



Family Hike Recommendations

There are some great nearby hiking trails just waiting to be explored! To get your family started on the right foot, REI employees have selected some of their favorites below.

Be sure to bring these necessities along in your daypack:

- Drinking water
- Lunch or snacks
- Extra clothing layers
- Map and compass
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- First-aid kit
- Insect repellent
- Whistle
- Headlamp or flashlight

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



Here Are Five of Our Favorite Kid-Friendly Local Hikes

Hike One: **Sweet Gum Loop Trail**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3.5 miles, significant elevation gain.**

Why this hike: Interpretive displays along the trail make this a wonderful educational experience for families wishing to expand their knowledge of the area.

Hike Description: This trail is rated at a moderate level of difficulty due to occasional gradient changes, so make sure you are ready to exert a bit of effort. The trail begins at the visitor center parking area of the Sweet Gum Lodge and makes a loop near the lodge at the park, then back toward the visitor center.

Driving Directions: From Kennesaw take I-75 north toward Chattanooga. Take Exit 285 for Red Top Mountain Road and turn right. Follow for 1.9 miles and turn left at Park Marina Road. Turn right at Lodge Road and park in the lodge parking lot.

Tips: There are plenty of other activities to check out here, including a visitor center, lodge, picnic shelters, lake and forest.

Hike Two: **Coopers Furnace Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.5 miles, moderate elevation gain.**

Why this hike: Unique wildlife can be spotted in many places along the trail.

Hike Description: The trailhead for this hike can be found at Coopers Furnace. The trail was developed from an old logging road and extends along a ridge. As you hike, be on the lookout for birdhouses and you may spot one of the less common bird species in the area. The trail then comes to the Lake Allatoona Visitor Center. At this point the trail is called the Laurel Ridge Trail. As you continue you will see pre-Civil War railway markers and several views of the lake. The trail completes the loop on the logging road.

Driving Directions: Heading north on I-75 from Atlanta take Exit 285. Go west on Red Top Mountain Road. Turn right on US 41. Take the second right, River Road. After you pass under the I-75 overpass, the remains of the Etowah Rail Bridge will be visible to the left. Continue down this road to the Cooper Iron Works Day Use Area (fee required). Park and follow the road just east of the furnace to the lake. The path starts on the left side of the lake.

Tips: This trail is part of a larger trail network within the Cooper Creek Wildlife Management Area. It's a great way to get kids interested in the other challenging hikes the area has to offer.

Hike Three: **Allatoona Pass Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **3.4 miles one way, moderate elevation gain.**

Why this hike: This historical trail follows the path of the Western & Atlantic Railroad as well as entrenchments dug by the Union army.

Hike Description: The trail goes to the left from the parking lot, where you are treated to amazing scenic views of Lake Allatoona as it follows the shore. Continue on an old wagon road where the trail comes to the Crow's Nest, a tall tree that was used during the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain as a signal flag post. Follow the trail to the Allatoona Pass, a railroad pass that is 190 feet deep at some points. Continue through the pass and finish the hike along the Lake Allatoona shore.

Driving Directions: Take I-75 to Exit 283 and go east on Old Allatoona Road for 1.5 miles. Follow this road over the railroad tracks and continue one mile to the parking lot on the left.

Tips: This is a great quick getaway hike, as it is only 45 minutes from Atlanta.

Hike Four: **The Pocket Recreation Area Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.7 miles, no elevation gain.**

Why this hike: This easy hike provides great geology and botanical splendor to see.

Hike Description: For the first half mile, this looped hike passes through pine woods and hardwoods, and across one of the spring runs on convenient boardwalks. In early spring, large patches of Pink Lady's Slipper orchids begin to bloom. The trail moves from wet areas to dry ridge sides where oaks, hickories and pines scatter the landscape.

Driving Directions: From I-75 at Calhoun take Exit 312. Go west of Highway 53/143 to Highway 143 to Calhoun. Take Highway 136 and go 5.5 miles to Sugar Valley, then follow Pocket Road 8.9 miles to the entrance of the Pocket Recreation Area.

Tips: Bring a backpack with a lunch. During your hike you will encounter an amphitheater that serves as a great picnic spot for the entire family.

Hike Five: **Arrowhead Wildlife Interpretive Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.2 miles, no elevation gain.**

Why this hike: With access to the Old Hatchery Ponds, this easy hike winds in and out of a dozen or so different wildlife habitats.

Hike Description: The trail offers unique opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography. Take advantage of the many interpretive signs scattered along the path to enjoy information about the local wildlife and habitats with your family. The wide and easy-to-follow path begins at the parking lot off of Floyd Springs Road. The trail will loop you around multiple wildlife openings and through several of the ponds before sending you back to the trailhead.

Driving Directions: From Kennesaw take I-75 north for approximately 32 miles. Take Exit 306 toward Adairsville and turn left at GA-140 west. Turn right on Floyd Springs Road northeast and park in the parking lot.

Tips: Spend extra time at the ponds as this is where you are most likely to see wildlife.



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 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 for more information.