

nature programme

by Familienhotels Südtirol

Nature adventures and wild sounds



Kids' adventures – the guide for explorers

Hello nature explorers!

It's great that you're out and about and want to discover nature together.

Nature is exciting, wild, calm, and full of little wonders. There's something to see, hear, and experience everywhere.

To help you feel safe, venture out on your explorations with confidence, and take good care of yourselves, we've put together the most important rules, tips, and ideas for real adventures in nature.

Whether in the forest, in the mountains, by the stream, or in the snow – this guide helps you to be mindful, aware, and safe while out in nature.

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The most important survival rules for children

I stay in sight.

- I don't just walk away.
- I stay where Mum, Dad, or other adults can see or hear me.

If I am unsure, I stop.

This is what I do if I get lost or scared:

- I stand still.
- I call loudly for help.
- I wait until someone comes.

I protect myself from the sun, cold, and weather.

- I wear a cap and sun cream when it's sunny.
- I dress warmly when it's cold.
- In a thunderstorm, I immediately go inside or seek shelter with adults.

I only play with water with caution.

Streams, lakes, and puddles are exciting, but sometimes dangerous.

- I never go to the water alone.
- I keep my distance when the ground is wet or slippery.

I respect animals and plants.

- I only watch animals. I don't touch them.
- I don't pull up plants.
- Nature belongs to everyone and should remain as we find it.

Fire and hot objects are a no-go.

- Open fires, barbecue spots, or hot stones are only for adults.
- I always keep my distance.

I drink enough and take breaks.

Being outside is fun, but it can be tiring, too.

- I drink water regularly.
- I take breaks.
- I listen to my body.



Mini check-list: Am I ready for an adventure outdoors?

- I'm wearing the right clothes.
- I have something to drink with me.
- I know where the adults are.
- I know the rules.
- I feel like discovering new things.

If you can tick everything off, the adventure can begin!

Survival kit for children

My explorer rucksack

- Small and light
- Comfortable to carry

Drinks and breaks

- Drinking bottle filled with water
- Small snack (arranged with adults)

Sightseeing and exploration

- Torch or headlamp
- Magnifying glass or small binoculars
- Whistle for attention and safety

Orientation and observation

- Easy compass
- Waterproof notebook or piece of paper
- Pen or coloured pencils

Clothing and weather

- Sturdy shoes
- Jacket to match the weather
- Sun hat or winter cap

Safety

- Small first aid kit (plasters)
- Tissues



Nature satnav: find your way like real adventurers

Long before there were mobile phones, GPS, or map apps, people found their way with the help of nature. They observed the sky, paid attention to light and shadow, and learnt to interpret small clues in their surroundings. Even today, nature can help you find your way if you pay attention to it.

Find your way with a compass: a quick helper

A compass is a simple but handy tool. The red arrow always points north. If you know where north is, you can also determine the other points of the compass: the south is exactly opposite, the east to the right, and the west to the left.

Above all, the compass helps you to develop a sense of direction. It doesn't replace careful observation, but it can help you out if you're feeling unsure or just want to get a rough idea.

Find your way with the sun: an old nature trick

The sun accompanies you every day and gives you lots of clues. In the morning it's approximately in the east, at midday it reaches its highest point in the sky, and in the evening it sets in the west.

Depending on the season, its position changes. The sun is really helpful if you want to orientate yourself. If you know where the sun is, you can figure out which way you're heading. You'll also find clues in the forest: bright and shady areas often show where the sunlight's coming from.

Orientate yourself with shadows – observing instead of measuring

Observing shadows is a particularly exciting trick.

If you poke a stick into the ground, it casts a shadow, which changes its direction and length throughout the day because the sun moves across the sky.

If you stand still for a while and look closely, you'll soon realise: the shadow "wanders".

The trick isn't an exact compass, but a good hint of where the light's coming from and how the sun moves.



Find your way with nature signs – knowledge from your environment

Plants and animals can also give you clues if you pay attention to them.

- Moss often grows on the shadier side of trees.
- Trees often have stronger growth on the sunny side.
- Anthills are usually found in warm, sunny places.
- In some places, the wind often blows from the same direction.

Important to know:

These signs are just indications. If you look at all your observations together, you can get a clearer picture.

Remember:

The closer you look, the better you'll understand nature – and the more confident you'll be in finding your way.



Creative projects from nature

The can cooker

You can make a can cooker from simple materials, and it's a cool crafting project for older children and teens. The main aim is to understand how a simple cooker is constructed and how fire can be used in a controlled manner – always under adult supervision.

What you need:

- A big and a small tin can (without inner coating)
- Waterproof pen
- Cordless screwdriver with metal drill
- Combination pliers
- Work gloves
- Small, dry pieces of wood or twigs



This is how it's done:

For your cooker you'll need two empty tin cans: a larger can as an outer shell and a smaller can as the inner combustion chamber.

Both cans need to be rinsed out properly. The smaller can goes in the middle of the bigger one. The outer can has small openings all around the combustion chamber, allowing air to circulate. This way, the fire burns evenly and steadily.

You can make a simple extension by using another tin can. For that, the base and lid are removed and larger openings are cut in the sides. These are for adding more wood.

A large tin can cut open at the side and carefully bent makes a good windbreak. Rounded edges ensure that there's no risk of injury.

Important safety rules

- Don't ever use the can cooker indoors.
- It must be placed on a stable, flat surface (e.g. sand or stone).
- Keep a good distance from grass, bushes, trees, and buildings.
- Keep flammable items and small children away.
- Always have water or sand ready to extinguish the fire.
- Metal gets very hot. Don't touch the cooker until it has cooled down completely.
- In the case of burns, cool the affected area briefly with lukewarm water (no ice).

Telling time with the sun

Long before digital watches existed, people used the sun's path to divide up the day. They observed how the shadows changed over the course of the hours, which let them estimate what time it was. That's how the first sundials were created thousands of years ago.

A sundial doesn't show the time down to the minute, but it helps you understand the course of the day and be more aware of the movement of the sun.

How does a sundial work?

When sunlight hits an upright object, it casts a shadow. Depending on the position of the sun, it changes its direction and length. It's precisely this change that lets you create a simple clock.

Important to know:

Due to summer time, the shadow doesn't point north at exactly 12 noon, but at around 1 p.m.

Sundial in a flowerpot

This option is ideal for balconies, gardens, or terraces.

What you need:

- Flowerpot with a wide rim
- Light-coloured sand
- Long, straight object
(like a wooden stick or a feather)
- Waterproof pen

Here's how to make it:

Find a sunny spot and fill the pot up to the brim with sand. Poke the stick into the sand as close to the centre as possible. The shadow should reach the edge. Start marking the time on a sunny day, at around 1 p.m. Mark the first number where the shadow falls on the edge. Over the course of the day, add more markers on the hour every hour, so you gradually make a complete dial. Once you have found a special place for the pot, it's best to realign it on the hour by turning it so that the shadow matches the current time again.



Sundial made from a paper plate

What you need:

- Paper plate
- Straw or a wooden skewer
- Modelling clay or tape
- Felt-tip pen
- Ruler

Here's how to make it:

Find the centre of the plate by folding it in half and then in half again or measuring it with a ruler. Poke a small hole in the middle and insert the straw. Secure it to the back so that it stands as straight as possible. Place the plate in a sunny spot. Every full hour, mark the position where the shadow falls on the plate and write down the corresponding time.

Your own mini raft

Have you ever dreamt of building your own raft? A little raft that floats on the water and goes on an adventure? With a few natural materials, a bit of patience, and imagination, you can build your own mini raft – and it's even more fun together with friends.

What you need:

- Before you start, collect some straight, equally thick, dry sticks that are already on the ground. Please don't break off any fresh twigs. Good options are, for example, hazel, maple, or elder.
- A few thinner twigs for the mast and crossbar
- Strong string made of natural fibres
- Small piece of fabric or a large leaf for the sail

Here's how to make it:

Lay the sticks side by side on the ground to create a stable surface. If they're different lengths, cut them carefully to the same length. Tie the sticks together at one end by weaving the string over and under the sticks alternately. Do that again on the other side.

Tip: to keep your raft stable, you can attach two crossbars underneath.

Then find a thinner branch for the mast. Attach it to the middle of the raft. Two taut strings to the corners help it stay upright. Tie a small crossbar to the mast. Attach a piece of fabric, a large leaf, or something else light as a sail.

Find a quiet spot by the water. Carefully place your raft on the water – and your voyage of discovery begins.



The throwing bag – a helper for high branches

Sometimes you need a rope high up in the tree – for example, for a tent, a swing, or a guy line. Using a throwing bag makes it much easier than just relying on brute strength. A throwing bag is heavy enough to fly a long way, and it drags a thin line behind it so that you can also place a thick rope securely over the branch later.

How it works:

Tie the throwing bag to a thin throwing line. Throw it carefully over the branch. Pull the throwing bag down again and tie the thick rope to the throwing line. Pull the rope over the branch using the line. Now it's exactly where you want it to be.

What you need:

- Old sock
- A little sand
- Key ring
- String

Here's how to make it:

Fill the sock with sand – about up to the heel. It should be heavy, but not stuffed full. Pull the top of the sock through the key ring. Fold the fabric over and tie it tight just under the ring. Then cut off the excess fabric.



Cold protection – an experiment

Many insects are cold-blooded. That means their body temperature depends on the environment. When it gets cold outside, they cool down too and move slower. Most insects survive the winter only in sheltered spots, like under bark, in the soil, or in leaf piles. They can handle the cold, but not severe frost.

That's why some insects have come up with special strategies. The brimstone butterfly produces a substance in its body that acts like a natural antifreeze. This way, it can handle really low temperatures without freezing.

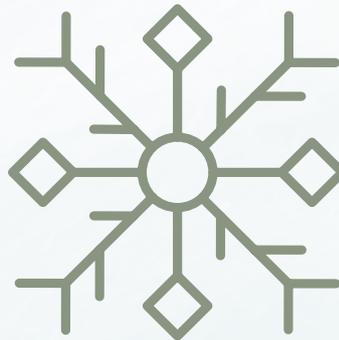
Salt and sugar have a similar effect. Both substances lower the freezing point of water. Water no longer freezes at zero degrees, but only at lower temperatures. That's why salt is spread on icy roads in winter. As a result, the ice begins to melt even though it's still very cold.

Experiment: freezing water

With this experiment, you can see for yourself how salt and sugar affect the freezing of water.

What you need:

- Ice cube tray
- Fridge with freezer compartment
- Measuring cup
- Teaspoon
- Salt
- Sugar
- Pen and paper



Here's how to make it:

Draw the ice cube tray on a piece of paper. Mark one corner of the tray and then mark the same corner on your drawing. This allows you to keep track of which liquid is in which compartment.

Fill one compartment of the ice cube tray with normal tap water.

Mix 100ml of water with a teaspoon of salt and pour the solution into another compartment. Make a note of how much salt you've used.

Now increase the amount of salt and mix 100ml of water with two teaspoons of salt. Pour this mixture into a separate compartment.

For the next mixture, add enough salt to 100ml of water until it no longer dissolves. Now you've made a saturated salt solution. Put this solution into a compartment as well.

Then repeat all the steps with sugar instead of salt.

Place the ice cube tray carefully in the freezer, making sure it stays level so that the liquids don't mix. Check regularly which mixtures have already frozen and which are still liquid.

All liquids reach the same temperature in the freezer compartment. That means you can tell that water with salt or sugar freezes later than pure water. The higher the amount of salt or sugar, the longer the mixture stays liquid.

What you learn from it:

- Pure water freezes faster than mixtures.
- Salt and sugar lower the freezing point.
- Some animals use similar principles to get through the winter.



Wild food to enjoy back home

Chocolate leaves made from linden leaves

The linden tree is seen as a symbol of protection, strength, and community. It plays a special role in many old stories and legends, like in the Song of the Nibelung. In this heroic tale, Siegfried bathes in the blood of a dragon to become invulnerable. Only one small spot on his back remained vulnerable, the one on which a linden leaf had fallen.

This story served as inspiration for a recipe.

You will need:

- Fresh, clean linden leaves
- Cooking chocolate
- Little pot
- Heat-resistant bowl
- Paintbrush
- Baking paper or a plate

Here's how to make it:

Fill a pot about halfway with water and heat it gently. The water should be hot, but not boiling. Put the chocolate in a bowl and place it in the pot so that the chocolate melts slowly in the bain-marie. While the chocolate melts, wash the leaves carefully and pat them dry. Dip the brush in the melted chocolate and spread it evenly on the underside of the leaves. You can make the layer a bit thicker. Place the coated leaves on baking paper or a plate and let the chocolate set completely. As soon as the chocolate is set, carefully peel off the linden leaf. You're left with a lovely chocolate leaf with a delicate leaf pattern.



Chocolate banana

A banana, some chocolate, and patience – and you've got a campfire classic. You can also easily make the chocolate banana at home.

What you need:

- Banana (with skin)
- Pieces of chocolate
- Aluminium foil

Variation 1: chocolate banana by the fire

Don't peel the banana! Cut the banana lengthways, but not all the way through. The skin stays intact on the bottom. Carefully insert chocolate pieces into the slit created. Press them in lightly so that they melt well. Wrap the banana loosely in aluminium foil. Heat it at the edge of the embers, not directly over the fire.

Wait a few minutes. The banana gets soft and warm, the chocolate slowly melts. Open it carefully, because it's hot.

Variation 2: chocolate banana at home

Prepare the banana in exactly the same way: cut it open, put the chocolate inside, and wrap it up.

Pop it in the oven (approx. 180°C), in a pan with a lid, or on the grill. After a few minutes, the banana's soft and the chocolate's melted. You can eat it straight out of the skin with a spoon.



Music in nature

Walnut drum

The walnut drum is a very old toy and percussion instrument.

A small piece of wood strikes against a nutshell when plucked, producing a drum sound. The music sounds different depending on how fast or slow you pluck.

What you need:

- Empty walnut shell
- Thin string (approx. 20cm)
- Match or little wooden stick

Here's how to make it:

Carefully open the walnut. It's best if an adult helps to lever the shell up from the bottom side so that both halves stay intact. Take one half of the shell and wrap the string around it several times. The string should be tight, but not too tight. Stick the match between the string and the nutshell. Twist the match once or twice so that one end rests on the edge of the nutshell and the other remains free to move. Hold the nutshell in one hand and carefully pluck the free end of the match.

And there you have it: your very own drumbeat!



The May whistle

The best time to carve a May whistle is at the end of April to the beginning of May, when there's a lot of sap in the wood. This makes it easy to remove the bark.

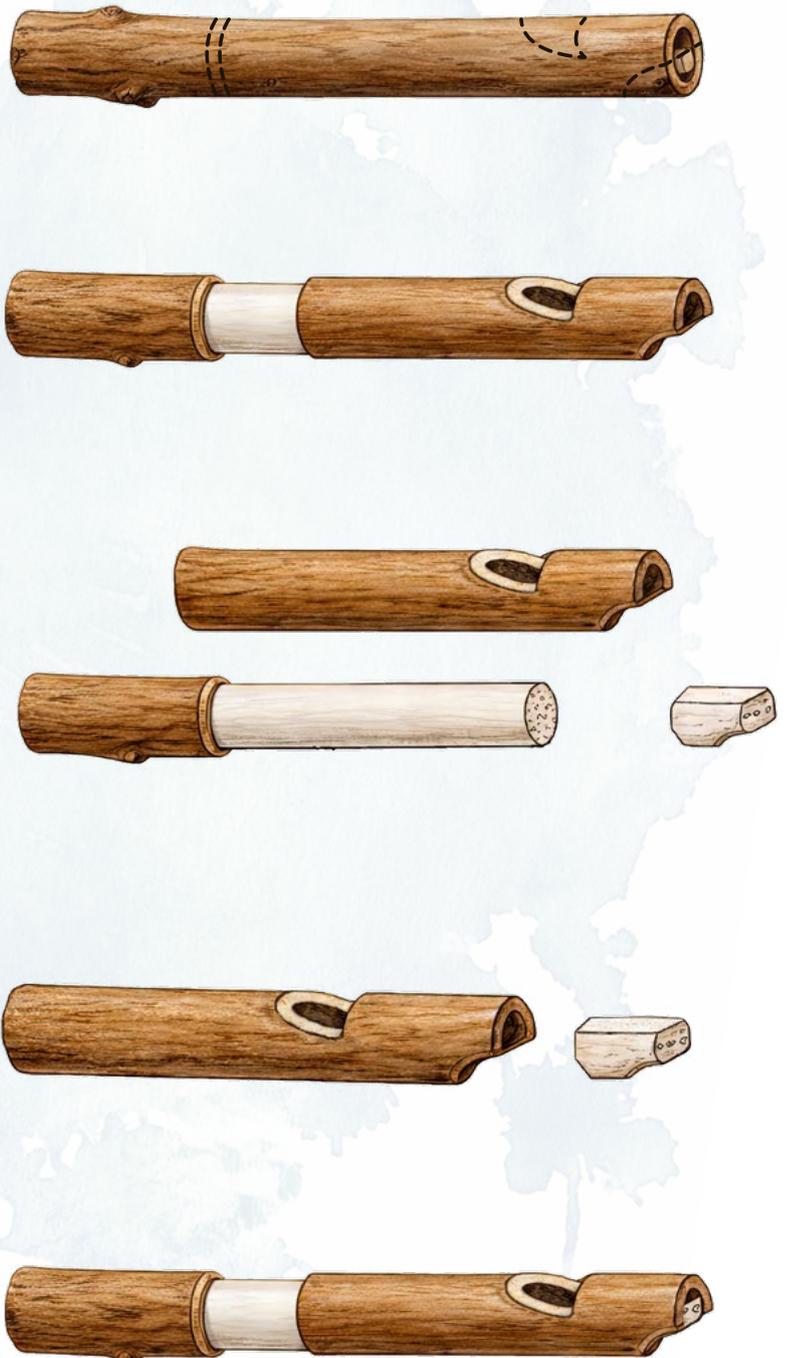
What you need:

- A straight branch (approx. 15cm long), the bark should be smooth, without any small side shoots
- A sharp pocket knife
- An adult to help you

Here's how to make it:

Together with an adult, cut a piece about 15cm long from the branch. Carve the mouthpiece about 2cm from the end. Always cut away from your body! Cut a small notch about 3cm from the edge – this is where the sound will come from later. Now make two small notches around the branch, about 5cm from the edge. Later, you'll loosen the bark between these notches. Gently tap around the branch with the back of the knife. Twist the branch slowly so the bark comes off but doesn't break. Cut the mouthpiece off at the level of the upper notch. Carefully carve a little air channel into the mouthpiece. That's how the air can flow into the whistle. Put the mouthpiece back in so that the whistle hole stays clear.

Blow in gently. Is it whistling yet? If not: slightly move the mouthpiece or carefully widen the air channel.



The rainstick

The rainstick is an effect instrument that mimics the sound of falling rain.

Every rainstick sounds a bit different – depending on the length of the tube, the number of nails, and the amount of dried pulses.

What you need:

- Sturdy cardboard tube (like from cling film or wrapping paper)
- Two strong cardboard lids
- Craft glue
- Nails (no longer than the diameter of the roll) or suitably trimmed wooden sticks
- Little lentils or other dried pulses
- Paper, napkins, or craft card for decorating
- Coloured paints
- Natural materials (like pressed flowers, grasses, leaves)

Here's how to make it:

Drill lots of little holes across the cardboard tube. Insert the nails or wooden sticks through the holes. The more nails, the longer and finer the rain will sound. Cut out two circles from cardboard that are a bit bigger than the openings of the roll. Seal one end of the roll with a cardboard circle (using craft glue, a stapler, or hot glue). Pour in the lentils and close the second end.

Decorate the rainstick however you like using paint, paper, napkins, or natural materials such as pressed flowers, grasses, or leaves.



Survival tools and adventure tricks

The feather stick

Sometimes it's difficult to find dry tinder material. Then a feather stick will help you.

For that, you carve thin strips of wood that curl up on their own. These wooden shavings catch fire really well.

You can either light them directly or shape them into a little nest.

A feather stick is a proper fire pro trick!

Here's how to make it:

Find a straight branch and remove the bark. Place it at an angle on a firm surface and hold it tightly. Lay the knife flat and slice very thin strips downwards. The strips shouldn't be completely cut off at the bottom.

You can light the wood shavings directly on the stick under the supervision of an adult, or carefully peel them off and use them as a tinder nest.

The survival bracelet

A survival bracelet made from cobra knots looks cool and is really handy – because there are several metres of cord in there for emergencies.

What you need:

- Two approx. 1.5m-long paracord strings
- Buckle
- Lighter (ask an adult to help you)

Here's how to make it:

Thread both cords through one side of the buckle and pull them through until you've got four equal lengths hanging down. Pull the four strands through the second side of the buckle and adjust the bracelet to the desired length. The two middle strands stay straight. They form the core. The left and right strands are knotted.

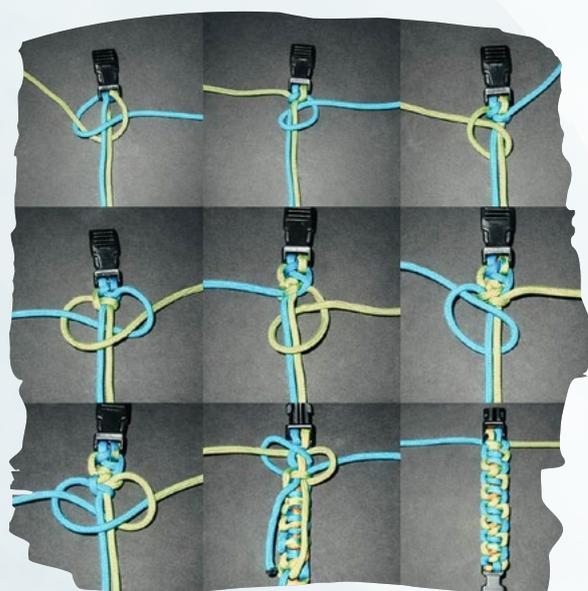
The two middle strands stay straight. They form the core. The left and right strands are knotted.

Lay the left strand over the two middle strands so that a loop forms on the left. Lay the right strand over, pass it behind the middle strands, and pull it through the left loop from underneath. Tighten evenly.

Now the knots are reversed: lay the right strand over the two middle strands so that a loop forms on the right. Lay the left strand over, pass it behind the middle strands, and pull it through the right loop from underneath.

Tighten evenly.

Keep alternating the knots – once on the left, once on the right – until the whole length is covered. Finally, trim the excess ends down and let an adult carefully melt them with a lighter so the bracelet doesn't come apart.



Outdoor quiz: test your knowledge!

Are you ready? Tick off the right answers!

1. What should be in every rucksack?

- Plasters
- Video game
- Rain jacket
- Supplies
- Laptop
- Drink
- Fireworks

2. Which shoes are suitable for longer hikes?

- Mountain boots
- Trainers
- Flip-flops
- Trekking sandals
- Slippers
- Rubber boots

3. What's helpful when hiking?

- Torch
- Compass and map
- Whistle
- Pocket knife
- Tissues
- TV

4. What do you need to make a campfire?

- An adult
- Dry wood
- Water for extinguishing
- Wind
- A safe fireplace
- Plastic

5. What helps you find your way in the forest?

- Sun
- Trail markers
- Compass
- Running away loudly
- Known landmarks (e.g. bridge, bench, large tree)



6. How do animals behave in winter?

- Many look for safe places
- Some hibernate
- All remain active
- Some have special protection against the cold
- Animals always freeze

7. What is the right behaviour in nature?

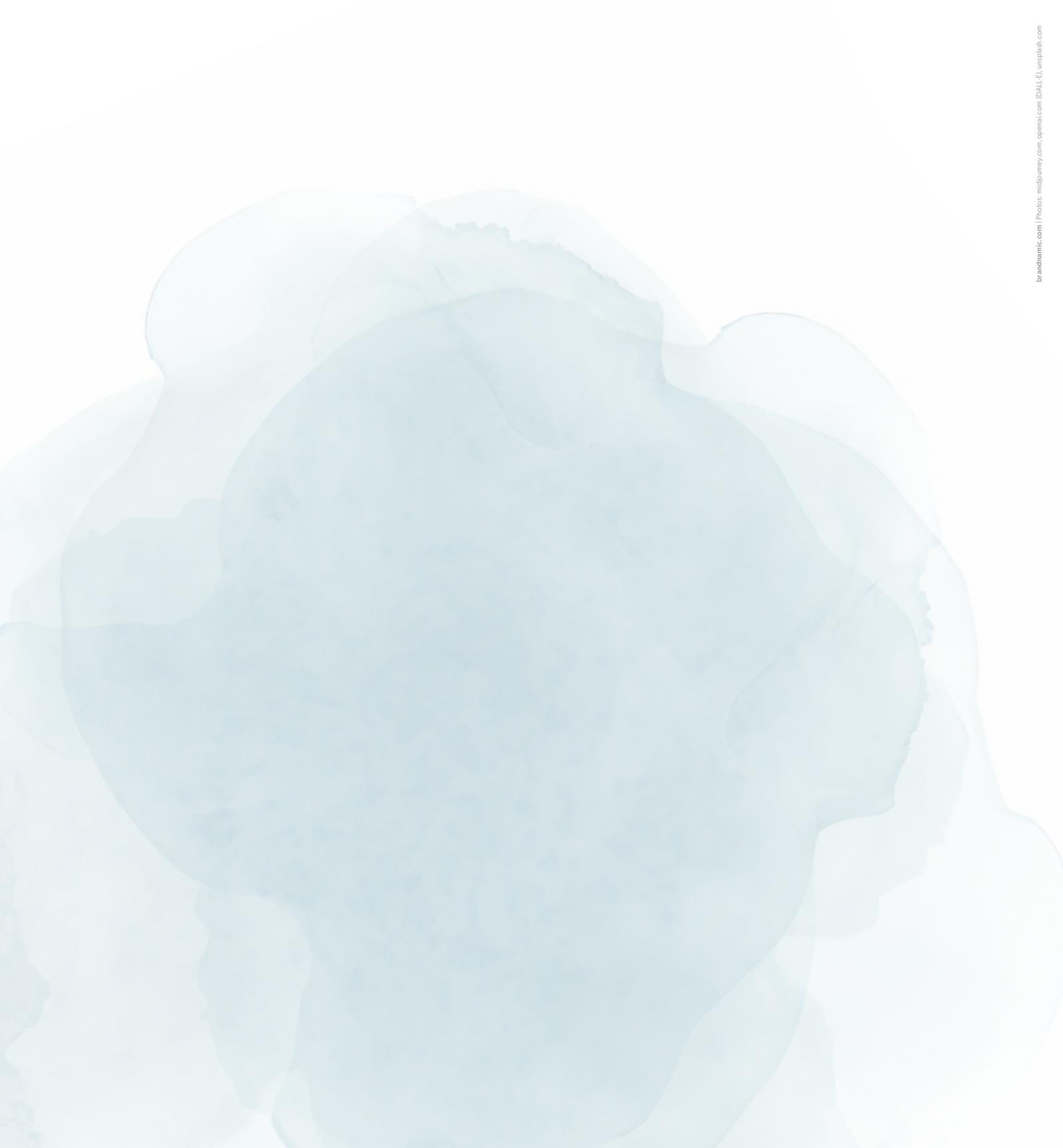
- Pull out plants
- Watch animals, don't touch them
- Take rubbish with you
- Stay on the paths
- Shout loudly to scare animals

Bonus question

What makes a good nature explorer?

- Be attentive
- Be considerate
- Stay curious
- Touch everything
- Look out for yourself and others





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