

## Baby and Me Hiking in North Vancouver, Coquitlam

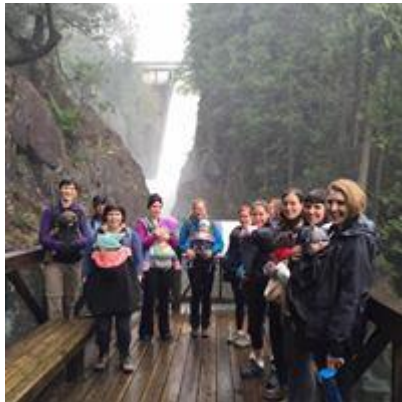
*Information contributed by Shelley Frick and Denise Blackwell – Hiking Guides*

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North Vancouver Recreation Commission and Coquitlam Recreation Parks & Culture run the Baby and Me Hiking Program and Eco Trekkers (ages 2-5 – with parents). The purpose of the programs are to introduce young families to our local parks in their 'backyards', to connect new families socially with like-minded interest of being in the outdoors, and to encourage health and wellness. The programs run in the spring, summer and fall.

- Monday - 10:30-11:30am Eco-Trekkers (ages 2-5) in the Tri-Cities (City of Coquitlam)
- Tuesday - 10:30-noon Baby & Me Hikes on the North Shore (North Van Rec Commission)
- Wednesday - 10:30-11:30am Eco-Trekkers (ages 2-5) on the North Shore (NVRC)
- Wednesday - 10:30-noon Baby & Me Hikes on the North Shore (NVRC)
- Thursday - 10:30-noon Baby & Me Hikes on the North Shore (NVRC)
- Friday - 10:30-noon Baby & Me Hikes in the Tri-Cities (City of Coquitlam)
- Saturday - 10:30-11:30am Eco-Trekkers (ages 2-5) in the Tri-Cities (City of Coquitlam)

### In their own words – stories from the participants



The Baby and me hiking group allowed me to meet a group of Mom's who, despite the challenges of new motherhood were committed to enjoying the outdoors and introducing their children to the outdoors. Week after week we met, rain or shine, happy babies, sad babies to hike. Out of that love of hiking/outdoors we evolved. Many of us carried on to snowshoeing in the winter and then to hiking again the next spring. When the babies got too big, we left them to enjoy their Dad's and we still continued to hike! Hiking gave us a chance to connect with nature and leave our concerns behind - even if it was for just an hour or two! Sharing our experiences while hiking was great therapy that allowed us/me to be a better,

more present Mom! Now....those babies are now 9 years old - when we gather to hike, they sometimes join us.....even running ahead! My heart feels very full to have passed along my love of the outdoors to the next generation and to still be hiking with this amazing group of dynamic women, whom I am proud to call my friends!

-Michele

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I participated in the Baby and Me Hiking Program, as well as the Baby and Me Snowshoeing Program when my kids were less than 1 year old. It was an amazing opportunity to get out and enjoy the outdoors at a time when I might not have otherwise done so on my own. It brought me together with a group of people that were in a similar situation and allowed me to do something I love. We were able to get some exercise, enjoy the fresh air, socialize and support each other. My baby usually fell asleep peacefully as I carried her in a cozy snuggly enjoying the sounds of nature, and to this day she loves nature, animals and being outside -- I'd like to think that maybe the early exposure had something to do with it! I am also still very good friends with many of the ladies that I hiked with. It brought together a bunch of us with common interests, the main one being nature and the outdoors. We have since been on greater adventures, all involving hiking, snowshoeing, and/or camping. I feel very fortunate to have

been able to be a part of those programs, and I have since told many other expecting and new parents about the programs.

-Monica

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I really enjoyed the hiking group last fall. We discovered new trails, learned so much from the guides and really got to connect with some other local moms. We really enjoyed ourselves. Not only did Rhys learn something new every week but I felt I did too. We now know where to take friends and family hiking.

-Kristie

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My family has greatly benefited from these programs.

I have told everyone I know that the baby hiking was the best thing I ever did postpartum. When



I was feeling overwhelmed with a new baby the hikes made all the difference in keeping me physically fit but more so, I know it played a role in my emotional health. With more attention being drawn to postpartum depression I truly believe the program is helpful.

The little Trekkers group provided an opportunity for my husband and son to spend some quality time. I know families can take a family walk anytime, you showed us how to make hiking fun for kids. It was a great bonding experience for them. I know my husband is lucky to have

flexible work hours but with so many fathers working from home or staying at home it's a wonderful way to bond with their children.

-Teanny

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I was a participant in the Mom and Baby Hikes in the Tri-Cities region for both spring and summer 2014. I had a wonderful time and met many like minded individuals whom which I am still friends with today. I think the mom and baby hike is a fantastic and unique program which highlights the beauty and accessibility of our parks. Through this program I was introduced to so many new hike and developed a greater appreciation for my region. I have been a resident of the tri-cities for 6 years and had never even heard of Minnekhada park. Now I feel comfortable with many of the trails and would introduce this beautiful park to family and friends.



Not only does the mom and baby hikes introduce fellow hikers to the wonderful trail systems, it brings together mothers to form friendships with residence of the tri-cities, potential neighbours that will (and have) get together and hike together through the very trails they walk during their scheduled program. I recall feeling so strong and proud of

hiking all the way to Jug Island or High Knoll, with my baby strapped to my back with all my fellow moms. It gave me strength and encouragement to try new things with my baby and

uplifted me to push on during those challenging time of motherhood (especially being a first time mom). It was especially rewarding when we would meet other hikers on the trail who were always so impressed with the group of us, babies in tow and compliment us for our great efforts. All this made possible by this wonderful program. I am looking forward to participating in the little trekkers hike when my son is a little older, hopefully by the summer.

When I meet new moms and we discuss the activities we do with our babies, everyone is so impressed and interested in learning more about the mom and baby hikes, and a number of them have gone on to register.

-Katie

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I registered in last summer's Tiny Trekkers in Capilano with my three daughters. I was did so mostly because I had a friend singing the program's praises from when she had done the Baby and Me program years ago with her first child. I must admit, I wasn't TOO excited about trying to get out to the North Shore every week (we're in Kitsilano) and half expected to miss a few classes along the way. After our first class and meeting Shelley, however, we were all hooked! We really looked forward to our walks and our exploration of new trails. Shelley had the kids engaged from the beginning and my girls were enthralled! Shelley is amazing with her groups and knows how/when to provide just the perfect amount of information. My girls still talk about Shelley and the valuable forest knowledge they learned in their summer program.

It's such a beneficial program for our younger generations. The contact with nature in our urban living is invaluable. In the short and small experience I had in the program, I met moms who started in the Baby and Me program and then made their way into the Tiny Trekkers. And it's just the beginning of encouraging healthy outdoor nature time for our children who grow later into adolescents and adults who also enjoy nature. What a gift.

-Dana

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My daughter, who is now 4, and I enjoyed the spring and summer session of baby and me



before I had to go back to work. After that I continued to keep hiking the trails I learned while doing the baby and me session. Always either taking my husband, mom or friends and showing them all the amazing trails in the metro vancouver parks and raving about the program. Then when Tiny Trekkers started I was thrilled to have my daughter do that. It was amazing!! I also recruited another outdoor enthusiast friend and her son to join us and they LOVED it!!

When I became pregnant with my son one of the first things I did was calculate my due date to realize I'd be able to take part in the spring session with him!! As soon as I could we signed up for that and I had my cousin sign up with her new baby daughter as well.

My family has grown up with these programs. I rant & rave to every new mom I meet about them.

-Erin C.

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With my first child I participated in more than one baby and me hiking group, and absolutely loved it and everything about it. I found out about it from a Mothers group and soon the program was full. This past summer, myself and my now 2 children and husband participated. I even spread the word and 2 other families joined and plan to join again this summer.

Please keep such amazing programs going. It gets us out to enjoy the parks, nature and all the while learning about our precious surroundings.

-Silvia