



# 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: **Beechwood Farms Nature Preserve, Spring Hollow Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **0.5 miles roundtrip, 70' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's a pleasant walk through a variety of habitats. You'll see lots of birds and butterflies, and there's a cool treetop observation deck.

**Hike Description:** The trail begins behind the barn and leads through a small meadow toward the forest. You'll pass a pond on your left and then head uphill until you come to a bridge over Hart's Run. When you get to the intersection with the Woodlands Trail, go left to the top of the hill. There's a little side trail here that leads to the Treetop Observation Deck. Don't miss this. On quiet days, kids might spot deer, wild turkeys and other critters from the deck. Returning to the trail, go left through the upper meadow to an intersection with the Meadowview Trail. If you'd like to lengthen your hike, the Meadowview Trail adds 0.41 miles and returns you to the Spring Hollow Trail within view of the Beechwood Farms Center.

**Driving Directions:** From Pittsburgh, take Rte. 28 north to Exit 5B (Rte. 8/Butler). At the first traffic light, turn right onto Sharps Hill/Kittanning Road. Continue up Kittanning 4.5 miles (it becomes Dorseyville Road). Beechwood Farms Nature Preserve is on the left side of the road. Parking is free.

**Tips:** After hiking, why not stop for ice cream? Our favorite spot is on Hart's Run Road. Turn left from the parking lot and left again on Hart's Run Road. The ice cream shop is just past the intersection with Saxonburg Boulevard. To get back to Pittsburgh from there, go to the Saxonburg/Hart's Run intersection and turn right on Saxonburg. Turn left on Rte. 8, which will take you to Rte. 28 south. There are restrooms, a bookstore and an observation room in the farm center.

### Hike Two: **Frick Park, Trails near the Environmental Center**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **0.25 to 1.25 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** The park offers young hikers varied opportunities to explore diverse Eastern woodlands within an urban setting.

**Hike Description:** A number of walks are possible here. I suggest that you try the South Clayton Trail that begins near the Environmental Center. You'll soon pass an enclosed area with an observation deck and then come to a junction with the Nature Trail. If you take the Nature Trail, it will lead you to another trail junction and then back to the center. But if you want to lengthen your walk, just stay on the South Clayton Trail for 0.65 miles. You'll come to the North Clayton Trail that, in 0.37 miles, will take you back to the center. Maps are available at the left-entrance gatehouse, Monday–Friday, 8am to 4pm. There are also several nice hikes that start at Blue Slide Playground (you passed it on the right, coming up Beechwood).

**Driving Directions:** From downtown Pittsburgh, take I-376 east (Parkway East) to the Squirrel Hill exit. Stay in the left lane of the off-ramp and turn left onto Forward Avenue. Pass beneath the Parkway and move to the right lane. At the traffic signal, go straight (a BP gas station is on the left) and follow Forward Ave. past Taylor Allderdice HS. At the top of the hill, there's a traffic light at Beechwood Boulevard. Turn left on Beechwood and go 1.2 miles to the Frick Park Environmental Center. Park in the lot opposite the center. Parking is free.

**Tips:** The park is popular with dog owners. While Fido is supposed to be on leash, it's not uncommon to encounter him and his friends running free. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Three: **McConnells Mill State Park, Kildoo Trail & North Country Trail Loop**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **2.5 miles roundtrip, 360' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It offers great views of Slippery Rock Creek, several waterfalls, native woodlands, a historic covered bridge and a reconstructed grist mill!

**Hike Description:** From the picnic area, the trail starts near the restrooms. Walk toward the edge of the gorge where you'll see the crushed-stone path. A series of switchbacks lead you to the base of the gorge and the mill. Follow the walkway past the mill and down to the trailhead for Kildoo Trail near the covered bridge. As you walk on the east side of the creek, you'll have lots of views of the rapids, and you'll clearly hear the roar of the water. Halfway through the hike you'll come to Eckert Bridge. Once you cross, turn right to pick up the North Country Trail that heads upstream on the west side of the creek. You'll climb above Slippery Rock Creek (it has earned its name, so don't let kids go near the water). When you get to McConnells Mill Road, turn right and quickly cross the single-lane covered bridge. Then return to the mill, cross the road and head back to your car via the switchback trail.

**Driving Directions:** From downtown Pittsburgh, take I-79 north to Exit 99 (US 422). At the off-ramp, turn left onto US 422 west toward McConnells Mill. Go one mile past the junction with US 19 and then left onto McConnells Mill Road to enter the park. Continue straight past the junction with Johnson Road, until you reach the picnic area. Turn right into the parking lot. Parking is free.

**Tips:** Sturdy walking shoes are recommended. Allow more time than you might expect. There are restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Four: **Todd Sanctuary Loop Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **2 miles roundtrip, 150' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** There's a nice mix of woodland habitats and lots of birds. The well-blazed trails are a good place for young hikers to practice route finding.

**Hike Description:** Pick up a trail map at the cabin (across the footbridge). The Loop Trail (marked by red blazes) begins behind the cabin. If you take the loop clockwise, you'll avoid a moderately steep climb. Going clockwise (left) from the trailhead, the trail winds through woodlands to a crossing of Watson's Run on a series of stepping stones. Climbing slightly, you reach a pond and then an intersection with the Polypody Trail. At this intersection, the trail makes a left turn and gets rockier, with more ups and downs. Shortly after passing the Indian Pipe Trail, you descend toward Watson's Run, and then climb gradually as you head back to the cabin. The sound of Watson's Run cascading through the rocks makes a soothing accompaniment to the last section of the loop.

**Driving Directions:** From Pittsburgh, take Rte. 28 north to Exit 17, and then go north on Rte. 356. At the first traffic light (there's a Get-Go on the corner), turn right on Monroe Road. Follow Monroe 2.3 miles to Stepp Road. Turn right on Stepp and go 0.7 miles to Kepple Road. Turn left on Kepple and go 0.6 miles to the entrance of Todd Sanctuary. (Watch for a sanctuary sign, and the driveway to the parking lot, on the right side of the road). Parking is free.

**Tips:** With the exception of service animals, dogs are not allowed in the sanctuary. There are no restrooms at the trailhead (nearest facilities are at the Get-Go at Rte. 356/Monroe Road).

Hike Five: **Raccoon Creek Wildflower Reserve**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **2 to 3 miles roundtrip, 250' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** From spring to fall, these trails offer a wonderful mix of wildflowers and other flora. There are also nice views of Raccoon Creek.

**Hike Description:** Start on the Jennings Trail at the east side of the parking lot. After passing the Big Maple Trail and crossing a small bridge, you'll descend some stairs to a marshy area. When you get to the junction with the Old Wagon Road Trail, turn right on Old Wagon. Follow it to where it meets the Meadow Trail. Take the Meadow Trail through a profusion of flowers that lasts from late spring until the first fall frost. Continue on the Meadow Trail past the Hickory Trail. Eventually you'll come back to the Jennings Trail. Turn right here and follow along Raccoon Creek. A nice side loop from here that takes you closer to the creek is the Beaver Trail, off to your right. Back on the Jennings, go until you meet the Audubon Trail. Turn left here and climb to the top of the ridge. This trail will lead you back to the nature center and the parking lot.

**Driving Directions:** From Pittsburgh, take I-279 west (Parkway West) to US Rte. 22 W/US Rte. 30 W in Robinson Township. Take Rtes. 22/30 W to where Rte. 30 bears right and goes through Imperial. Continue 7.2 miles past the town of Clinton. Watch for the right turn into the Raccoon Creek Wildflower Reserve. Park in the first lot to the right. Parking is free.

**Tips:** Be sure to pick up a trail map at the nature center. This hike can be wet; sturdy walking shoes are recommended. There are restrooms at the nature center.



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.