

# If it doesn't feel like winter, act like it's spring!

## Hitting the trails early in 2012

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Issaqueena Trail and waterfall are seeing higher volumes of visitors during this unusually mild winter.

CLEMSON — Spring is a prime time for hikers, and Upstate boasts a multitude of scenic trails.

According to officials at Table Rock State Park, January and February are usually slow months, but not this year.

The mild temperatures have tempted the outdoor junkies and they are getting a chance to see different wildlife, flora and, of course, raging waterfalls from the recent rains.

Hiking is a relatively inexpensive way to get out of the car, bars and away from everyday life. Our area is rich with natural treasures.

"There are a lot of great places to hike in Pickens and Oconee counties," said Paul Matthis, manager of Outdoor Adventures in Clemson. "The great thing about hiking is that you can set your own pace."

According to Matthis, there is a basic list of supplies to bring on a hike. This includes water, a small first-aid kit and insect repellent.

"Also, bring a map if you don't know the area," Matthis recommended. "Unless you're carrying a heavy pack, you don't need big hiking boots. Tennis shoes or light hiking shoes are fine. But don't skip on socks — get some with padding on the heel and ball of the foot. Wear comfortable clothes and bring an extra layer in your backpack."

As far as food goes, hikers should remember to carry what they carry in. Store all food in ziplock bags; save the cardboard at home. Freeze-dried meals work particularly well and are easy to prepare — just add water.

There are a few basic types of backpacks. For short, day hikes, there are the aptly named "daypacks," which are relatively light. Bigger packs are available with an external frame (the "Boy Scout model") or internal frame. An external frame tends to be a little more comfortable because it provides ventilation between the hiker and the pack. But an internal frame usually has a larger capacity. For Upstate overnight camping, Matthis recommends a 5-20 degree backpack. Make sure the bags use Polar-guard or another synthetic insulation. Down-insulated bags will be too warm and can become weighed down with moisture.

"If you're drinking water from a stream, make sure you purify the water," Matthis said. "Use iodine tablets, a water filter or chlorine tablets."

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With the high number of easily accessible waterfalls in the immediate area, venturing to them is a popular activity when the weather warms up.