



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: **John Ripley Forbes Big Trees Forest Preserve**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, 120' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: We love this place, and have spent a lot of time volunteering here to help keep it pristine. The preserve and its easy trail system is a peaceful oasis in the middle of Sandy Springs—just minutes from the Perimeter REI store.

Hike Description: The 1.5-mile trail system consists of three main trails with several short connector trails. They all loop through the full-canopy, hardwood and softwood forest. As you go, you'll come to cliff overlooks with views of cascading water, two creeks with multiple bridge crossings, and several benches that offer a nice place to rest. A trail brochure (available at the trailhead) presents you with a 15-stop, self-guided tour, pointing out the dynamics of forest life as well as some interesting historical elements within the preserve. The soft, wood-chip paths keep footsteps quiet, and visitors are encouraged to protect the forest tranquility by avoiding boisterous conduct while following the forest rules. (So no running, kids, and keep Fido on a leash.) The result is a soothing, relaxing day spent enjoying nature.

Driving Directions: From Atlanta, go north on GA-400 to Exit 5B in Sandy Springs. (From GA-400 south, take Exit 5, NW Abernathy Road). Go west 1.3 miles to Roswell Road NE. Turn right (north) on Roswell and go 2.1 miles. The Big Trees Forest Preserve is on the right, next to the North Fulton County Government Service Center (beige, 2-story building). Park in the Service Center's south parking lot. Enter the preserve from the south end of the lot. Parking is free.

Tips: While you're here, check out the Albert Schweitzer Nature Preserve, just 1 mile south of Big Trees. There are no restroom facilities available on the weekend. During the week, you can use the restrooms in the Service Center building next to the forest.

Hike Two: **Cochran Shoals Trail: Cochran Shoals to Columns Drive Loop**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **3 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Open to hikers, bikers and joggers, this trail offers a great family experience that brings you up close to the Chattahoochee River and its surrounding wetlands.

Hike Description: Here's a fine place to bring your family for some quiet time alongside a smooth-flowing river. The wide, flat trail accommodates a number of users simultaneously, of both the two-legged and four-legged varieties. The terrain is groomed and lined with crushed gravel, so navigation is easy, even with a stroller. There are lots of amenities along the way, including restrooms, benches, water and trail markers. The star of the show is the Chattahoochee River, along with its varied plant and animal life. After about 1.5 miles, you'll loop around a marsh and wetlands, marking your turnaround point.

Driving Directions: From I-285: Take Exit 22 (Northside Drive). Turn north onto New Northside Drive. Use the "through" lane to pick up Interstate North Parkway. The CRNRA park unit will be 0.8 miles on the right, after crossing the Chattahoochee.

From US 41 (Cobb Parkway): Travel to Akers Mill Road. Go north about 1.5 miles to the junction of Akers Mill and Powers Ferry Road. Turn left and go under I-285, then an immediate right onto Interstate North Parkway. The park will be 0.2 miles on the left, before crossing the river. There's a parking area off Interstate North Parkway. You can also enter the park from the Column Drive parking area. Parking is free.

Tips: There are picnic tables in the park and an activity field (bring a soccer ball, football, kite or baseball and mitts for after-hike play). You can launch a canoe across the river at Powers Island. There are no restrooms at the trailhead, but there are at the activity field (0.5 miles from the parking lot).

Hike Three: **Dunlap Trail of the Chicopee Woods and Elachee Nature Preserve**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3.5 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's one of the most scenic walking paths in the Chicopee Woods, which are well-known for their beauty.

Hike Description: The Dunlap Trail starts on the right side of West Lake Trail after it leaves the overflow parking area. You can also access it from the Mathis Trail. The Dunlap follows Homestead and Walnut creeks. The high point (literally) may be the new 140' suspension bridge that crosses Walnut Creek. You also pass through a variety of forest types, including mature stands of oak and hickory. This is a great trail to explore in different seasons. The woods change dramatically, giving kids a wonderful experience of the rich diversity and clear cycles in forest life.

Driving Directions: From Atlanta, take I-85 north to Exit 16 (Oakwood). Turn left at the offramp. Take the second right (Frontage Road) and follow it until it dead-ends into Atlanta Hwy. Turn left. Pass the Chicopee Woods Golf Course on the right. Take the next right (Elachee Drive) and follow it through the preserve to Elachee Nature Science Center. Turn left into the parking lot. Parking is free.

From the north, take Hwy I-985/365 South to Exit 16 (Oakwood). Turn right at the offramp and then immediately right again onto Frontage Road. Follow it to where it dead ends at Atlanta Hwy. Turn left and complete the directions listed above.

Tips: There are several great exhibits at the Nature Science Center. Admission to the center is \$3 for adults; \$2 for children ages 2–12. Children under age 2 and Elachee members are admitted free. At the center, you can check out a free Discover Nature Pack filled with information and activities for your hike. Restrooms are available at the center during business hours (Mon–Sat, 10am to 5pm).

Hike Four: **Mountaintop Trail at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **2.4 miles roundtrip, 700' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: The trail is a great journey through the past and present. It offers wonderful views of the countryside, and it includes interpretive signs pointing out some of the park's well-preserved relics from the Civil War.

Hike Description: The 2,888-acre park, site of some of the heaviest fighting during the Atlanta Campaign of the Civil War, has 17.3 miles of hiking trails. The Mountaintop Trail is paved and includes several switchbacks. It's moderately difficult because of the overall elevation gain and some steep sections. But on a clear day, the commanding views from the summit stretch as far as Stone Mountain to the south-east. For those who don't want to hike all the way to the top (or if little legs fade at the prospect of the walk down), there's a shuttle available from the visitor center. Please help preserve the park by remaining on the trail at all times.

Driving Directions: From Atlanta, take I-75 to Exit 269 (Barrett Parkway). At the light, turn west onto Barrett Parkway. Go approximately three miles and turn left onto Old Hwy. 41. Turn right at the next light (Stilesboro Road). The visitor center will be on your left. Parking is free. (Additional parking is available in the gravel lot on the right side of Stilesboro, just before the visitor center).

Tips: There's a meadow and a shaded forest on either side of the visitor center that offer great picnic spots. Several restaurants and ice cream can be found nearby on Barrett Parkway or at Town Center Mall. There are restrooms at the visitor center. The fare for the shuttle to the mountaintop is \$2 for adults; \$1 for children ages 6–12. Children under age 6 ride free.

Hike Five: **The Stone Mountain Park's Mountaintop Walk-Up Trail**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **2.6 miles roundtrip, 825' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: The trail offers amazing views of Atlanta, and the park is loaded with family fun—from picnic areas and playgrounds to a laser light show!

Hike Description: The trail is very easy to navigate: just follow the large yellow line painted onto the primarily granite path. (The granite can be slippery when wet, so if you get caught in rain, watch your step.) As you climb, you'll meander through several patches of pine forest. Tell your kids to watch for small wildlife—there are plenty of little critters out and about. They'll also find lots of interesting rock formations. At the top, be ready for stunning views of the metropolitan area. There's also a snack bar, souvenir stand and restrooms. As an option to the hike down (or up), you can ride one of the Skyline Gondolas. But if you ride it down, when you get to the bottom you'll have a 1.1-mile walk to the parking lot at the trailhead. So you won't save much distance. But it will be flat, which can feel shorter.

Driving Directions: From Atlanta, take I-285 to Exit 39B (Stone Mountain Parkway) east toward Snellville and Athens. Go 7.8 miles to the exit for Stone Mountain East Gate, where you'll pay an \$8 entrance fee. After one mile (now known as Jefferson Davis Drive), the road intersects with Robert E. Lee Boulevard. Turn left on Robert E. Lee and go one mile to Confederate Hall, on the left. Turn left and park just after the hall. (Additional trail parking is available on the right, on the way to Confederate Hall, and past the hall at the nature center.)

Tips: In the summer, stay into the evening and enjoy the nightly music and laser light show under the stars. The show is included with your \$8 entrance fee. There are several restaurants and food vendors in the park. Restrooms are available at Confederate Hall and at the top of the mountain.



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.