



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: **Kortum Trail at Sonoma Coast State Beach**

Rating: **Easy to moderate, depending on length**

Distance: **About 3.3 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean, pristine beaches, tidepools, brilliantly colored wildflowers, abundant marine and terrestrial wildlife—this hike has it all.

Hike Description: Named after Bill Kortum, a local preservationist, this bluff-top trail is considered one of the premier sections of the California Coastal Trail. Springtime brings a beautiful array of colorful wildflowers, including yellow and blue lupine, sea pink, Indian paintbrush, western wallflower, sea fig, verbena and much more. From the Shell Beach parking lot, head north toward Blind Beach (or for a quick trek and some serious beach time, hike right to Shell Beach.) The trail climbs in and out of a few ravines, which are easy to navigate and kid-friendly thanks to some well-designed bridges. Stop off at any of the pristine beaches (Blind Beach is about 1.6 miles from the trailhead). If the tide is low, check out all the cool, brightly colored tidepool inhabitants (but remember not to touch!). Keep your eyes open for whales during their annual December–April migration. There’s even a harbor seal colony at Goat Rock Beach (about 0.5 miles beyond Blind Beach). On land, look for raccoons, rabbits, deer, squirrels, badgers or even an elusive gray fox. Bring a bird guide and see how many different species of birds your children can identify—about 300 species live in the area!

Driving Directions: From Hwy. 101, take the River Road exit west toward Guerneville. In Guerneville, River Road turns into Hwy 116. Continue on Hwy. 116 to its intersection with Hwy 1. Turn left on Hwy. 1 and go south about 2 miles until you see the Shell Beach parking area on the right. No parking or trail fees.

Tips: Bring a picnic to enjoy on one of the beaches. There is a restroom at the trailhead.

Hike Two: **Canyon Trail to Lake Ilsanjo, Annadel State Park**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **5 miles roundtrip, 400' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's a beautiful hike in one of Sonoma County's premier state parks. Enjoy sweeping vistas of Santa Rosa and abundant wildflowers in late spring and early summer.

Hike Description: Wildflowers, such as the colorful “Indian Warriors,” are the big attraction here when spring transitions into summer. The trail is an old fire road that’s wide and well-graded as it gently climbs through rolling hillsides and grassy plains. Keep your binoculars handy on your way up so you can spot the several types of raptors that like to soar the drifts. Other critters that make the area home include deer and wild turkeys, plus many other types of birds. Make note of the Spring Creek Trail junction when you pass it, as it not only marks the one-mile point, it’s also an alternative route back to the trailhead (you can follow Spring Creek through a cool redwood/alder forest). At the two-mile mark, there’s a picnic bench with some amazing views of Santa Rosa, the Coastal Range, Mt. Saint Helena and the geysers in Napa County. Take a rest, drink some water and then push on to Lake Ilsanjo, just a half-mile farther!

Driving Directions: From Hwy. 101 take Hwy. 12 east. At the junction with Farmers Lane, continue straight on Hoen Avenue. Continue on Hoen as it crosses Summerfield Road and into residential neighborhoods. Turn left on Newanga Road and follow the signs to the parking area on the right. There is a \$4 parking fee. Annual parking passes can be purchased through California State Parks.

Tips: Bring your fishing gear (and licenses for hikers over 16), as Lake Ilsanjo offers excellent angling for bluegill and largemouth bass. There is a restroom at the trailhead and at the lake.

Hike Three: **Bodega Head, California Coastal Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **3-mile partial loop, moderate elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Enjoy world-class views of the Pacific Ocean and Pt. Reyes National Seashore, as well as abundant springtime wildflowers and the opportunity to see both marine and terrestrial wildlife.

Hike Description: This is a two-part hike, with the parking lot being the starting point for both sections. The shorter, more spectacular hike leaves from the south end of the lot and follows the cliff edge around the promontory. The beautiful exposed granite along this trail is an indication that Bodega Head, like Point Reyes, is part of the Pacific geological plate. Geologists theorize that the granite broke off from the southern Sierras and was dragged 300 miles north along San Andreas Fault! The trail continues gently uphill, to a series of high bluffs with great views of Bodega Bay and the Marin shore. Near the southern end, you'll see (and hear) Seal Island, a favorite hang out for sea lions. The promontories are also good places to look for the spouts of California gray whales during their fall and spring migrations. As you round the point, the trail threads through expanses of waist-high lupine, where northern harriers cruise for prey. The second part of the hike starts back at the cliffside lot at the Bodega Head Trail sign. The trail goes briskly uphill with good views of the rocky shore below on your left. Amble down a side trail to the beach below, or continue uphill to a junction, where a spur to the left dead-ends at the Horseshoe Cove Overlook. Here you'll enjoy a view of the cove and see the University of California's Bodega Marine Lab.

Driving Directions: Take Hwy. 1 to the town of Bodega Bay. Just north of town, turn west on Eastshore Road. At the bottom of the hill, turn right on Bay Flat Road and skirt the bay for three miles. At the sign for Campbell Cove, the road takes a sharp hairpin to the right. Go uphill another 0.6 miles and park in the lot by the cliffs. Parking is free.

Tips: Visit the UC's Bodega Marine Lab from 2–4 p.m. on Fridays. There is a restroom at the trailhead.

Hike Four: **Howarth Park**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **Varies by the trail chosen, all have no significant elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Howarth Park not only has plenty of easy trails that are perfect for the younger crowd, it offers a variety of recreational activities for all ages.

Hike Description: Make a day of it at this 152-acre city park. Spend the morning hiking on one of the many easy trails, have a picnic lunch at mid-day and then take a dip (or go fishing) in Lake Ralphine in the afternoon. The trail system offers a dozen options, with many that are less than a mile. You can stick to the shores of Lake Ralphine, or tackle one of the forested paths on the gently rolling hills that surround the lake. Bolder adventurers may want to try the 3.7-mile Spring Lake loop, which takes you by three different dams, past a swimming lagoon and through the Jack Rabbit meadows picnic area as you work your way around Spring Lake. Other attractions at Howarth Park include rowboat rentals, a petting zoo and even pony rides.

Driving Directions: From Hwy. 101, take Hwy. 12 east. Turn left on Farmers Lane, then right on Sonoma Avenue. Sonoma Avenue dead-ends into Summerfield Road. Turn left on Summerfield Road and the park will be on the right. There is a large parking lot for day use.

Tips: Be sure to take a ride on the miniature 1863 C.P. Huntington steam train. This narrated ride goes around a quarter-mile track, over a bridge and through a tunnel. There are restrooms located throughout the park.

Hike Five: **Armstrong Woods State Reserve Nature Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.2 miles roundtrip, with no elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This terrific nature hike offers an upclose and personal look at a coastal redwood forest, including a few old-growth trees.

Hike Description: The sheer size of some of these redwoods—the tallest species of tree on the planet—will definitely wow children. Fifty cents gets you a map from the kiosk at the start of the nature trail, so you can take a self-guided tour and learn about these dramatic, towering behemoths. Follow the white footprints to the Pioneer Trail trailhead. The trail takes you along Fife Creek and past Parson Jones Tree, which is more than 310 feet tall and 1,300 years old! Cross the road and find the trail to the right, which leads to the Colonel Armstrong Tree, the oldest tree in the grove, estimated to be more than 1,400 years old. It was named after a lumberman who chose to preserve this portion of the park in the 1870s. From here, backtrack to the previous junction and take the Discovery Trail (where kids can practice their tree hugging along the way) south back to the parking lot.

Driving Directions: From Santa Rosa, go north on Hwy. 101. Take the River Road exit and go west for 14 miles. In Guerneville, turn right on Armstrong Woods Road. The road ends at the park. There is a free parking lot on the right before you enter Armstrong Woods State Reserve. If you drive into the park past the kiosk, it costs \$6 to park.

Tips: Keep your eye out for fire scars on redwood trunks from past forest fires, as well as trees that have been hollowed out by fire but are still growing. There are restrooms 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.