



Family Bike Ride Recommendations

Take the family out on some of our great nearby biking paths. To make your planning easier, REI employees have selected some of their favorites below.

Be sure to bring these necessities along on your ride:

- Helmet
- Drinking water
- Lunch or snacks
- Map and route directions
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- First-aid kit
- Tire mini-pump or CO2
- Spare tube or patch kit
- Tire levers



For a complete cycling checklist, visit [Expert Advice](#) on REI.com.

Here Are Five of Our Favorite Kid-Friendly Local Bike Rides

Mississippi River Parkway Loop

Terrain: **Paved trails**

Distance: **9.2-mile loop; minimal elevation gain**

Why This Ride: Historic and easy to access, this family-friendly trail brings the Mississippi River to life.

Ride Description: This slice of the Grand Rounds, which is part of the Minnehaha Park trail network, takes you right next to the Mississippi River. Directly in the heart of Native American history, the Mississippi River Parkway Loop offers riders an opportunity to search for the Winchell Trail, which is an ancient Native American path. The loop also includes breathtaking vistas from the tops of bluffs and river flats. Ride in the fall and enjoy the gorgeous foliage color changes. The Minnehaha Falls are also accessible from the trail.

Driving Directions: From Highway 55, turn east onto 46th Street East. Head south on Minnehaha Avenue. At the roundabout, follow either Minnehaha Avenue or Godfrey Parkway to parking areas. Parking in the lot requires parking meters or a City of Minneapolis Parks parking permit. Street parking is generally free.

Tips: Hungry after the ride? Visit the Sea Salt Eatery (open April through October). Restrooms are available only at Minnehaha Park, not along the trail.

Lake Calhoun/Lake Harriet Route (Minneapolis Chain of Lakes)

Terrain: **Paved trail**

Distance: **About 7 miles roundtrip; slight elevation gain**

Why This Ride: Popular, easy ride that perfectly blends the city with its natural resources.

Ride Description: Up for more of an urban ride with a little natural scenery sprinkled in? The Lake Calhoun/Lake Harriet route provides great views of the Minneapolis skyline, plus two lakes (Calhoun and Harriet) that are often dotted with sailboats and paddlers. Additional connections and loops will beckon; if you want to ride a few more miles, add Lake of the Isles to your itinerary or continue north to the beaches at Cedar Lake. If you want to get off your bike for a bit and stretch out your legs, make sure to stop by the Rose and Peace gardens near Lake Harriet.

Driving Directions: The lakes are located southwest of downtown Minneapolis. From 35W, take 46th Street west to Lake Harriet Parkway. Free on-street parking surrounds much of both lakes and in nearby neighborhoods. Pay lots are located at the Harriet Band shell, at the intersection of Calhoun and William Berry Parkways and at the intersection of Lake Street and Calhoun Parkway. There are no park use fees, but parking lots require meter use or an annual City of Minneapolis park permit.

Tips: Ice cream and other treats are available at both lakes. Both lakes have beaches with lifeguards, too. Stop near the band shell at Lake Harriet and take a trolley ride. Restrooms are located at park buildings during the summer, and portable restrooms are also located along the trails.

Hyland Lake Park Reserve

Terrain: **Paved trail**

Distance: **8.6 miles roundtrip, but rides can be tailored to any length; minimal elevation gain**

Why This Ride: The trail is integrated nicely with the city, so it doesn't take long to get to and connects well with neighborhoods for easy access.

Ride Description: With its 10-foot-wide trails, Hyland Lake Park Reserve is the perfect destination for a family outing. Three loops extend north from the southern boundary of the park and take riders through rolling hills, scenic meadows and woodlands to the southern edge of the nature center's trails. The trails connect to the neighborhood east of the park via a bridge over the railroad track and to Bush Lake Park on the west. Want to search out wildlife? Keep an eye out for prairie skinks, Cooper's hawks and other raptors, pileated woodpeckers, bluebirds, woodcocks, tiger salamanders and common loons.

Driving Directions: From I-494 in Bloomington, exit at East Bush Lake Road. Head south and turn right at the light to stay on East Bush Lake Road. It winds around and the park entrance will be on your left. Parking is free.

Tips: To cool off after your ride, cross Bush Lake Road and take a swim in Bush Lake. Kids will also love the nationally acclaimed play area at the Visitor Center. Restrooms are available at the Visitor Center.

Elm Creek Park Reserve

Terrain: **Paved trails**

Distance: **20 miles roundtrip total, separated into smaller loops that are 12 miles, 4.7 miles and 4.5 miles each. It's a bit hilly, which should suit adventurous riders well.**

Why This Ride: It's a diverse trail with multiple route options that provide breathtaking views of assorted scenery as well as wildlife and wildflower viewing.

Ride Description: The largest park (5,400 acres) in the Three Rivers Park District, Elm Creek Park Preserve and its interior trails connect riders to a vast landscape. Whether it's a shady ride through woodlands, along streams and over wetland bridges, or an open-field excursion that wanders along old farm fields, this set of trails will always keep the scenery fresh. The 10 feet-wide trails are newly resurfaced; they connect to the regional trails of the Coon Rapids Dam or Fish Lake Regional Parks and beyond. Pick your pleasure, and afterwards enjoy one of the picnic sites, play area, chlorinated pond with swim beach and concessions.

Driving Directions: You can access Elm Creek's main entrance off of County Road 81 or you can access the other loop from Eastman Nature Center, which is on Elm Creek Road, north of County Road 81 and Fernbrook Lane. Parking is free at Elm Creek's Visitor Center (12400 Elm Creek Park Drive, Maple Grove) or Eastman Nature Center (13351 Elm Creek Road, Dayton).

Tips: Stop off at the nice beach spot with picnic tables before or after the ride. It's located just inside the park. Restrooms are available at both park entrances. Bring plenty of water.

Crosby Farm—Hidden Falls Trail

Terrain: **Paved trail**

Distance: **6.7 miles round-trip; minimal elevation gain**

Why This Ride: It's a beautiful and easy ride along the country's most famous river.

Ride Description: Get up close and personal with the Mississippi River as you roll along its banks on this shady excursion. The southern end of this ride opens up and allows for great birding as you gaze down at the river, while the rest of the journey takes you around Lake Crosby and through wooded bottomlands. This ride is special because it provides the ability to experience the Mighty Mississippi in a natural setting close to the city.

Driving Directions: Crosby Farm Regional Park is located on Sheppard Road between Highway 5 and Interstate 35E. The entrance to the park is on the south side of the road. The address is 2595 Crosby Farm Road St. Paul, MN 55116. Parking is free.

Tips: Be sure to hit the restroom before you take off on your journey, because there aren't any on the ride. There are restrooms located at the parking area, along with picnic tables and grills—providing the perfect setting for a little post-ride picnic.



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.