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EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Enjoying the Great Outdoors: Hiking and Camping with Myriam

19 Jan 21 | Tamarah | [no comments.](#)

I met Myriam through Facebook, and I have really enjoyed the content that she put on the timeline. When I saw some of the images of her on a mountaintop, I just had to speak with her about her experiences outdoors.

What is your name?

My name is Myriam.

How long have you been hiking?

I have been hiking regularly for the past four months. However, prior to that, I frequently visited local gardens, parks and lakes for recreational cardio. I was somewhat acclimated to walking in nature, from power walking on treadmills to leisurely walking around my neighborhood. Long walks have been a big part of my life for the past 20 years, before I finally gave in and decided to challenge myself with small summits.

Did you start with an instructor?

No, I actually did not start out with an instructor because of I already had some experience. I began by hiking often with a partner. Later on, I joined a local hiking group to add to the variety, safety and social support of the experience. We all come together around our desire to be fit while escaping from the hustle and bustle of the city. For anyone who is beginning this experience, I would highly recommend hiking with a partner or with a small group.



Do you choose your own trails?

When I am not hiking with a group, I often choose my own trails. It depends on different locations, time constraints and my mood. I start by researching the distance and various trail features such as overlooks, terrains, waterfalls, lakes, brooks and switchbacks. It helps looking at reviews for how well-marked and easy to navigate the trails are from beginning to end whether I am alone or with a small group. There are also lots of cool and popular hiking apps to facilitate this.

How has this impacted your fitness?

Hiking through forest, hills and mountains is a great way to decompress and refocus the mind, body, emotions and spirit.

How often do you hike?

I typically power walk 3-5 days a week for 5-8 miles daily, but I hike 10-12 miles at least once a week. This keeps me at a baseline level of health and free from chronic illness or pain. The most immediate health benefits I've noticed were weight loss, lowered blood pressure, improved circulation, respiration and range of motion.



What kind of equipment do you use?

Some of the equipment I need for a solid-day hiking experience may include: hiking sneakers for traction and grip, trekking poles to enhance stability, a light weight backpack to safe guard your belongings and binoculars to see far off sites. You will also need a first aid kit, bug spray, sun protection, breathable clothing, battery pack, digital, step counter GPS navigation tools, full sized sleeping bag and water.

Do you enjoy any other fitness activities?

Hiking is great but other fitness activities I enjoy include dance aerobics, partner dancing, cardio sculpting and yoga.

What lessons have you learned from this experience?

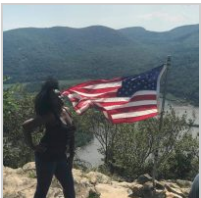
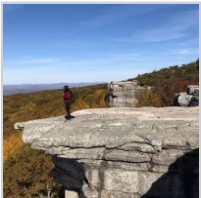
What I have learned from hiking is to have a positive attitude and keep pressing on no matter what. Keep putting one foot in front of the other and you will reach your summit every time! Truly it is not where you start, but where you finish. Enjoy the whole journey not just the destination.



The reward is spectacular views only a handful of persistent people get to see! I would love to see more black women boldly taking up space in nature and enjoying all the wonderful benefits of the great outdoors. The best part is that it is often low cost to get started. Nature is free and for everyone and the gift that keeps on giving.

I noticed that you camp as well. How long have you been camping?

A happy black girl hiking quickly became a happy black girl camping. The outdoor benefits are very similar and transferable. My enthusiasm for the outdoors became a way for me to explore more than one activity, while meeting new people and getting fit and healthy.



Do you find that lessons from each experience are similar?

Definitely. Both my hiking and camping experiences teach trouble-shooting, teamwork, autonomy, determination, respect of self and others, self-control, self-confidence, boundary setting and maintaining, grace agility, body-positivity... the list goes on. It is a entire host of social skills, all while being adventurous and exploring new terrain and activities.

Do you enjoy your outdoor activities all year round?

Biking, kayaking, swimming, backpacking were some of the things I and other hikers inadvertently ended up exploring alongside hiking. It is sort of like a black woman in motion stays in motion. Adventure trips and activities tend to coexist and feed into each other. We not only talking about diet and exercise on the trail and at the campsites. We also end up trading nutritious snacks, cooking tips, other practices good for holistic lifestyle. It is loads of fun.



How would you advise someone to start outdoor activities like hiking or camping?

I would encourage anyone who is getting into the outdoors not to shy away from trying a variety of outdoor or pairing other experiences alongside one consistent activity. There really is a cornucopia of fun and exiting ways to partake in a lifestyle that is fun and fit, while not being particularly tied to the gym. It does not feel like such a chore to socialize with others or to prioritize your health and well-being when it's centered around a unifying activity. Afterall, variety is the spice of life.

I was telling Myriam during our chats that she was really inspiring my fitness journey. What a way to take charge of your fitness. I love the intentionality of it all, and how she makes it fun. If you have a sport or activity that you enjoy, and you think that it could benefit our community, please either contact Christelyn, leave a comment below, or e-mail me at bryan.tamara@protonmail.com.

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Trails



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