

# Getting away from it all – with digital help

By Louis Hansen, Bay Area News Group

It might seem wrong to reach for the smartphone for anything more than a photo during a hike. But a number of apps make it easier to find the trails, sweeping vistas and brilliant meadows.

For some nature-lovers, an app is the alternative to pulling out the guidebook to plan a trip. Once you get inside the park boundaries, mobile phones can replace the accordion maps. After the hike or biking trip, apps can let you share and brag on social platforms geared to fellow intrepid outdoorsmen and women.

Outdoor guides say they've come to accept and even embrace the innovations.

The potential audience for outdoor apps is gauged in the millions. The National Park Service reports the park system counted 307 million visits last year, up 7 percent from 2000.

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