

OUR FAVORITE LOCAL HIKES:

➔ River Bend Park



Located in Catawba County, River Bend Park offers a variety of trails that border the Catawba River.

With over 19.7 miles of casual trails, picnic areas, and fishing spots, there is something for everyone in this park.

[Click here to find out more!](#)

➔ Bakers Mountain



Bakers Mountain Park is located on the highest elevation point in Catawba County (1780 feet.) The park has a 2.3 mile loop trail that features a small waterfall and is dog friendly.

[Click here to find out more!](#)

➔ Hibriten Mountain



This old logging road offers a challenging hike to a summit where you will find the "Bridge to No-Where" that overlooks Lenoir and acts as a hang gliding ramp for the ultra-adventurous.

[Click here to find out more!](#)

➔ The Vertical Mile: Rocky Face Mtn.



Rocky Face Mountain Recreational Area is located in the northern part of Alexander County. The park offers a variety of trails, picnic areas, and even rock climbing.

One trail nicknamed the "Vertical Mile" is a 2-mile loop with a steep vertical ascent about a fourth of a mile into the trail. This summit offers one of the best views in the area!

[Click here to find out more!](#)



FALL FITNESS: A guide to the best local hikes & exercises to prepare for them

By Jennifer Pitts, CPT, MES

Whether you're planning on blazing the Appalachian trails this fall or simply enjoying the new city walk in Downtown Hickory, there are plenty of ways to prepare your body for the physical demands of this great pastime.

While it may seem counter-intuitive to think about exercising to exercise...there are three areas of physical fitness you can emphasize to make your hikes more enjoyable: aerobic capacity, lower body strength, and core stabilization.

- Aerobic Capacity refers to a person's ability to sustain an aerobic activity, like hiking, for an extended period of time. ***With as little as 15-20 minutes of cardiovascular activity three times a week, you can improve your aerobic capacity!*** Try elliptical training or treadmill walking - make sure you're not holding onto the handles as this reduces your calorie burn and can throw off your body's natural alignment. You don't have handrails on the trails, so don't rely on them in the gym.
- Steep ascents, like the one found at the popular waterfall trail in local South Mountain State Park, will require more than just aerobic endurance to climb. Try functional lower body strength exercises like **step-ups** and **lunges** as these moves will help you develop the appropriate strength more effectively than machine-based exercises.
- Contrary to what most people believe, the core is a complex structure, not just your "6-pack." There are important muscles beneath this exterior musculature that stabilize your spine, posture, and provide firm support for all of the activities you do. Ditch the crunches and sit-ups for exercises like **deadbugs**, **side planks**, and **cable chops**.