



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.

Content provided by **FALCONGUIDES**

Here Are Five of Our Favorite Kid-Friendly Local Hikes

Hike One: **Anne Springs Close Greenway – Nation Ford Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1 mile, minimal elevation gain.**

Why this hike: Walk the same paths used by Native Americans, traders, settlers and Revolutionary War soldiers.

Hike Description: Park near the nature center to access the trailhead. The trail is part of the Great Wagon Road that ran from Philadelphia to Augusta, Georgia. Along this easy-to-hike trail you will cross beautiful Steele Creek on a 125-foot suspension bridge, and visit two authentic log cabins dating back to 1800. This trail offers views of native wildlife, vibrant wildflowers, rolling pastures and oak, hickory and dogwood trees. The Greenway gates open at 7 a.m. and close at sunset seven days a week.

Driving Directions: From Charlotte take I-77 south to Exit 90. Turn left at the light at the bottom of the ramp. Continue for 2.6 miles on this road (road changes from Carowinds Boulevard to US-21 Bypass). Turn left into the main entrance to the Greenway.

Tips: Check out www.leroyssprings.com/GreenwayTrails.cfm for more trail maps and general information.

Hike Two: **McDowell Nature Preserve**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **7 miles, moderate elevation gain.**

Why this hike: The nature preserve is a great location for kids because of other activities in the area, including the nature center.

Hike Description: An easy hike for kids is the Four Seasons Trail, a one-mile loop located near the nature center that is also paved and handicapped accessible. This particular trail offers hikers the opportunity to explore a variety of terrains while enjoying scenic views of the lake, forest and streams. Dogs are allowed on the trail, but must be leashed.

Driving Directions: From Charlotte take I-77 south to Exit 90 onto Carowinds Boulevard. Go west approximately three miles to Highway 49 (York Road). Turn left on Highway 49 and travel four miles. The nature preserve will be on your right.

Tips: The nature center features live native animals, an exhibit hall and gift shop. Call ahead to make sure it is open: 704-588-5224.

Hike Three: **Crowders Mountain State Park**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **0.8 to 2 miles, minimal elevation gain.**

Why this hike: An opportunity to see a variety of birds while taking in the beauty and diversity of this mountain park.

Hike Description: Kids will enjoy the Fern Trail, marked by red hexagons and an easy, one-mile loop that begins at picnic shelter number one. Lined with wildflowers, the path has very minimal elevation gain.

Driving Directions: From Charlotte take I-85 south to Exit 13. At the top of the ramp turn left onto Edgewood Road. At the first stoplight turn right onto Franklin Boulevard/Highway 74 and drive approximately two miles. At the next stoplight turn left onto Sparrow Springs Road and drive approximately two miles. Follow signs to stay on Sparrow Springs Road, which will make a turn to the left. The main entrance to the park will be on the right in less than one mile.

Tips: If you have more experienced hikers or older kids, consider hiking the more strenuous trails up to the summit of King's Pinnacle. This is the highest point in Gaston County at 1,705 feet.

Hike Four: **Kings Mountain Nature Trail (Kings Mountain State Park)**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.2 miles, no elevation gain.**

Why this hike: Dense hardwoods forest, vegetation and a rich history all come together in this location.

Hike Description: A hike the whole family should enjoy, you'll begin your journey near the campground and picnic area. The trail has various interpretive signs along the way that educate hikers about the local wildlife, vegetation and history. Keep your eyes open for deer, rabbits, wild turkey and other various birds.

Driving Directions: From Spartanburg drive northeast on I-85 to Exit 8 and turn right onto SC 161. Turn left onto Park Road, and left onto Lake Crawford Road. There will be parking at the end of the road and the trailhead can be found here.

Tips: For a fantastic map of all the trails visit www.sctrails.net/Trails/MAPS/KingsMountainSP%20map.html.

Hike Five: **Latta Plantation Nature Preserve**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **7 miles, moderate elevation gain.**

Why this hike: A great place for kids to see and learn about endangered wildlife and vegetation.

Hike Description: The Nature Preserve is 1,343 acres of protected land that offers educational programs and is surrounded by Mountain Island Lake. There are a variety of endangered plants protected within this sanctuary. Latta Plantation has many trails to choose from that are easy for kids to traverse. Some of the sights include creek-spanning bridges, trail markers that identify plants and wildlife, and the Latta Plantation Nature Center. Stop here first and pick up a complimentary trail guide.

Driving Directions: From Charlotte take I-77 north to Exit 16B (Sunset Road). Follow Sunset Road approximately 0.6 miles and turn right on Beatties Ford Road. Follow Beatties Ford Road for about five miles and take a left at Sample Road. Follow the road about one mile to the preserve entrance.

Tips: You will want to pick up a trail guide at the nature center to help plan the duration and distances of various trails to explore.



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.