

Present By

**Symbol**<sup>ALL</sup>

# Hiking Signs

## And Symbols Meaning











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Symbol	Meaning
 (Blue Blaze)	Indicates a side trail or an alternate path
 (Red Blaze)	Marks the main trail
 (Directional Arrow)	Shows the direction to follow on the trail
 (Warning Sign)	Warns of potential dangers like wildlife or cliffs
 (Tree Symbol)	Indicates a camping area
 (Wave Symbol)	Proximity to water sources
 (Fork and Knife)	Nearby picnic area
 (Regulatory Sign)	Enforces rules like no fires or no dogs

## Informative Highway Signs



More often than not, trail markings found on the highway will showcase white font against a dark brown background. Most of the time, these signs show the trail's name, your current elevation, and maybe a symbol representing the national park.

As far as hikers are concerned, these are some of the least important signs to be familiar with. Sure, they provide essential details about the path you're going to.

However, you'll really only use these once or twice upon visiting a new trail. I honestly hardly ever notice these signs when I'm re-visiting a trail I've hiked before.

# Trailhead Signs

Knowing how to spot a trailhead is a critical part of a hiker's skill set. Otherwise, how would you know where to start your trek?

**You'll often find them roadside, mounted on any of the following pole or stake materials:**

- Metal
- Wood
- Stone



Trailhead Signs

Depending on the trail and where it is, it might either be posted vertically or horizontally.



Bright Angel Trail

Horizontal trail markings will generally present little information. These are more likely to include the trail and park name and perhaps an arrow directing you where to start.

Note that trailheads can be unintentionally tucked away sometimes. There have been times when I've hiked an entire trail up and down, only to finally return to the start and stumble upon the trailhead thinking, "Wow, that would've been nice to see when I got here!"

With that said, if you think you've located the correct trail but you don't see any signage, try looking around the trees and shrubbery.

It shouldn't be too hidden away. Still, your eyes might trick you into missing it, given its natural hue.

## Important Trail Symbols to Recognize on Trailhead Signs

The most notable trail marker signs you should recognize include:



North Downs Way

- One person or two people walking with backpacks and walking sticks. These trail symbols show that the trail is suitable for people who are hiking or backpacking.
- Person on a bike. Multi-use trails will typically have this on the sign. It indicates that the trail ahead is safe for bikers.
- Person riding on a horse. Trails that have this symbol on the sign are okay for those exploring on horseback.
- OHV (off-highway vehicle) letters or person riding a quad. If you see this sign, you can take your off-road vehicle down this route. Examples include Jeeps, quads, or motorbikes. Watch out for other vehicles and pedestrians!

## Warning Signs

Signs	Name
	<p>Warning Ahead</p>
	<p>Danger! Unsafe Area! DO Not Enter</p>
	<p>Stay On Trail   Respect Private Property</p>
	<p>Please Stay On Trail!</p>



Before you start on a new trail, it's vital to check any available warnings relevant to the area. This will help you determine what gear you should bring. These will often be concentrated at the trailhead, where your journey will start.

### **Some of the main types to look for include:**

- **Stay on trail:** I know the temptation to ignore this sign is strong. After all, you're a trailblazer! Yet, it's imperative that you heed the message.

Off-trail hiking is risky, especially for less experienced folks. It increases your injury risk and is the number one reason why search and rescue teams must locate adult hikers.

- **Landslides or rockslides:** Ideally, you would've gotten to know a bit about the environment before heading out. So, you would know if there was a rockslide risk before seeing a sign like this.

Still, these posted on the dangerous portions of the trail. This helps to know when to watch your step exactly.

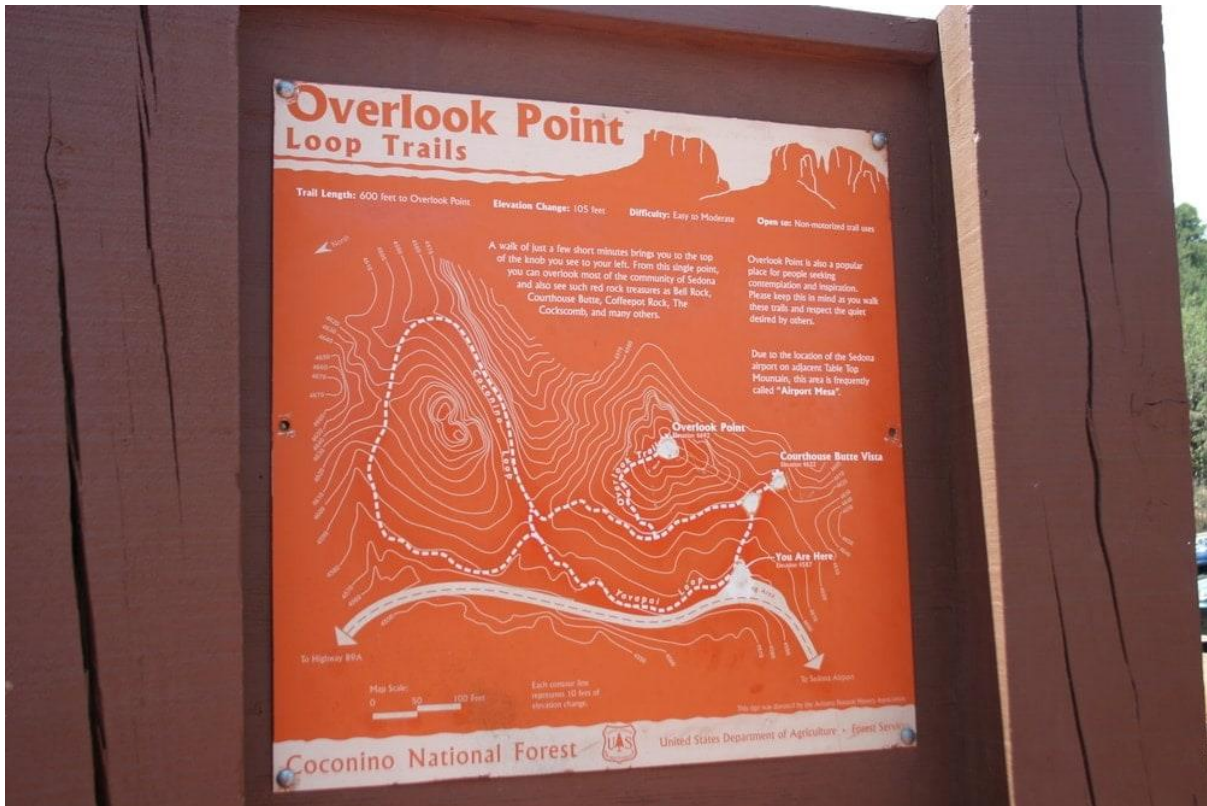
- **Private property:** Sometimes, a plot of private land is immediately next to a public trail. If there's a chance of a hiker wandering into the landowner's area, officials will help out by including this sign.

These are just a few examples of some of the most common warnings a hiker might see anywhere around the country.

Of course, there are many more that will vary based on your geographic region. The specific environmental and wildlife risks present there will influence this, too.

It might be helpful to get to know the area before you venture out into the wild. That way, you'll have an idea of the specific types of signs to watch out for.

# Interpretive Signs



Overlook Point | Loop trails

Signs in this category are more popular on heavily trafficked trails. They're excellent sources of cultural and environmental education. They often share tidbits about the geographic and societal history of a certain location.

For example, many interpretive signs in North America present timelines of the area's settlement.

The sign might mention what Indigenous population once managed the habitat. It might also discuss how they used and interacted with the surrounding plant life.

Other interpretive signs will walk visitors through the place's ecological makeup. These will detail the fauna and flora species native to the park.

The goal of incorporating these signs into the hiker's journey is to offer an engaging educational experience. They might

feature informative graphics, plants' and animals' species names, and brief descriptions of an object or small habitat nearby.

Additionally, you might find interpretive signs with maps. These are useful for walking you through historical events. For example, they can illustrate where things happened relative to where you're currently standing.


Most interpretive signs will be very easy to spot. They're often encased in glass and wood and built quite tall or in other conspicuous styles.

You're most likely to spot an interpretive sign or "wayside exhibit" at the start of a trail with free brochures or maps of the area.

Smaller exhibits can be scattered along the length of a trail with bite-sized pieces of information to enhance your journey each step of the way.

## Navigational Signs

There are a few key types of navigational signs you should know about before heading out to the trail. These are described in detail below.

Signs	Name	Description
	<p style="text-align: center;">Rock Cairns</p>	<p><b>Rock cairns</b> are the most natural, traditional hiking trail markers you'll get to learn.</p> <p>These are stacks of <b>rocks</b> that can have many different meanings, depending on where you are and how they're arranged.</p> <p>Cultures throughout the world have used and designed cairns in varying manners.</p> <p>Yet, the term itself was adopted from a Gaelic term meaning "heap of stones," believed to be first dubbed by Scots.</p>

	<h2>You Are Here</h2>	<p>“You Are Here” signs are very straightforward. They depict where you are currently standing in the context of either the trail or the entire park.</p> <p>Ideally, you’ll have a <b>GPS</b> or map with you, so this shouldn’t be your only means of navigation.</p>
	<h2>Mile Markers and Destination Signs</h2>	<p>These two sort of blur into one another, as they can both include the number of miles you have traveled or will travel to reach a certain point.</p> <p>The former is more applicable to loop trails, where there’s no particular destination for the hiker.</p>