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# How Trails Make Us Feel

## Critical Elements of Emotional Design in Trails

PTBA Sustainable Trails Conference, March 26 - 28, 2018



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## Disclaimer



**I take credit for nothing.**  
These ideas, opinions and  
photos are someone else's.  
Well, at least most of them.

Thank you if I have used something of yours



## Parks Canada

National Parks and National Park  
Reserves, National Historic Sites,  
National Marine Conservation  
Areas, National Urban Parks and  
National Monuments

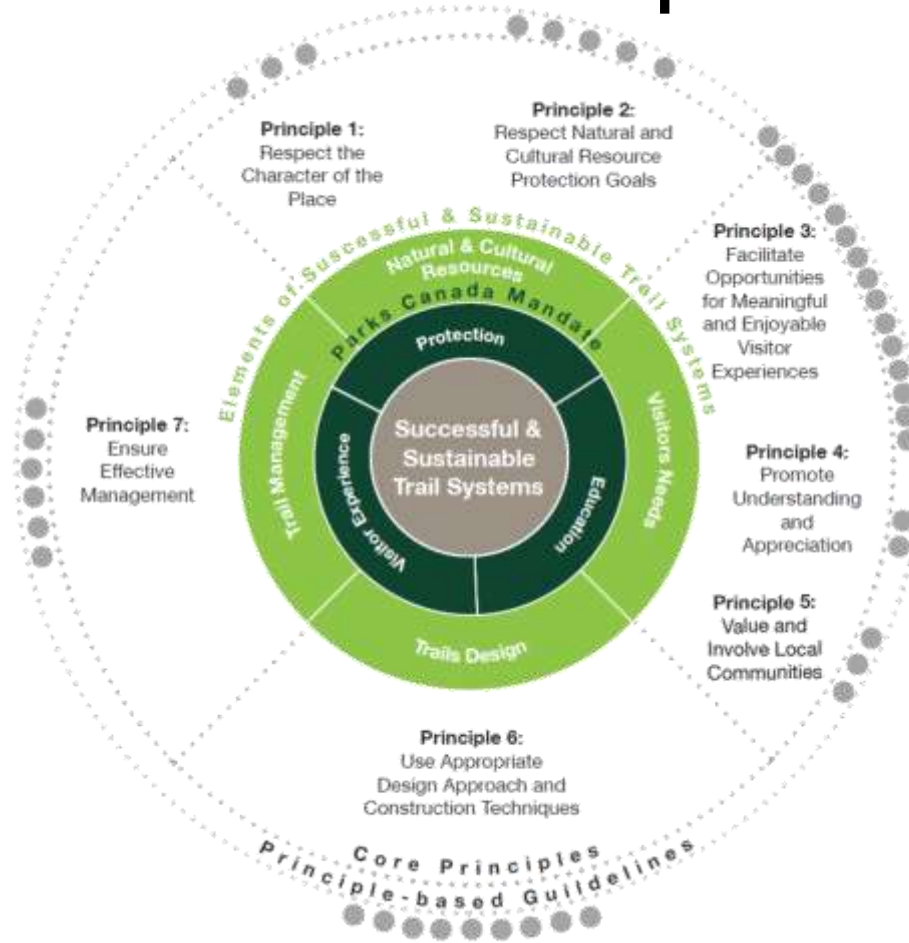




# Trail Principles

## 7 Core Principles

*[What we  
want the trail  
system to  
achieve]*



## 42 ● Principle-based guidelines

*[How it can be  
achieved]*





How does this trail make you feel?



It appeals to the subconscious



## Visitors Needs

Positive experiences  
kindle our curiosity and  
negative experiences  
protect use from repeating  
mistakes

Trail designers must  
seduce, shape and more  
importantly evoke an  
emotional response from  
the users





Visitors Needs

# Emotional Design

Emotional design strives to create products that elicit appropriate emotions, in order to create a positive experience for the user.

Don Norman' "The Design of Everyday Things"

3 Critical Element of  
Emotional Design for Trails





# VISCERAL

Appeals to our first reactions when we encounter a trail. It mainly deals with aesthetics and the perceived quality from mere look and feel, and the engagement of the senses





# Behavioral

The usability of the trail, our assessment of how well it performs the desired functions, and how easily we can learn how to use it.

MARITIME  
HAMMOCK  
NATURE TRAIL

A photograph of a wooden boardwalk winding through a lush, green maritime hammock. In the foreground, a brown wooden sign with white text reads "MARITIME HAMMOCK NATURE TRAIL". The boardwalk is made of wooden planks and curves through dense vegetation, including palm-like plants and vines. A small wooden post with a red and white marker stands near the boardwalk. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and more dense foliage.



A person wearing a red helmet and a grey t-shirt is riding a mountain bike on a dirt trail. The trail is a wide, reddish-brown dirt path that curves through a forest. The rider is leaning forward, and the bike is in motion. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and dense green foliage. The lighting suggests it's daytime, with sunlight filtering through the trees.

# Reflective

Ability to project the trails impact on our lives after we have used it. How it makes us feel when not using it, or what values we find ourselves attaching to the trail in retrospect



A photograph of a forest scene. A dirt trail winds through the woods, with several fallen logs and branches on the ground. The trees are mostly green, with some autumn-colored leaves visible. The ground is covered in brown leaves and some green grass. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Putting the Trio Together

Every good trail design involves all three elements working together, effectively addressing all three cognitive levels of the human brain.





***“The trail is in  
the land, its our  
job to release it.”***

***Jim Angel***