



Coast Range Chronicles 21: “Trail Etiquette”

by

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Trail etiquette is important while hiking, biking, or horseback riding. I’m mostly a hiker, so I’m biased toward that mode of transport. I’ll admit to occasional annoyance at practitioners of the other two methods, but they have as much right to be there as I do. Public lands are for everyone.

The horseshit strewn along the trail is sometimes copious and difficult to avoid, especially when you’re focused on plants or wildlife and step in a fresh pile. And some mountain bikers, armored in Road Warrior garb, seem obsessed with making a ramp or jump out of every dirt mound or fallen log regardless of the environmental impact. But most trail users, despite their method, seem respectful of the land and others and are just happy to be there.

Hikers are not without their own annoying habits. Poor trail spacing is one. Leaving room between yourself and other hikers is basic common courtesy. Nobody

wants a stranger's sweaty halitosis blown down their neck while they're trying to enjoy the outdoors.

But some people don't get it. They tailgate you, so you step aside and let them by. Then they stop a short distance up the trail and when you pass them they continue right behind you. So you speed up to get some separation. They speed up as well. You stop and let them pass and when you resume hiking suddenly they're lollygagging in front of you.

And so on.

They're not purposely trying to annoy. They're just not paying attention. It's like a clueless driver on a two lane highway, speeding up, slowing down, speeding up, slowing down.

What can you really say? Hurry up? Slow down? Get away from me?

It's a moral gray area, and maybe it's me with the problem. Maybe their obtuseness masks a Zen-like bliss, a profound acceptance of the moment in a way we unenlightened and cantankerous folk can't understand. Maybe, if more people were like them, the world would be a better place.

Yeah, maybe.

But they're still irritating.