



# 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: **Crest House to Sandia Peak Tram Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **3.6 miles roundtrip, 378' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** Are the kids restless? Here's an easy trail with flat-out amazing, expanding views of Albuquerque, Mt. Taylor, the Jemez mountains, the Sangre de Cristos, the San Pedros, the Manzanos and Ladron Peak.

**Hike Description:** The well-marked Crest Trail 130 offers 2 parallel routes here: one through the forest and the other along the crest's cliff. Both begin just south of the gift shop parking lot. The cliff trail, more scenic and interesting, is not really dangerous if children are kept back from the edge—and the views are stunning. However, it can be very windy (notice the flagging of the trees). The nature trail is a calmer alternative and rejoins the main trail later. Leaving the parking lot, the way is rocky. Shortly after you climb the rock stairs, you enter the forest where you'll see lots of downed trees, cut where they fell across the trail. In the forest, the trail is usually smooth. After 0.5 miles you'll come to the stone Kiwanis Cabin. Here, or at Kiwanis Meadow, is a good place to take a break or turn around. From the meadow the trail again enters forest. Look for signs pointing out ecological features. At about 1.5 miles, you reach the terminus of the Sandia Peak Tram where there's a bathroom and a restaurant. The Crest Trail continues south from here, but it's steeper. To return to the parking lot, turn from the tram terminal, and head north on Crest Trail 130.

**Driving Directions:** From Albuquerque, go east on I-40, taking the Tijeras exit on NM 14 (Exit 175). Go north for 6 miles to NM 536, then follow the signs for 12 miles to the crest parking lot. Parking is \$3.

**Tips:** When taking the cliff trail, use the opportunity to teach kids trail safety, reminding them to stay clear of the edge. The elevation is slightly above 10,000', so be prepared to stop more frequently to rest.

### Hike Two: **Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument**

Rating: **Cave Loop Trail, easy; Canyon Trail, moderate**

Distance: **1.2 miles roundtrip (Cave Loop); 3 miles roundtrip, about 1,000' elevation gain (Canyon Trail)**

**Why This Hike:** This is a great way to give kids a firsthand experience of how some of the land we see today was shaped by ancient volcanoes.

**Hike Description:** This well-maintained, foot-travel-only hike actually includes two different trails. Both offer fun opportunities for birdwatching, plant identification and seeing really cool geological formations—the result of volcanic eruptions 6 to 7 million years ago. Both trails begin at the monument's designated parking area. The easy Cave Loop Trail is 1.2 miles long. The more difficult Canyon Trail is a 3-mile roundtrip into a narrow canyon which includes a steep (630') climb to the mesa top where you'll find "wow!" views of the Sangre de Cristo, Jemez and Sandia mountains, and the Rio Grande Valley.

**Driving Directions:** From Albuquerque, take I-25 north and exit onto NM 22 at Santo Domingo/Cochiti Lake Recreation Area (Exit 259). Follow the signs on NM 22 to Cochiti Pueblo and Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument. Turn right off NM 22 at the pueblo water tower (painted like a drum) onto Tribal Route 92, which connects to Forest Service Road 266. Travel 5 miles on a gravel road to the national monument's designated parking/picnic area, fee station and trailhead. There's a \$5 parking fee.

**Tips:** In the arroyos, kids can find small, rounded, translucent obsidian (volcanic glass) fragments created by rapid cooling. Please teach them to leave these fragments for others to enjoy. During inclement weather, the canyon may flash flood and lightning may strike the ridges, so the Cave Loop Trail would be a safer choice.

Hike Three: **Rinconada Canyon—Petroglyph National Monument**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.2 miles roundtrip, 85' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** With approximately 400 petroglyphs visible from the trail, this hike gives kids an exciting glimpse into 12,000 years of human history in the Albuquerque area.

**Hike Description:** From the trailhead, you skirt along the right side of the canyon/ mesa. Along the trail you'll notice many petroglyphs etched into the dark rocks. The artists came from different periods in history and different cultures—Native Americans, Spanish settlers and American ranchers. The trail is a loop or, if you prefer, can be an out-and-back hike. Going in, you follow close to the canyon/ mesa wall. But if you do the loop, the trail returns through the middle of the canyon—too far from the cliffs to see the petroglyphs. The sandy, flat trail makes this an easy trip, and the petroglyphs ensure that it's a family outing that will be remembered a long time.

**Driving Directions:** From Albuquerque, take I-40 west and exit onto Unser Boulevard (Exit 154). Go north for a little over 2 miles. Turn left on St. Joseph Avenue and you'll immediately be at the parking lot and trailhead for the Rinconada Canyon Trail. Parking is free for Rinconada Canyon. (There are fees for other nearby trails. See the visitor center, 0.5 miles north of the Rinconada trailhead on Unser Blvd., for details.)

**Tips:** Viewing the petroglyphs is easiest early in the morning before the sun gets too bright on east- and south-facing walls. Consider planning your trip for the first hours after the park opens at 8 am. Binoculars and polarized sunglasses will also enhance the experience.

Hike Four: **Rio Grande Nature Center State Park**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **0.8- to 1-mile loops, no elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's a fine place for birdwatching. In the summer, kids will see warblers, western meadowlarks, black-chinned hummingbirds, black phoebes and western kingbirds. In the winter, they'll spot numerous waterfowl, as well as sandhill cranes and bald eagles.

**Hike Description:** The park has wonderful interpretive nature trails and demonstration gardens to explore. Inside the Nature Center are exhibits of the river ecology. The Riverwalk Trail is an easy one-mile loop through the cottonwood bosque (woods) and along the river, passing through open meadows and heavily forested areas. The Bosque Loop Trail, about 0.8 miles, is an easy walk through the bosque, with a spur to the river. A trail guide is available at the Nature Center.

**Driving Directions:** Rio Grande Nature Center State Park is located in Albuquerque at the west end of Candelaria Road NW. From I-40, take Exit 157A onto Rio Grande Boulevard. Go north 3 blocks, and turn left onto Candelaria Road. From I-25, take Exit 227 (Frontage Road) and turn right onto Candelaria Road. Parking is \$3 in the Nature Center's paved parking lot.

**Tips:** If you have binoculars, bring them. If not, you can borrow some at the Nature Center. Field guides are also available for loan. A highlight of the Nature Center is the glass-walled library that looks out over the park's pond. A speaker system brings the actual sounds of pond life into the room. Admission to the Nature Center is \$1 for adults; \$.50 for kids.

Hike Five: **Travertine Waterfall—South Crest Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1 mile roundtrip, approximately 300' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** After just a short walk, there's a delightful waterfall that flows gently down a limestone rock formation above a shallow cave. It's a wonderful place for a snack or lunch.

**Hike Description:** This is the southern terminus of the 28-mile Crest Trail, but you'll be walking just a short distance, so relax and enjoy all the plants around you. There are piñons, oaks, ponderosas, wild grapes, asters, foxgloves and many more varieties. Poison ivy is also found here (don't despair, just be aware). The trail ascends gradually from the parking area, crossing a small watercourse that's usually dry. After about 0.5 mile, you'll arrive at a short side trail leading to a small cliff at the base of which are several grottoes. A tiny waterfall trickles down the cliff face. The cliff is made of travertine, a soft mineral formed by the evaporation of water containing dissolved limestone. Above the waterfall, the stream is pleasant and shaded—definitely worth a visit.

**Driving Directions:** From Albuquerque, drive about 6 miles east on I-40 and take the Tijeras exit. But instead of entering the village, turn left immediately, and pass beneath the interstate. Bend right, and follow the road through the Canyon Estates residential neighborhood. After 0.5 mile, at the road's end, you reach the well-marked parking lot and trailhead. Parking is free.

**Tips:** At the top of the waterfall, be sure to have your kids look in the light-colored sedimentary limestone for fossils—there are lots of crinoid stems and seashells embedded in the rock.



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.