



# Family Bike Ride Recommendations

Take the family out on some of our great nearby biking paths. To make your planning easier, REI employees have selected some of their favorites below.

## Be sure to bring these necessities along on your ride:

- Helmet
- Drinking water
- Lunch or snacks
- Map and route directions
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- First-aid kit
- Tire mini-pump or CO2
- Spare tube or patch kit
- Tire levers



For a complete cycling checklist, visit [Expert Advice](#) on REI.com.

## Here Are Five of Our Favorite Kid-Friendly Local Bike Rides

### Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve

Terrain: **Crushed-rock path**

Distance: **9.5 mile loop, hills along the trail's south side.**

**Why this ride:** This path takes you through what is considered to be the most beautiful open preserve in Northern Illinois.

**Ride Description:** The natural beauty along the trail in Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve will keep cyclists on the edge of their seats. Head to the stunning overlook to check out the Des Plaines River, the Illinois and Michigan Canal and a panoramic view of the town of Lemont. Along the way, soak up the views of marshes teeming with turtles and waterfowl, flower-filled prairies, old pine plantations and tall oak forests. This trail also provides access to the waterfall, just a short walk from the bike path. Look for old stone walls and building foundations along the trail—all that's left of a small town that once thrived beside the railroad. Into something more modern? Ride over to the model-airplane field and watch the action.

**Driving Directions:** The main entrance is on Northgate Road, west of Cass Avenue. From I-55, exit on Cass Avenue south to Northgate Road. The Outdoor Education Camp parking lot at Bluff Road (99th Street), which intersects Cass Avenue. Parking is free.

**Tips:** For an additional challenge try the orienteering course, which offers routes of various lengths and difficulty. For an instruction book and access to the topo maps and compasses, call 630-850-8110. Restrooms are located at four spots along the trail.

### North Branch Trail—Skokie Lagoons

Terrain: **Paved trail**

Distance: **4.4 mile loop or 20 miles one way, no elevation gain.**

**Why this ride:** The beautiful Skokie Lagoons are a must-see, and this trail offers easy access to them. Plus it's a gateway to other recreational activities along the trail.

**Ride Description:** It's a treat to bike the North Branch Trail, which winds along the Chicago River and leads riders to a variety of outdoor activities. Pack a lunch and head to the Chicago Botanical Garden at the north end of the trail, or simply make a short jaunt around the Skokie Lagoon and look for the diverse wildlife that inhabit the area. Whether you spend an hour or a day, this trail is too conveniently located to pass up.

**Driving Directions:** From the Edens Expressway, head north to Willow Road east. Take Willow Road to Forrest Way and turn left (north). Follow Forrest Way to Tower Road and turn left on Tower Road. There is one parking lot on the left and another further down, over the bridge, on the left. The second lot has a boat launch. No fees.

**Tips:** Helmets are required for all riders age 14 years and younger. Outhouses are available throughout the lagoon area.

## Greene Valley Forest Preserve

Terrain: **Crushed-stone paths**

Distance: **Up to 10 miles one way (with many shorter trails), minimal elevation.**

**Why this ride:** It's easy, yet has great views and provides access to plants and trees not commonly found in other areas of the county.

**Ride Description:** Pick a clear day and ride up to the top of Greene Valley Hill to catch a glimpse of the Chicago downtown skyline, or cross paths with an abundance of wildlife, including red foxes and coyotes. Either way, the Greene Valley Forest Preserve trails provide some of the best outdoor entertainment around. Whirl through woodlands, savannas and meadows filled with wildflowers and trees that have called Illinois home for a long time. You might even see a great-horned owl or a white-tailed deer or fawn. If you're into tree identification, check out the Tricky Tree Key Trek. It will help you learn to identify common Illinois trees.

**Driving Directions:** The preserve is located at Route 53 and 75th Street in Naperville. Park off Greene Road, south of 79th and west of Route 53. There are no fees.

**Tips:** To get an instruction booklet with a worksheet and key for tree identification, call 630-850-8110. Restrooms are available at four spots along the trails and parking lots.

## Deer Grove Forest Preserve

Terrain: **Paved bike trail and multi-use unpaved trail**

Distance: **3.9 mile loop, elevation gain varies.**

**Why this ride:** This ride caters to all interest and skill levels. For a smooth, relatively flat ride, stay on the paved trails.

**Ride Description:** Deer Grove is an 1,800 acre preserve with forested areas, wooded ravines and wetlands. With two lakes on the property and access to picnic areas, it's a great place to spend a day riding with the family. The 3.9-mile paved loop trail takes you through woodland areas and a beautiful grass prairie. Keep your eyes open for deer, birds and other critters, or enjoy sitting by one of the meandering creeks that flow through the preserve. Trail riders should be aware of the strict off-trail riding restrictions.

**Driving Directions:** From Chicago, head north on I-94. Exit at IL-53 north toward Rolling Meadows. Continue on IL-53 EXT north and exit onto Lake Cook Road. Turn left at Quentin Road. Parking and a staging area are about 0.5 miles down the road.

**Tips:** The forest preserve includes several great picnic areas – bring a lunch! Some of the multi-use trails are also used by equestrian traffic; cyclists must remember to yield the right-of-way to horses.

## Chicago Lakefront Trail

Terrain: **Paved multi-use**

Distance: **20 miles, no elevation gain.**

**Why this ride:** Situated right alongside Lake Michigan, this is one of the best uninterrupted rides in Chicago.

**Ride Description:** The paved trail runs for 20 miles along the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Starting as far south as 71st Street, the trail takes you past many notable sites including Soldier Field, McCormick Place, the Museum of Science and Industry, the University of Chicago Campus, and of course, beautiful beachfront along Lake Michigan. The route runs as far north as Hollywood Avenue. At peak times the trail is heavily used by bikers, joggers, in-line skaters and others. Take care to ride safely and respect others who are using the trail.

**Driving Directions:** Parking areas are available at 801 South Canal, 440 South, LaSalle, 227 West Monroe, 130 East Randolph, 200 East Randolph, 35 East Wacker, 303 East Wacker, 35 West Wacker, 225 West Wacker and 800 South Wells, as well as various spots on the lakefront.

**Tips:** Trail conditions can vary, so be prepared for changes. With easy access to the beachfront, bring a blanket, lunch and your swimsuit on warm days.



REI's PEAK program uses a fun presentation filled with hands-on activities and games to teach kids ages 6 through 12 about taking care of the outdoors.

Ask an REI team member about scheduling a free PEAK presentation for your classroom or youth group, or visit [www.rei.com/PEAK](http://www.rei.com/PEAK) for more information.



**First Saturday in June** The American Hiking Society's National Trails Day, sponsored by REI, is a nationwide celebration of trails. Celebrate with your family by taking a hike, or volunteering for a trail clean-up project. Ask an REI team member about how to get involved, or visit [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com) for more information.