



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: **China Camp State Park Loop**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **3 miles roundtrip, 700' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Enjoy sweeping views of San Pablo Bay on this mostly wooded loop.

Hike Description: Back in the 1880s, a Chinese shrimp-fishing village thrived at this site. But today, the park is a favorite for hikers and other recreationalists. For this scenic loop, start at Miwok Meadows and follow the Shoreline Trail south, where you'll be treated to occasional glimpses of the bay. After about a mile, you'll turn right and begin the climb along Oak Ridge Trail, where you'll travel through a verdant coast live oak forest that's home to deer, squirrels and numerous birds. Then catch the Miwok Fire Trail back down to Miwok Meadows, which explodes with colorful wildflowers in the spring. Numerous benches along the way let you enjoy the views of surrounding San Pablo Bay.

Driving Directions: From Hwy. 101 in San Rafael, go east on North San Pedro Road for five miles until it enters the park. Parking is located in the park at Miwok Meadows. There is a parking fee in picnic areas and parking lots. There is no fee on the shoulders of the road.

Tips: Visit China Camp Village and walk through the house museum describing early Chinese settlement in the area. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Two: **Crissy Field, San Francisco**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **About 3 miles roundtrip, no elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Enjoy expansive views of both the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz as you stroll along a waterfront path.

Hike Description: Crissy Field, a bayside park restored in the late '90s to its former glories, features 100 acres of nature, history and recreation in the Presidio district. There's a full day of adventure to be found here. Start your hike by the tidal marsh on the east end and then proceed onto the wide, hard-packed gravel path as you head west. You'll want to be sure to bring your binoculars, as you'll see all sorts of wildlife and historic landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz. Keep going and you'll encounter the revitalized natural dunes, which have been replanted with native flora. Once you get to the west end of the park, look overhead for an amazing view of the Golden Gate Bridge. You may also see an ocean liner or freight ship pass underneath the massive bridge!

Driving Directions: From downtown San Francisco, head west on Marina Boulevard until you get to the intersection with Lyon Street, where Doyle Drive diverges left to the Golden Gate Bridge. Continue straight onto Mason Street. Look for the East Beach entrance on the right. Parking can be found right off of Mason and in the parking lot adjacent to the Sports Basement. The park is also serviced by the 28, 29 and 43 MUNI bus routes, which stop at the Main Post parking lot.

Tips: The Crissy Field Center Café and the Warming Hut both feature organic and locally grown food and snacks for a bayside picnic. The west end of the park has a grassy field that's perfect for a picnic or flying a kite. There are restrooms located near the parking lot.

Hike Three: **Lake Merced, San Francisco**

Rating: **Easy to moderate, depending on how far you go**

Distance: **4.6 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: A natural retreat in an urban setting, this is a good entry-level hike for young adventurers.

Hike Description: Lake Merced actually consists of three interconnected freshwater lakes that are fed by springs, creeks and rain water. It's a favorite destination for birders as its variety of habitats and close proximity to the ocean make it an attractive home for numerous species, such as great blue herons, marsh wrens and double-crested cormorants. There is a wide paved path that goes all the way around the lake. A bridge between the North and South lakes and a second bridge found between Harding Park (which is a golf course, so watch out for golf balls!) and the parking lot at the southernmost end of Sunset Boulevard let you tailor the length of the hike to fit your child's energy and enthusiasm level.

Driving Directions: The lake is located in the southwest corner of the city. Parking is available in several lots: at the intersection of Lake Merced Boulevard and Brotherhood Way, along John Muir Drive, along Harding Road, and at the intersection of Sunset and Lake Merced boulevards. There is some free parking.

Tips: Rent a canoe or rowboat in the park to see the lake from a different perspective, or bring along your fishing pole and try your luck for trout or bass. The park is also a good spot for a bike ride. Restrooms can be found at each parking lot, as well as in Harding Park.

Hike Four: **Phyllis Ellman Loop, Ring Mountain Preserve**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **Approximately 3 miles, 500' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This windswept ridge high atop the Tiburon Peninsula offers jaw-dropping views of San Pablo Bay and south to San Francisco, Oakland and Mt. Tam—and the chance to see an extremely rare flower.

Hike Description: The Phyllis Ellman Loop, named after the local preservationist who saved the area from development in 1995, leaves the trailhead (stick to the left-hand path of the loop) and begins a gentle climb up a grassy, rock-studded hillside. As you continue to climb, don't forget to look behind you occasionally to take in the views of San Francisco Bay and the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. The soils on the ridge are rich with the mineral serpentine, which is toxic to most plants. However, several species have evolved to survive on serpentine, and normally where serpentine soils are found, there are usually rare plants—such as the Tiburon Mariposa Lily, which is found on the upper slopes of Ring Mountain and nowhere else on earth. Look for it in late May, after most of the other wildflowers have faded.

Driving Directions: From Hwy. 101 in Corte Madera, take the Paradise Drive exit and follow Paradise Drive east for 1.6 miles. You'll pass through a residential neighborhood to the Ring Mountain Preserve entrance on the right. Park in the gravel pullout on the side of the road.

Tips: Petroglyph Rock, near the preserve's highest spot, has rock carvings created by native Miwoks. There are no restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Five: **Tennessee Valley Trail, Golden Gate NRA**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **4 miles roundtrip, 200' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Enjoy expansive views of the Pacific Ocean while strolling down to beautiful Tennessee Beach.

Hike Description: Part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the Tennessee Valley Trail is one segment of an extensive network that stretches from the Golden Gate in the south to Muir Beach in the north. You'll start in the rolling hills of the grass-covered uplands on a paved road that's wide and easy to stroll. Go early in the day and you might see a covey or quail scamper across the trail, or cottontail rabbits and deer having breakfast on the edges of the grass fields. After about three-quarters of a mile, the trail changes from pavement to packed dirt as it curves along the valley floor on its way to Tennessee Beach, where a ship (the Tennessee) beached in the 1800s. You can still see bits of the wrecked ship's remains. Bring a picnic basket for lunch on the beach, and if you have the time, maybe build a sandcastle.

Driving Directions: Go north on Hwy. 101 from San Francisco and take the first Mill Valley exit. Follow the signs to Tennessee Valley Road. Go about 1.5 miles to the parking lot at the end of the road. There is no fee for parking.

Tips: Though some trails are designated for hikers only, there plenty of great options for mountain biking, too. There is a restroom at the trailhead.



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.