



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: **Dreamy Draw Nature Trail (#220 & #220A)**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1 mile (#220A) or 1.5 miles (#220) roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This popular, easy hike through the foothills northwest of Piestewa (Squaw) Peak offers quick access, great views and gentle grades.

Hike Description: From the trailhead, follow the trail east through the horse tunnel and then make an immediate sharp right. Once you reach Trail 220, have kids look ahead to see Piestewa (Squaw) Peak—it's the 2,608' summit rising above the surrounding mountains. And right at their feet, point out some of the native vegetation that's scattered along the trail, including creosote bushes, brittlebush, bursage, and cholla and saguaro cactus. Follow the signposts to the junction with Trail 100. Bear left, follow the nature trail up the hillside, south along the ridge, down the slope, and then rejoin 100 back to the trailhead. To take the shorter, children's loop (220A), after leaving the trailhead and going through the tunnel, continue on 100 to signposts marked 220A. Then follow 220 back to the trailhead.

Driving Directions: In Phoenix, take AZ 51 to the Northern Avenue exit. From the exit, go right at the Dreamy Draw Park sign. Follow the park road to a parking lot. The trailhead is on the north side of the lot. Parking is free.

Tips: This is a great hike for stopping and taking in the beautiful desert scenery along the way. Best months to hike are November through April. Due to the heat, avoid this area during midday from May through October. If you go during the summer, go early in the morning, at sunset or even by moonlight when the moon is full (be sure to bring headlamps). And BRING LOTS OF WATER!

Hike Two: **Gilbert Riparian InSTITUTE**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1-3 miles roundtrip, no elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This is an easy, flat trail that's great for families with children and strollers.

Hike Description: Part paved and part decomposed granite, this family-friendly trail takes visitors past a series of ponds that are used to treat reclaimed water. It's a quiet refuge in a suburban setting. There are interpretive signs along the trails to explain the operation of the ponds, and to point out the native wildlife that lives in the water or along its banks—fish, amphibians, insects, birds and mammals. Mom and dad will enjoy the soothing getaway, and the kids will love a learning experience that's this cool.

Driving Directions: From Phoenix, take US 60 east toward Gilbert. The riparian education center offers a central point to the preserve. The center is located just east of the intersection of Greenfield and Guadalupe roads in the town of Gilbert. Free parking is available at The Riparian Institute.

Tips: The Institute has a Junior Ranger Program for kids that is offered November through May. They also have a number of programs and classes for people of all ages. Best months to hike are November through April. Due to the heat, avoid this area during midday from May through October. If you go during the summer, go early in the morning. And BRING LOTS OF WATER!

Hike Three: **Black Rock Trail, White Tank Mountain Regional Park**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.3 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This is a fun and easy loop across the sloping plain below the mouth of Waterfall Canyon. Several of the scattered boulders along the way have ancient petroglyphs.

Hike Description: From the trailhead, follow the path across the main road (use caution—cars do not have to yield to pedestrians). Once you cross the road the trail will split. Take the right fork. The first section of the trail is wide, flat and covered with gravel. There are interpretive signs along the first 0.5 miles that help kids understand and appreciate the amazing diversity of plant life in the apparently barren desert. When you get to a sign for the Black Rock Long Loop Trail, take a right. The trail narrows and you'll begin to hike toward the mountains. As the petroglyphs show, people lived in this area long before Phoenix. In fact, kids will be interested to know that the trail actually passes through the now-hidden site of a prehistoric Hohokam village. Continue on the main path when, after 1.3 miles, you rejoin the Short Loop Trail. Head northeast on the wide path until you reach the road. Return to your car.

Driving Directions: From Phoenix, drive west on I-10 to Exit 124 (Cotton Lane). Go north on Cotton Lane 7 miles to Olive Avenue and turn left. Drive 5 miles to the entrance of White Tank Mountain Regional Park. Inside the park, continue north on White Tank Mountain Road to the group picnic area on the right. The trailhead is on the north and west side of the parking lot by the informational kiosk. Parking is \$5.

Tips: Bring a camera and a cactus guide—kids will be able to identify many species of cacti that flourish here. Best months to hike are November through April. Due to the heat, avoid this area during midday from May through October. If you go during the summer, go early in the morning, at sunset or even by moonlight when the moon is full (be sure to bring headlamps). And BRING LOTS OF WATER!

Hike Four: **Second Water Trail (#236), Superstition Wilderness**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **1–6 miles roundtrip, 500' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This is a fine hike through easy terrain—ideal for families with older children.

Hike Description: Start from the First Water Trailhead in the Superstition Wilderness area on an old road through the remains of First Water Ranch. Once past the ranch, the trail enters a narrow canyon which climbs toward Garden Valley. This is a wide-open area filled with mesquite trees that were once used by the ancient Sinagua Indians. To your left is a large hill where kids can find tinajas (water holes) carved by the Sinaguas to catch rainwater. To the right of the trail, just past the signed intersection with Black Mesa Trail, is a large mound that looks like a small hill. It's actually the ruins of a Sinagua village. You can walk on the mound, but be careful not to disturb anything, as it's a protected site. Follow the unmistakable trail through the valley. You can turn around at any point to return to the First Water Trailhead.

Driving Directions: From Phoenix, drive east on US 60 toward Apache Junction. Take the Idaho Road exit and go past Apache Trail, bearing right onto Hwy. 88. Just past mile marker 201, turn right onto FS78 (the first right after Lost Dutchman State Park). Go approximately 2 miles to the pay station (\$4 per vehicle). From there, follow the road another 0.25 miles and park at the trailhead.

Tips: The small spur trails leading to some of the old ranch structures are not maintained, so exercise caution if using them. The Sinagua mound and the ranch ruins are fragile and should be admired but not disturbed. Best months to hike are November through April. Due to the heat, avoid this area during midday from May through October. If you go during the summer, go early in the morning, at sunset or even by moonlight when the moon is full (be sure to bring headlamps). And BRING LOTS OF WATER!

Hike Five: **Wind Cave Trail, Utery Mountain Recreation Area**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3 miles roundtrip, 785' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It climbs the western face of Pass Mountain to a large, scooped-out shelter cave in the cliffs. Along the way it offers excellent views of the diverse Sonoran Desert ecosystem.

Hike Description: The trail begins on the north side of the parking area at the top of Wind Cave Drive. It first follows the edge of a wash lined with palo verde trees and boulders, then steepens as you climb mountain slopes on gentle switchbacks. There's a stone bench about 1 mile into the trail. Catch your breath there and check out the area's geological formations. On the hillside to your right, look for a "sign" made from white-painted rocks. It points to Phoenix! The trail ends at Wind Cave, which is carved out of the rock under an 80' volcanic tuff cliff. Inside the cave are lots of holes and water seeps. In the spring, you'll see wild geraniums on the cave roof. Look west to see pyramid-shaped Camelback Mountain and Piestewa Peak to its right. Return to the parking area by the same trail.

Driving Directions: From Phoenix, go east on US 60 to Ellsworth Road (Exit 191). Turn left on Ellsworth and drive 6.6 miles to the main entrance of Utery Mountain Park. Turn right and drive to the visitor contact station to pay the \$5-per-vehicle daily park fee. Follow Utery Park Road to Wind Cave Drive west. Turn left and park at the lot on the north end of the road.

Tips: For the inside scoop on the area, call ahead to reserve space in a ranger-led hike. Best months to hike are November through April. Due to the heat, avoid this area during midday from May through October. If you go during the summer, go early in the morning. If your kids are 12 or older, you might also consider going at sunset or even by moonlight when the moon is full (be sure to bring headlamps). And BRING LOTS OF WATER!



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.