



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: **Redlands Loop**

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

Distance: **Up to 5 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's a series of family-friendly trails that are close to town.

Hike Description: The Redlands Loop consists of three trails in the Colorado River Trail system—the Audubon, the Connected Lakes and the Blue Heron Trails. Start on the Audubon Trail at the west end of the Albertson's parking lot. This paved path runs for 1.5 miles where it joins the Connected Lakes Trail in Connected Lakes State Park. In the park, follow along the Redlands Canal, with several opportunities to stop for a picnic or to fish. After about one mile, the Connected Lakes Trail takes you to Promontory Point. The 2.5-mile Blue Heron Trail runs on the north side of the Colorado River from Hwy. 340 to Redlands Parkway. It can be accessed by crossing the river via the pedestrian/bike path along Broadway. The Blue Heron Trail will lead you back to the east side of the Albertson's Shopping Center.

Driving Directions: From Grand Junction, take Grand Avenue west, passing through a major intersection where Grand turns into Hwy. 340. Continue a short distance on Hwy. 340, cross over the Colorado River, and park in the Albertson's Shopping Center. Parking is free.

Tips: These trails are open to hikers, bicyclists and horses. There are several shady spots with picnic tables, so pack a lunch. There are no restrooms at the trailhead, but there are two in the Connected Lakes State Park.

Hike Two: **Rabbit Valley BLM Trail Through Time**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, 100' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: How about real dinosaur bones?! And there are great views, too.

Hike Description: There aren't a lot of places where kids can see actual dinosaur bones. But they can here! The Trail Through Time takes visitors through an active fossil quarry that continues to be the site of significant finds. Along the interpretive trail, you'll pass through what was (140 million years ago) lush forest and swamp, with a nice watering hole. Just the kind of place where dinosaurs liked to hang out. And they did here, evidenced by the bones they left behind. The short, relatively easy trail also gives you terrific views of the La Sal Mountains and Ruby Canyon. Summer temperatures can get quite hot, so carry lots of water.

Driving Directions: From Grand Junction, go west on I-70 approximately 30 miles. Take Exit 2 (Rabbit Valley) and follow signs for the Rabbit Valley Trail Through Time. Turn right and park at the sign in the Bureau of Land Management parking area. Parking is free.

Tips: Kids might like to stop at the Dinosaur Museum in Fruita on the way back to Grand Junction. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Three: **Mica Mine Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **2 miles roundtrip, 600' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's a relatively short hike with a cool mica mine at the turnaround point.

Hike Description: From the parking area, cross the dirt road and head west, walking down a steep, rough jeep road for a few minutes. Turn right at a trail junction and follow the old jeep road. Stay left and follow it up the canyon or walk along the creek bed just below it. Follow this route as it heads upstream. Point out to kids the red-rock geology of beautiful Ladder Canyon. The road ends after about 30 minutes of walking. Continue up the single-track trail a short distance to the mica mine. The floor of the mine alcove is littered with chunks of mica.

Driving Directions: From downtown Grand Junction, take Grand Avenue (Hwy. 340) west. Turn left on Monument Road, toward the Colorado National Monument. Within 0.25 miles, turn left on D Road, which will make a sharp right turn and become Rosevale Road. Rosevale will make a sharp right turn and become Little Park Road. Follow Little Park Road for approximately five miles. Watch for a sign warning of a cattle guard, and take an immediate left onto a gravel road to the BLM parking area. Park in the lot by the restroom. Parking is free.

Tips: Kids can still see really cool samples of mica right on the floor of the mine. After your hike, stop at Enstom's Candies in Grand Junction for ice cream. (Yum!) There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Four: **Echo Canyon Trail**

Rating: **Moderate**

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

Why This Hike: It leads to a spectacular amphitheatre that's a great place for an unforgettable picnic.

Hike Description: From the trailhead at the south end of the parking area, follow the signs for the Old Gordon Trail. This will lead you across a wash and around to the east rim of No Thoroughfare Canyon. Immediately before the trail climbs steadily over slickrock, turn left onto an unmarked trail. In a little bit, you'll see a sign that says this is private property, and that no dogs or bicycles are allowed. (Don't worry, you're still on Colorado National Monument land.) Stay on the trail as it descends into Echo Canyon. You'll skirt the streambed as it leads you through an amazing sandstone canyon into a lush, riparian habitat. The trail ends in a grove of cottonwoods. It's the perfect spot for a picnic, in a dramatic natural amphitheatre that features a seasonal waterfall.

Driving Directions: From downtown Grand Junction, take Grand Avenue (Hwy. 340) west. Turn left on Monument Road and follow the signs to the Colorado National Monument. Park in the Devil's Kitchen parking area. Entrance/parking fee is \$5 per vehicle for a 7-day pass.

Tips: Be sure to carry plenty of water. There are no restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Five: **Devil's Kitchen Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, 500' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Just a short drive from Grand Junction, it has beautiful red-rock canyons with cool rock formations.

Hike Description: This is a wonderful place to introduce kids to awesome landscapes and fascinating geology. The sheer-walled canyons and rock formations carved by wind and water are sure to leave a lasting impression. Follow the trail as it descends toward a wash. Within a few minutes, you'll come to a trail junction. As the signs indicate, the left fork of the wash leads to Devil's Kitchen. As you continue, you'll cross the wash and hike across level terrain for a few more minutes. Then you climb up the slickrock slope, following established cairns and manmade steps to the Devil's Kitchen rock formation. Rattlesnakes are sometimes seen along this trail, so be sure that kids stay on the trail and don't harass the snakes. Overhead, eagles and other raptors ride the thermals.

Driving Directions: From downtown Grand Junction, take Grand Avenue (Hwy. 340) west. Turn left on Monument Road and follow the signs to the Colorado National Monument. Park in the first lot after the entrance station (\$5 per vehicle for a 7-day pass). The Devil's Kitchen trailhead is here.

Tips: This trail can get quite warm, so be sure to carry plenty of water. Sunscreen and insect repellent (for the gnats) also help to make the trek more enjoyable. There are no 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.