



# 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: **Aliso Canyon Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's great by itself, and it's just the beginning: The park has 30 miles of trails, including some with breathtaking views of the ocean.

**Hike Description:** This is a nice introduction to the Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park. From the parking lot, the trail passes through the Aliso Creek habitat, which is a fine place to watch native birds. Coyotes and deer are also frequent visitors. In fact, the park is full of rare and endangered plants and animals. Two streams flow year-round. Relatively level, the Aliso Canyon Trail is suitable for young children. And it links to many of the other trails, for those who want a longer trek. Be sure to stop at the Natural History Museum for a trail map.

**Driving Directions:** From Santa Ana, drive south on I-5 and take the Alicia Parkway exit. Go west, toward the ocean. The park entrance is 100 yards south of Aliso Creek Road off Alicia Parkway. Parking is \$3.

**Tips:** There's a large shaded picnic area, and a Natural History Museum at the park entrance. Entrance to the museum is free, although donations are accepted. The museum gift shop sells snacks and drinks.

Hike Two: **Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** The Bolsa Chica Wetlands are a beautiful place to walk and bird-watch. The sunsets are breathtaking, and the hike is perfect for little kids!

**Hike Description:** The salt marsh interpretive trail through the ecological reserve starts on a footbridge and alternates between dirt and paved sections. You'll make a gentle circle around Inner Bolsa Bay. The wetlands are full of native and endangered plants and birds. It's home to herons, great egrets and both white and brown pelicans. You'll also find all kinds of lizards and other little critters. Kids may want to bring a camera or a journal to keep track of what they see—a fun, informal, firsthand science lesson. If you visit on the first Saturday or the third Sunday of the month, you can go on a free guided tour. (Check the schedule at the Educational/Interpretive Center in the parking lot at PCH and Warner.)

**Driving Directions:** From Huntington Beach, go north on the Pacific Coast Hwy. until you reach the first parking lot opposite Bolsa Chica State Beach. The trail begins at this lot. Additional parking can be found at the corner of PCH and Warner Avenue where the Educational/Interpretive Center is located. Parking in either lot is free.

**Tips:** There's no place to sit and have lunch, so bring chairs and supplies for a picnic in the parking lot. Or, across the street, there's a Dairy Queen (yum!).

### Hike Three: **Laurel Canyon & Willow Canyon Loop**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3.5 miles roundtrip, 600' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** There are beautiful ocean views and landscapes. During the summer, those ocean breezes feel amazing!

**Hike Description:** Located in the 6,500-acre Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, this loop trail is a little challenging, but the wildflowers, oak and sycamore trees, hills and those incredible ocean views make it worth the effort! From the northwest corner of the parking lot, take either the left trail fork toward the visitor center and Willow Canyon or the right fork toward Laurel Canyon. You'll follow the canyon floor through the woods, gradually climb the canyon walls and reach the top for panoramic views. Along the way you'll see a seasonal stream and waterfall (don't expect to dip your toes in during the summer) and some cool sandstone boulders. Although not on this hike, the only natural lakes in Orange County can be found in the park. Guided tours by foot, bicycle or horseback with volunteer naturalists are regularly available. Sunset and moonlight tours are also sometimes offered.

**Driving Directions:** From inland Orange County, take I-5 or I-405 to the Laguna Canyon Road (133 freeway) toward Laguna Beach. The park entrance is about 0.25 miles south of El Toro Road on the west side of the road. Parking is \$3.

**Tips:** Make sure to check out the Interpretive Center for educational activities and to find out when the guided tours take place. There's a shady picnic area next to the center.

### Hike Four: **Irvine Regional Park**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **Up to 2 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** The trails are wonderful for small children and strollers. And there are so many great family activities in the park that you can spend the whole day here!

**Hike Description:** There are paved and unpaved trails throughout the park, so kids will have a blast exploring. At the center of the park are a pond, a stonework waterfall and footbridge, and even the Orange County Zoo. Lots of oak and sycamore trees provide welcome shade on warm days. And for those kids who like to be near the water, you can rent a paddleboat or go fishing. Once little legs begin to tire, give them a 10-minute ride on the Irvine Park Railroad. It's open every day from 10am to 4pm. The park's Nature Center is open on the weekends as volunteer staff is available. It provides the natural and cultural history of the area.

**Driving Directions:** From central Orange County, take the 55 freeway to the Chapman Avenue exit. Go east, and turn left on Jamboree. This will take you to the park entrance. Parking is \$3 on weekdays, \$5 on weekends, and up to \$10 on "special-use days" (see the park's fee structure for details).

**Tips:** Admission to the zoo is extra: \$2 for those 3 years and older. Children under age 3 get in free. Pony rides are also available for rent on weekends, as are guided trail rides and riding lessons.

### Hike Five: **Peters Canyon Regional Park**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **2.5 miles roundtrip, 250' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's a really fun, woody experience—ideal for the whole family!

**Hike Description:** The most popular Lake View Trail will take you along Upper Peters Canyon Reservoir. This winding route is shaded in spots, exposed in others. Other trails in the park give you the option of adding up to 6 more miles and an extra 400' in elevation if you've got older kids who want to burn some energy. The East Ridge View Trail offers great views of the canyon and its environs. The Peters Canyon Creek Nature Trail passes through groves of willow and black cottonwoods. And the Lower Canyon Trail crosses grassland, coastal scrub and a eucalyptus grove. Resident critters include mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, opossums, raccoons and even the occasional mountain lion.

**Driving Directions:** From central Orange County, go north on the 55 freeway and take the Chapman Avenue exit. Head east on Chapman to Jamboree. Turn right on Jamboree and continue to Canyon View. Turn right on Canyon View and go 0.25 miles to the park entrance and parking lot. Parking is \$3.

**Tips:** Bring your binoculars—there are plenty of opportunities for wildlife and bird viewing. Also look for the nice picnic area along the Lake View Trail.



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.