



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: **Canyon Lake Creek Community Forest**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **0.4 miles roundtrip, 200' elevation gain; or up to 9 miles, 2,200' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This is one of the true gems of Whatcom County. For the ambitious who can make it to the top, it has one of the oldest stands of Alaska yellow cedar in the Northwest, and unforgettable views of Mt. Baker.

Hike Description: The shortest and easiest option here is the lake viewpoint at only 0.2 miles from the parking lot. But you won't want to stop there. A 2-mile trail around the lake is still easy, though it has some ups and downs and can be slippery, so you may need to give little ones a hand. There are several bridges to cross. Taking the extended hike up the logging roads to the Old Growth Forest Trail is challenging, but worth the effort for older kids who are up to it. The first 3 miles climb gradually, but the last 1.2 miles are steep. The payoff is the time spent with 1,000-year-old trees and AMAZING overviews of the South Fork Nooksack Valley, Mt. Baker and the Twin Sisters.

Driving Directions: From Bellingham, follow SR 542 (Mt. Baker Hwy) east. At milepost 16, turn right on Mosquito Lake Road, and go 1.6 miles to Canyon Lake Road. Turn left and follow signs 6.5 miles to the trailhead. Parking is free.

Tip: In addition to the pleasant, easy hike to and around the lake, Canyon Lake is a nice spot for canoeing.

Hike Two: **Fragrance Lake Trail**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **5 miles roundtrip, 1,100' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: A great hike for older kids, it has amazing views of the San Juan Islands, a nice climb through the woods and a lake with really cool echoes.

Hike Description: This well-maintained, year-round trail is understandably popular, given its quiet beauty along the way and picturesque Fragrance Lake at the top. Passing through old growth forest, kids will see several nurse logs, and then about 1 mile in from the trailhead, something more unusual: a "nurse rock" that's completely wrapped in tree roots. Several trails intersect on the trip to the lake, so be sure to bring a map. The trail is heavily wooded so keep a lookout for viewpoints. If you're an angler, bring your gear (and your license) because the lake is stocked with trout.

Driving Directions: From Bellingham, drive 5 miles south on Chuckanut Drive to trailhead across the road from Larabee State Park. Parking in the lot is \$5. You can park free along the road north or south of the lot.

Tips: Make sure you go to the lookout. (The views are something else!) At the top of the trail, there's a 0.5-mile loop around the lake. The rock walls and water combine to create great echoes. Bring plenty of water, snacks and the 10 Essentials.

Hike Three: **Hovander Homestead Park**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.4 miles roundtrip (with longer options), no elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This park and trail system is informative, educational and fun. Trails meander around the extensive grounds, along the Nooksack River and into fertile fields.

Hike Description: The park actually includes 2 sites: the historic Hovander Homestead and the Tenant Lake Interpretive Center (also an old homestead). The 0.4-mile Hovander/Tenant Trail connects both. At the Interpretive Center, there's a 1.4-mile boardwalk loop trail along Tenant Lake and the wetlands surrounding it—a great place for birdwatching. A lookout tower offers spectacular views of Mt. Baker. Also right there is the award-winning Fragrance Garden with over 200 varieties of plants and herbs in raised beds. The longer (2.2 miles) River Dike Trail is another option that follows the Nooksack River in the park.

Driving Directions: From Bellingham drive north on I-5 to Ferndale (Exit 262). Go west to the railroad underpass and immediately turn left, following signs to the park. Parking is free, available either at Hovander Homestead or the Tenant Lake Interpretive Center.

Tips: Bring a lunch and prepare to explore by foot, pedal or boat. During the summer, the Hovander farmhouse is open for tours. The huge barn—complete with animals and antique farm implements—is great fun.

Hike Four: **Squires Lake and Alger Alp Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **1–6 miles roundtrip, 100' to 1,000' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: There is a wonderful, easily accessible lake in Whatcom County's newest park.

Hike Description: The trail rises away from the parking lot, and after only about 0.4 miles you reach the beautiful, serene lake. An easy path, with minor ups and downs, loops around the lake. Benches offer pleasant spots to relax and have a picnic. A side loop trail adds another 0.4 miles and leads from the lake up to Beaver Pond (have kids look for gnawed trees—a sure sign of beavers). For a longer and more challenging trek, stay on the main logging road to get to Alger Alp (elevation 1,315'). There you'll find impressive views of the Twin Sisters, Mt. Baker and the Skagit River Valley. If you venture beyond the lake, be sure to bring a map.

Driving Directions: From Bellingham head south on I-5 and take Exit 242. Go east along Old Hwy. 99 for 0.7 miles to the trailhead on your left. Park at the trailhead (don't leave valuables in the car—there have been some break-ins). Parking is free.

Tips: The quiet seclusion at the lake makes it a good place to bring a book for those kids who love to read. It's also great for skipping stones or throwing sticks for Fido. The trail is open to bicycles and horses (you might even see some llamas).

Hike Five: **Stimpson Family Nature Reserve**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.5 miles roundtrip, 300' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This reserve is a wonderful treat so near Bellingham. It's well worth the adventure.

Hike Description: Open to the public only since 2003, the 350-acre reserve offers an easy walk through a mature forest as well as an up-close view of an active beaver pond. The well-used and maintained trail is closed to all but pedestrian traffic, so you're assured of a quiet, relaxed stroll. The hike also provides a great opportunity to give your kids a unique, hands-on geology lesson, as the reserve includes native sandstone as well as "glacial erratics"—rocks that were carried here from other parts of the Northwest by ancient glaciers. Because of its rich diversity and easy accessibility, Stimpson is used by Western Washington University and others as an environmental study and recreation area.

Driving Directions: From Bellingham head east on Lakeway Drive past Sudden Valley and turn right on Lake Louise Road. Go 1.6 miles and watch for the small parking lot on the right. Parking is free.

Tips: More trails are being carefully developed as land has been added to the reserve. Keep an eye out for wildlife, including beaver, deer and eagles. Bicycles and dogs are not allowed.



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.