



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

Rock Creek Park: Beach Drive between Military and Broad Branch Roads

Terrain: **Paved road**

Distance: **2.4 miles roundtrip; minimal elevation gain.**

Why This Ride: It's a great place to introduce young novice riders to the fun of riding in nature. The broad, flat road is easy to navigate, and offers beautiful scenery.

Ride Description: Located in northwest Washington, D.C., Rock Creek Park is an urban wonder and a National Park. This short, relaxing ride on open road is only possible on weekends and holidays: Beach Drive is then closed to motorized vehicles (7am to 7pm). Take advantage of the window of opportunity. You'll forget you're in a major city. The thick woods muffle everyday commotion, leaving just the sounds of the bubbling creek that follows the roadway. When the mood strikes, take a break from your pedaling and give kids a lesson in the fine art of skipping stones across the creek.

Driving Directions: Park at Pierce Mill, southwest of Beach Drive. Pierce Mill is off Tilden Street and Park Road, between Connecticut Avenue and 16th Street in NW Washington, D.C. There are no fees.

Tips: From Pierce Mill, ride half a mile north along the paved bike path to Beach Drive. Rock Creek Park also has lots of hiking trails, ranger programs and a planetarium. There are restrooms at the mill, and the lawn makes a great picnic spot.

Prince William Forest Park Scenic Drive: Parking Lot D to Oak Ridge Trail intersection

Terrain: **Paved road**

Distance: **9-mile loop, with some rolling hills and two significant climbs, each approximately 500 yards long. Gentle incline for the first few miles, then a flat ride, mostly on a designated bike trail.**

Why This Ride: Beautiful scenery, safe conditions and rich history combine to make this a memorable excursion.

Ride Description: With its rolling hills and stunning piedmont forest, Scenic Drive definitely lives up to its name. Kids will enjoy seeing lots of birds among the beech, holly and oak woodlands. If you go early, you might also see deer, wild turkey and beaver. Human history in the area dates back to 8,000 BC, and Depression-era CCC projects (rustic cabins, bridges, dams and roads) still stand. Three miles of the road are designated for bicycles only, and car traffic is light and slow-moving on the remaining couple of miles. To avoid having to climb the steepest section (before Turkey Run), ride the loop clockwise. Just be sure to watch your kids' speed on the descent. Oak Ridge is the highest point in the park, so the return ride includes plenty of coasting. For a more challenging 12-mile roundtrip, continue to Parking Lot H. Mountain bikers can park at Turkey Run Education Center and take the Old Black Top Road trail to parking area F, then continue to Oak Ridge.

Driving Directions: From Washington, D.C., go south on I-95. Take Exit 150-B (VA Rt. 619/Joplin Road). The park entrance is the second right. Park in any of the designated parking areas along Scenic Drive. Day-use parking is \$5 per vehicle; \$3 per person (pedestrian or bicyclist). An annual parking pass is \$20.

Tips: Be sure to stop at the Visitor Center and check out the artifacts from the park's unique history. Restrooms are available at the Visitor Center, Turkey Run Education Center and Turkey Run Campground. (The campground is a short ride off Scenic Drive between parking areas D and I.) Parking Lot D fills early on nice weekends. For a shorter ride, parking is available at Lot E where several hiking trails can also be accessed.

Millennium Trail, Rockville, Maryland

Terrain: **Paved path**

Distance: **10.6-mile loop; no elevation gain.**

Why This Ride: A convenient, safe, urban trail with little traffic.

Ride Description: A bicyclist's version of the beltway, this picturesque loop trail is within 2 miles of any Rockville neighborhood. While shorter out-and-back trips can be planned anywhere along the route, the entire loop is flat and makes an easy family excursion. Since it rings the city, it takes you through both old and new neighborhoods. You'll also pass wetlands and quiet ponds in the Fallsgrove area. Have kids keep their eyes open for various critters here, including the occasional shy coyote.

Driving Directions: The trail runs along several main Rockville roads: Gude Drive, First Street, and Wooton Parkway. Pick up the southern end of the trail at Route 355 and First Street; the northern end at Gude Drive and Route 355. From the west, pick up the trail at Darnestown Road and Wooton Parkway; from the east, at Norbeck Road and First Street. Free parking is available on any public road or lot unless otherwise indicated.

Tips: There are three major road crossings, all with signal lights: at Route 355 and Gude Drive, at Viers Mill Road and First Street, and at Route 355 and Wooton Parkway. Restrooms are available at the many commercial establishments along the trail.

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Towpath (C&O Canal): Old Angler's Inn to Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center

Terrain: **Packed clay and gravel path**

Distance: **4 miles roundtrip, with negligible elevation gain.**

Why This Ride: Unique geologic features, magical birds, easy access.

Ride Description: This short ride is just a brief taste of what the historic 185-mile towpath offers. While the path is wide enough for two bikes to ride abreast, weekend traffic on this section can be heavy, so plan to ride single file. You'll pass the Canal Clipper, a period canal boat complete with rangers in costumes and mules to tow it. Further on, you may see kayakers shooting the rapids. Just past the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center is a path to Olmstead Island. For a feeling of being in the middle of a waterfall, leave your bikes and walk onto the Mather Gorge Bridge. Beneath you, the river roars through a narrow canyon. This is a natural turnaround point.

Driving Directions: From the Capital Beltway, take the Carderock exit to Clara Barton Parkway. Continue 1.5 miles to MacArthur Boulevard. Turn left and continue 1 mile to the Old Angler's Inn. Parking is free (and crowded) across the street from the restaurant in the large dirt lot. (Parking at the Great Falls Tavern entrance is \$5 per vehicle or \$3 per bike or walk-in.)

Tips: All bikes are required to have a bell to warn other towpath users when approaching from behind. Canada geese also like the trail and can be slow at getting out of harm's way. Portable restrooms are available in the parking area by Old Angler's Inn. There are full restroom facilities at the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center.

Baltimore and Annapolis Trail: Annapolis to Earleigh Heights Ranger Station

Terrain: **Paved path**

Distance: **14 miles roundtrip; minimal elevation gain (2% grade).**

Why This Ride: It's easy and relaxed, with pleasant scenery and a chance to see both historical buildings and local wildlife.

Ride Description: This ride covers just over half of the entire 13-mile-long Baltimore and Annapolis Trail that reaches from Annapolis all the way to Glen Burnie. From the south parking lot, the 10-foot-wide path leads you through suburban neighborhoods and past historic reminders of the old B&A Short Line Railroad that used to run here, including the Severna Park Station. Kids will also have a good chance of seeing wildlife in the woods, wetlands and meadows you'll pass. The Earleigh Heights Ranger Station (mile 7) makes a good picnic and turnaround spot. Check there for ranger-led walks, talks and programs.

Driving Directions: From Washington, D.C. and points west, take Highway 50 east to Exit 27 and follow Route 450 toward the Naval Academy. Go 0.1 miles to the south parking lot on the right. Parking is free.

Tips: Restaurants and stores are accessible along the way, in case you get an irresistible urge for ice cream or another snack. Severna Park (mile 5) is a good choice for this. There are restrooms at Earleigh Heights Ranger Station.



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.