



Family Hiking Project Research Insights

Barriers and motivators for families
hiking and bushwalking



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Overview

Western Australia offers extensive trails for hiking and bushwalking, but many families face both practical and perceptual barriers that limit their participation. These challenges vary by location, experience, and family dynamics, and continue to restrict equitable access to the benefits of spending time in nature.

In May 2025 Nature Play WA undertook high-level desktop research and review of currently available family hiking and bush walking resources. In June 2025 the findings were then verified through a 45 minute online targeted focus group with 15 families. The aim was to better understand the barriers to and motivators for family participation in hiking and bushwalking.

This multi-method approach allowed for the identification of common challenges—such as accessibility, time constraints, and perceptions of difficulty—as well as factors that encourage participation, including social connection, engaging environments, and child-friendly trail features. The summary of the barriers and the motivators identified are listed within this document.

The findings will help inform the development of inclusive, family-oriented guided walks hosted by Hike West in Spring 2025.

Findings - Barriers



Accessibility of Suitable Trails

- Lack (or perceived lack) of easily accessible, short (2–4 km), family-friendly trails near Perth's metro region.
- Limited public transport options to walk locations.
- One-way trail designs and poor signage increase logistical complexity.
- Additional barriers for families with children who have disabilities or additional needs.

Safety and Supervision Concerns

- Parents feel uneasy about supervising children in risky natural environments.
- Fear of children getting lost, injured, or facing harsh weather.
- Safety anxiety exacerbated by poor mobile reception in more remote locations.
- Added complexity for neurodiverse children and single parents.

Lack of skills, knowledge, confidence

- Limited experience with navigation, safety planning, and outdoor logistics.
- Single parents feel overwhelmed managing everything alone.
- Unreliable maps and confusing apps reduce confidence.
- Device distraction can interfere with electronic navigation.

Financial Constraints

- Costs of gear, fuel, and park entry are significant barriers.
- Even free walks can feel financially inaccessible due to perceived gear needs.
- Lack of access to essential equipment such as carriers, footwear, or first aid kits.
- Financial burden multiplied for larger families.

Weather and Environmental Risks

- Extreme summer heat, flies, and insect risks deter families.
- Cooler seasons preferred for comfort and safety.

Limited Family Specific Resources

- Inconsistent and unclear trail information for families.
- Lack of trail guidance on facilities like toilets, shade, or suitability for prams.
- Interest in organised family-friendly group walks.

Cultural and Language Barriers

- Fear and unfamiliarity with local wildlife and bush conditions among migrant families.
- Need for culturally relevant and translated resources.

Findings - Motivators



Reframing the Experience

- Children respond better to "adventure" or "mission" than "hike".
- Giving children leadership roles increases engagement.

Add purpose or Incentive

- Treats at the end (like ice cream) are effective motivators.
- Games like scavenger hunts and geocaching add structure.

Social Connection

- Peer involvement improves motivation for both children and parents.
- Group walks reduce burden on single parents.

Interactive and Educational Elements

- Trail signage with local flora/fauna facts, quizzes, and cultural stories boosts interest.
- Preference for physical maps over digital apps.

Environment and Timing

- Families prefer cooler months for comfort and safety.
- Proximity to cafes, playgrounds, or beaches enhances walk appeal.

Program and Community Ideas

- School-based excursions to introduce trails.
- Rewards systems to encourage repeat participation.
- Family trail newsletters and Facebook groups.
- Interest in night walks with stargazing activities.



What next?

Create family hiking resource

Drawing on the learnings from the discovery phase, we will develop a family hiking and bush walking resource which may contain nature-based activities to engage children while walking with their families etc.

Hike West Guided Walks

Hike West will host a series of guided walks at locations around the Perth and Peel regions in September. Hike West (in collaboration with Nature Play WA and Trails WA) and will then host a family walk(s) event in the October school holidays, open to the public, with fun activities for kids.

Trial Resource

Trial resource at the Hike West guided walks.

Evaluation

Feedback will be sought from participants on the walks in the form of a survey. Findings from the analysis of the responses will inform the completion of the family resource. A project evaluation report will be compiled at the end of the project and will incorporate the research conducted and references.

