



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: **Dogwood Trail at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **2 miles roundtrip, about 300' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This trail rises and falls several times as it traverses through old-growth oak and hickory forests, providing scenic views of the lush valley sections.

Hike Description: This may be one of the more strenuous trails in the park, due to the hills and valleys, but the payoffs are worth it as you really get to experience both sides of the park's terrain. (And be sure to keep your eyes open for deer, turkey, squirrels, raccoons and rabbits along the way!) The trailhead you'll start from serves both the Dogwood and Woodbine trails, and the two can easily be combined for a longer trek. The well-marked Dogwood Trail ambles between dense woodlands and moist, green valleys, and at its highest point it passes the remnants of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) shelter built when the Great Depression-spawned group used the park as a camp in the 1930s. Wildflowers draw hikers in the spring, while the fall brings spectacular displays of color that can last for almost two months. And summer is, of course, prime time for hiking when the weather is just right.

Driving Directions: From downtown St. Louis, take I-64/US 40 west for about 30 miles. Take the Chesterfield Airport Road exit to Long Road. Travel one mile on Long Road to Wild Horse Creek Road. Turn right onto Wild Horse Creek Road and continue three miles to the Highway 109 stop sign. Turn left and travel less than one mile to Route BA. Turn right and continue for 1.5 miles to the park entrance. There is plenty of free parking at the trailhead.

Tips: Babler State Park has an interpretive center, playgrounds and camping. There is a restroom at the trailhead.

Hike Two: **Laumeier Sculpture Park**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, 100' of elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This unique hike through a sculpture-filled park will amaze young and old alike.

Hike Description: Laumeier Sculpture Park features 80 sculptures scattered along a well-maintained trail throughout this unusual park. The trail takes you through woodlands as well as manicured fields, and you'll encounter large sculptures everywhere you go. Some pieces tower in the air, while others are carved into the ground. You can even venture off the trail for a closer look. Don't forget to bring your camera—you'll see things here you've never imagined!

Driving Directions: Laumeier Sculpture Park is located inside the I-270 beltway, just 15 minutes from downtown St. Louis. From I-44 eastbound (just past I-270) or westbound (just before I-270), take the Lindbergh Boulevard exit south and go a half mile to Rott Road. Turn right on Rott Road and follow it a half mile to the park entrance on the left.

Tips: The 98-acre park features great open meadows that are perfect for picnics or a game of tag. There are restrooms at the trailhead that are open seasonally.

Hike Three: **River Scene Trail at Castlewood State Park**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3-mile loop, 250' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This trail combines awesome views from the top of the bluffs with a stroll along the banks of the Meramec River in the valley below.

Hike Description: From the trailhead, you'll face an intimidating incline, but most of this hike's elevation gain is in the first third of a mile; the rest is either flat or a descent. At the top of the initial climb you'll see the first of the dramatic views from the top of the bluffs. Be sure to keep your kids at a safe distance from the edge as there is no railing along the bluffs. However, there are great benches and overlook decks where you can safely enjoy the views. Continue along the trail as it follows the edge of the bluffs to the hiking-only section. About a mile into the hike you'll start to descend a long set of stairs leading down from the bluffs and into the valley below. After passing through a short tunnel under the railroad tracks, you'll arrive at the edge of the Meramec River. This section is great for exploring the river's edge, especially when you get to the large sandy beach. The trail continues past the cul-de-sac at the beach and eventually ends on a park road. Turn to your right and follow the park road back to the trailhead.

Driving Directions: Take I-44 west from St. Louis, going past I-270 to the Highway 141 exit. Travel north on 141 to Big Bend Road. Turn left onto Big Bend and go west to Ries Road. Turn left onto Ries and continue on until you reach the park entrance at the intersection of Kiefer Creek and Ries roads. There is plenty of free parking at the trailhead.

Tips: The swimming beach, playground and numerous picnic areas make Castlewood a fine place to bring the entire family. There is a restroom at the trailhead.

Hike Four: **Wolf Run Trail & Wetland Trail, Shaw Nature Reserve**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.5 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This is a beautiful hike on relatively flat terrain through a pine forest, hardwood forest, prairie and wetland habitat.

Hike Description: Rarely can you experience so many different landscapes in one easy hike. From the trailhead for the Wolf Run Trail, you'll walk through a pine forest and hardwood forest before coming to a gate. Go through the gate and into a prairie on your way to Wolf Run Lake. The lake has several floating docks for nature study and it's a great place to take a break. Continue along the right (east) side of the lake on the connector trail, past the brick serpentine wall and along the gravel path. You'll cross a creek, then pass a small cemetery. When you reach the small stone bus stop shelter (circa 1940), you are at the trailhead for the Wetland Trail. This one-mile loop leads you past excellent bird watching habitat to an observation blind and wooden boardwalk. When you complete the Wetland Loop, backtrack the way you came past the creek, serpentine wall and Wolf Run Lake, where you will pick up Wolf Run Trail for the return to the trailhead. For a shorter version of this hike, you can simply stay on Wolf Run Trail (which is a loop), rather than proceed onto the Wetland Trail.

Driving Directions: From St. Louis, take I-44 west for 32 miles to the Gray Summit exit. From the exit ramp, turn left crossing over I-44. Turn right at the intersection and go 50 yards to the entrance on the left. There is parking at the entrance as well as at the trailhead. Admission is free for Missouri Botanical Garden members. Adults are \$3, Seniors (65+) are \$2, and children (12 and under) are free.

Tips: Stop at the visitor center to pick up an informative Wetland Trail booklet designed for use with children. There are restrooms in the visitor center.

Hike Five: **Trail Among the Trees, Rockwoods Reservation**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, 150' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This is a short, hilly loop hike that includes lots of cool, unique features, including a cave.

Hike Description: This hilly loop will take you past a rocky glade, forested uplands and lowlands, through valleys, quarried areas and Bathtub Cave. The cave, which is small, dry and virtually impossible to get lost in, offers a great first caving experience for kids. As you travel along the trail, look for karst, a limestone that resembles Swiss cheese. Arriving at the rocky glade, you'll find a nice west-facing overlook of the Rockwoods area, which is particularly enjoyable at sunset. The beginning and end of the trail are flat and easy, but the middle section has a few steep grades and some stairs.

Driving Directions: From St. Louis, take I-44 west to the Eureka exit (Exit 264). Turn north onto Hwy. 109 and continue for four miles. Turn left on Woods Ave., just before Smokey's Forest Fire sign, then right on Glencoe Road. The visitor center is up a mile or two more on the left. The trailhead is across the road. There is parking at the visitor center.

Tips: Be sure to pick up a copy of the Trail Among the Trees interpretive brochure in the visitor center before you head out. There are restrooms in the visitor center (open 8am-5pm).



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.