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Think 'Breathtaking', not 'Back-Breaking'

Featuring: Sirrus 24

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San Jose hikers hoping to get more social on the trails this summer need look no further. With nearly 3,000 active members, the San Jose Hiking Meetup Group is an ideal way to get together with other like-minded outdoor enthusiasts to discover trails, make friends and tackle the challenge of a new adventure. The group has several different organizers who lead hikes of varying levels of difficulty and distance. Scheduled outings range from shorter jaunts to ultra-long treks (35+ miles), so participants of all ages and abilities can pick and choose based on their respective preferences and physical conditions. And according to reviews, group members are known for being particularly pleasant, friendly and encouraging – yet they still know how to turn up the heat and crank out a good workout in the hills.

Whether you're a newbie who doesn't want to stick out like a sore thumb or a veteran who is in need of a gear upgrade, we've got you covered with our guide to summer hiking essentials below.

If an all-day hike evokes thoughts of schlepping around with a hefty pack slung uncomfortably across your shoulders, it's time for an attitude change – and a gear upgrade. Today's packs are technical, performance-oriented tools: Lightweight, custom-fit and (dare I say?) even comfortable. Simply put, the Osprey Sirrus 24 is a gift to hikers that keeps on giving. I tested it on several day hikes, and was amazed at how much it could fit, not to mention the ingenious and efficient way in which all of the compartments are organized. Even when packed to the brim, the Sirrus 24 felt deceptively light, thanks to the back panel suspension, padded belt and strategically-placed harnesses. It's even hydration-compatible if you want to purchase a coordinating reservoir, and another bonus is the integrated rain cover, which can easily be whipped out if you're taken by a surprise storm. \$99; 21 x 13 10.25 in; S-L, ospreypacks.com

