



# 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: **Blue Sky Ecological Reserve**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3 miles roundtrip, 100' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's a beautiful hike on a shaded, tree-lined trail. Just the place to go when the kids (and mom and dad) need someplace quiet and peaceful.

**Hike Description:** The trail starts out in a gradual descent. You can take the main trail or wander off on one of the side trails closer to the creek. The side trails reconnect with the main trail, so there's no risk of getting lost. The variety of riparian woodlands drowns out any traffic noise and adds to the quiet. Take the kids down to the creek and check out the tadpoles and water bugs. After one mile you come to a side road that leads to Lake Poway. Continue straight about 0.5 miles until you reach a split in the road. This the turnaround point for this hike.

**Driving Directions:** From San Diego, take I-15 north to the Rancho Bernardo Road exit. Go east on Rancho Bernardo Road, which turns into Espola Road. The Blue Sky Ecological Reserve parking lot is 3.5 miles from I-15 on Espola Road. Parking is free.

**Tips:** After your hike, continue on to Lake Poway for an afternoon picnic.

### Hike Two: **Discovery Creek Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.0 mile roundtrip, 50' elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** This multi-use trail in San Marcos follows the creek from Discovery Lake, offering views of creek habitat and the mountains to the south. It's relatively flat, making it a good choice for younger kids.

**Hike Description:** From the Lakeview Park parking lot, head west down a steep little hill. The trail parallels the creek below the dam, staying on its north side. Discovery Creek provides a natural habitat for a wide variety of native critters, including quail, coyote, the occasional deer and elusive bobcat. Encourage your kids to watch for animal scat or tracks along the trail. As you go, you'll cross Applewilde Drive and Via Vera Cruz. Continue this way until you reach the new Discovery Elementary School at La Noche and McMahr. You can create a loop by taking the paved trail in one direction and returning on the soft-surface trail.

**Driving Directions:** Take Hwy. 78 to San Marcos Boulevard. Head west on San Marcos for one block, then turn south onto South Bent Avenue. Continue, as Bent becomes Craven Road. Turn right onto Foxhall. Go 0.2 miles to the well-marked lot for Lakeview Park at the end of Foxhall. Parking is free.

**Tips:** A xeriscape garden provides special interest, as it demonstrates local plants that grow with little water. The garden is a quiet place to sit, rest your feet and enjoy the views.

Hike Three: **Los Peñasquitos Canyon**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **Up to 12 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** This is an easy, beautiful trail with little elevation gain, lots of shade and plenty of places to stop for rest. It's great for kids who are just starting to hike.

**Hike Description:** While hiking this trail end to end makes for a long walk, it's easy to tackle as little or as much as you want to. From the east end, start at the parking lot and enter Los Peñasquitos Canyon. You'll find a variety of vegetation, including sycamore, willow and live oak trees (beware of the occasional poison oak). Be sure to take your kids to the little stream on the north side of the trail and have them look for different types of water insects. At about the 3-mile mark, there's a nice little waterfall that's a great place to have a picnic.

**Driving Directions:** From I-15, take the Mercy Road exit west to Black Mountain Road. Follow the signs across Black Mountain Road to the parking lot for the canyon. Parking is free.

**Tips:** In addition to the waterfall and the lush foliage, there are lots of wildflowers (if you go in the spring). And you're likely to see plenty of wildlife, including birds, rabbits, coyotes and even deer.

Hike Four: **San Elijo Lagoon Trail and Nature Center**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.0 mile roundtrip, no elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** The trail is easy and accessible, and it offers beautiful views of the lagoon. It's a great place to take kids on a consistent basis so they can watch the changing lagoon ecosystem.

**Hike Description:** The trail begins in front of the nature center. The center is actually a wonderful place to start. There's usually a docent on hand to answer questions. When you go outside, you pass over a little bridge at the start of your walk. Stop and look down into the water and notice the variety of fish. You may even see mullet jumping! Continue down the trail as it parallels the shoreline of the lagoon. In addition to fish, a large variety of mammals, reptiles, birds and plants make the lagoon their home. When you want to sit down and rest or just enjoy the scenery, there are plenty of benches to oblige you. The trail eventually turns back north and returns to the parking lot.

**Driving Directions:** Take I-5 to the Manchester Avenue (S11) exit in Encinitas. Head west on Manchester and turn left into the first available driveway (2710 Manchester Avenue). Parking is free.

**Tips:** Have your kids start a nature journal. They can record all the wildlife they see at the lagoon. Free, guided nature walks help kids understand the rich diversity of the lagoon life cycle.

Hike Five: **Torrey Pines State Reserve**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **0.5 to 1.0 mile roundtrip each, minimal elevation gain**

**Why This Hike:** It's centrally located in San Diego and is world-famous for its magnificent ocean views. It's also one of the only places in the world where the Torrey pine, for which the reserve gets its name, can be found.

**Hike Description:** There are several short loop trails, all of them easy, and most intersect one another. The most popular is the Beach Trail that starts in the parking lot near the visitor center and museum. This trail connects with the Yucca Point and Razor Point trails, which both have incredible views of the Pacific. On a clear day, you can see San Clemente and Santa Catalina islands. The Guy Fleming Trail (0.7-mile loop) and Parry Grove Trail (0.5-mile loop) are in thick groves of Torrey pines.

**Driving Directions:** Torrey Pines State Reserve is located between La Jolla and Del Mar, north of downtown San Diego. Take I-5 to the Carmel Valley Road exit, then go west to Hwy. 101. Turn south on 101 and go about one mile to the reserve entrance at the foot of the hill. Parking in the reserve is \$6.

**Tips:** You might want to start your hike surfside, on Torrey Pines State Beach. You can then take one of the trails up from the beach into the reserve. Bring your binoculars and camera. In the winter, you might catch a glimpse of a migrating gray whale. Bottlenose dolphins can be spotted during most of the year.



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.