our trails!

You don't want to abuse them with warm-weather excitement.

When the melting snow turns your familiar day hikes into a stretch of the Mighty Mississippi, it's *crucial* to stay on trail. **Saturated soil equals fragile soil.** This means the nearby ground and plants are easy targets for erosion, *especially* this time of year.

Have you ever come across a stretch of trail where three, seemingly-identical paths all lead to the same destination? Or several paths wind in and out of each other and you wonder which one you should take? Me too.

Walking alongside existing trails to avoid mud and muck may seem like no biggie. But the impact adds up when everyone else has the same idea. **This is how trail braiding, widening, and soil erosion occur.**



Photo by [Don Chen](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Here are some quick tips on how to enjoy the new sunny season while keeping damage minimal:

1. If Lake Michigan is blocking your path:
Splash through the puddle!
Get some air - douse your friends - have a laugh!
2. If there's a pig wallow blocking your path:
Squelch through the mud!
Enjoy the mucky symphony - it's seasonal and it's free!
3. If your trail has turned into last night's lava cake:
Surf that slip 'n slide!
An equally yummy experience - without all the extra calories!

Most importantly... JUST HAVE FUN!



Photo by [Massimo Sartirana](#) on [Unsplash](#)

A blog piece for Runner's Edge in Missoula, MT

If you *really* don't want to fall, come on in. Get some Katoohla traction devices and check out this season's models of [Altra](#) or [Salomon](#) trail running shoes!

If you *really* don't want to show people how cool and outdoorsy you are with your epic mud splatters, that's fine too. You can always stick to lower elevations or sunny areas where the ground is dry.

Springtime running may require you to be a bit more prepared - change of socks and shoes in the car? Totally doable. We have a wide variety of [moisture-wicking socks](#) from Smartwool, Feetures, and Balega, just to name a few.

We want to enjoy the good weather as much as you do. Just don't forget to pack your child-like enthusiasm for puddles and mud pies because that's the name of the game!

With that in mind, happy spring & happy running. See you out there... *on* the trail!