



# 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: **Harriet Alexander Nature Center Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.34 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's an easy urban hike that showcases several different Minnesota landscapes.

**Hike Description:** The natural-turf trail starts near the entrance to the nature center and winds through 52 acres of protected land. You'll go from forest to marsh, where a boardwalk carries you across the wetland, to a section of tallgrass prairie. The preserve is home to painted turtles, cottontail rabbits and many different species of birds (bring your binoculars). Naturalist-guided tours are available, and they make a great way to introduce kids to a deeper understanding of local ecology and stewardship.

**Driving Directions:** The trail is in Central Park in Roseville. Take Hwy. 36 to the Dale Street exit. Go north on Dale. North of Transit Avenue West, you'll enter Central Park. The nature center entrance is ahead on the right. Parking is free.

**Tips:** Be sure to stop at the nature center to see the animal displays and to talk with a naturalist. Next door is the wildlife rehabilitation center where injured animals are nursed back to health. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

### Hike Two: **Louisville Swamp, Mazomani Trail**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **4.5 miles roundtrip, 100' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** The varied landscape gives you the feeling of being far from the city, but you're not.

**Hike Description:** There's forest, prairie, two historic farms, a creek and a swamp. Kids will never be bored with "the same old thing" on this trail. It's constantly changing. You start in upland forest, on a bluff. In a little ways, you come to an overlook of the swamp. But if the water's high, what you'll see is a nice lake. From the bluff you descend to the first of two old farms, then duck back into the forest where you'll cross Sand Creek. A climb back to the bluff takes you onto open prairie. Kids will notice a large boulder alone in the field. It was left by a glacier that passed through the neighborhood a few thousand years ago. More views of the swamp from the bluff's edge are followed by Jab's Farm, where kids can explore the old buildings. The trail ends when you cross the swamp and climb back to the prairie and the trailhead.

**Driving Directions:** From Minneapolis, go south on Hwy. 169. About 4.5 miles south of Shakopee, turn right on 145th Street. Cross the railroad tracks. The trailhead parking lot is at the end of the road, on the left. Parking is free.

**Tips:** Shorter and longer loops are also available, so you can adjust your hike depending how much time and energy you have. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Three: **Minnehaha Falls and Creek**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **2.8 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** Minnehaha Falls (“Laughing Waters”) is one of the most famous natural landmarks in the Twin Cities.

**Hike Description:** Minnehaha Falls is the result of the creek cutting through the soft sandstone to reveal harder limestone cliffs. The process continues, creating a gradually expanding bowl 50' below the limestone shelf. The trail starts as a wide walkway along the west bank of Minnehaha Creek. As you walk downstream, you'll cross several footbridges. Along the way, the forest opens to views of Abandon Falls Glen, the Mississippi River and the star of the show, Minnehaha Falls. This is a fun hike any time of year. In the spring, wildflowers are spectacular along the trail and creek. Fall colors are worth a trip, thanks to the alder, dogwood and cottonwood trees. And in winter, fantastic frost patterns are formed when the warmer water meets the colder air.

**Driving Directions:** In Minneapolis, access is available off 46th Street/Minnehaha Parkway. From St. Paul, turn south immediately after crossing Ford Bridge. There's a parking lot just off 46th Street at Minnehaha Falls Park. Parking is paid at automated pay stations or meters (an annual pass is also available).

**Tips:** Minnehaha Falls Park offers concessions, a picnic pavilion, drinking water and a playground. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Four: **Quaking Bog**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **0.5 miles roundtrip, 50' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's a family-friendly and handicapped-accessible trail right in the city of Minneapolis.

**Hike Description:** The natural-turf trail initially climbs a series of switchbacks to a small ridge, and then descends into the bog. A floating boardwalk takes you into the bog and around Mariana's Isle. Quaking Bog is a unique natural feature, mostly covered in thick sphagnum moss, and shaded by mature tamarack trees. It attracts a variety of songbirds, as well as dragonflies and damselflies. If they walk quietly, kids will also hear frogs along the trail. The path is an out-and-back, so you just return by the same route.

**Driving Directions:** From I-394 in Minneapolis, exit at N. Penn Avenue. Go south to Wayzata Boulevard (the south side of the frontage road) and proceed to the Wirth Parkway connection. Go north on the parkway. Quaking Bog is 0.3 miles ahead on the left. Parking is metered (bring quarters).

**Tips:** Just north and across the street is the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary. Both are part of Theodore Wirth Park. Swimming beaches and more hiking and biking trails are nearby. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Five: **Rice Creek Chain of Lakes**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's a great opportunity for kids to experience a sampling of Minnesota's natural resources.

**Hike Description:** I like this hike because it gives you a little taste of “northern” Minnesota. The trail begins at the intersection of the main bike trail. It's wide, paved and wheelchair-accessible. Five lakes connect through the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve. They also provide transition areas of marshland with cattails and alders. As you walk, the trail cuts through aspen groves mixed with ash and willows. Hiking in this area has been described as being like walking in a huge neighborhood park. Native critters that kids might see (especially if you go early or late in the day) include muskrats, red fox, squirrels, woodchucks, weasels, deer and lots of birds. It's also a great spot for canoeing.

**Driving Directions:** From St. Paul and Minneapolis, go north on I-35 West toward Centerville. Take Exit 36 and turn. Drive about one mile to Aqua Lane. Turn east to the first parking lot near the lake. Park near the boat launch. The trailhead is just across the road. Parking is \$4 (a \$20 annual permit is available).

**Tips:** Be sure to check out the park's Wargo Nature Center. It's open every day except Monday. There are 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](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.