



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: **Loch Raven Watershed, Deadman's Cove**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.5 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's local to the Towson and Baltimore area, and offers great views of the cove and Loch Raven.

Hike Description: This non-strenuous hike borders a part of the Loch Raven shoreline. It's a wonderful place to take the kids to experience the tranquility of nature. If you have young anglers in the family, you'll want to check out the Loch Raven Fishing Center on Dulaney Valley Road. You can rent boats there, too.

Driving Directions: Loch Raven is located just north of Towson. From the Baltimore Beltway (I-695), take Exit 27 and go north on Dulaney Valley Road. Three miles north of the exit, you'll notice a wide shoulder on the southbound lane. This is the tiny parking area for the trailhead. Park here and cross the road to the trailhead. Parking is free.

Tips: There are no restrooms at the trailhead.

Hike Two: **Gunpowder Falls State Park, Gunpowder South Trail**

Rating: **Easy to moderate**

Distance: **2 miles roundtrip, 160' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: Close to I-83, this trail makes a wilderness trek for kids very accessible.

Hike Description: You can actually make this a short or long hike—anywhere from one mile to more than seven miles. The segment we suggest for families is about two miles, out-and-back. From the trailhead, head west, passing under I-83, and after one mile of pristine Maryland woodlands you will come to the Camp Wood area. Use this as your turnaround point. The trail is easy to follow, just watch for the white rectangular blazes. If you go early in the morning, there's a good chance kids will see critters, anything from frogs and turtles to beaver and whitetail deer, plus a wide variety of birds. Encourage kids to look for signs of beaver on the gnawed trees.

Driving Directions: From Baltimore, go north about 12 miles on I-83. Take Exit 27 and turn east onto Mount Carmel Road. Turn left (north) on York Road to the Gunpowder River. Before you cross the river, there's a parking lot on the right. Parking is free.

Tips: After the hike, stop in Hereford to celebrate all that fresh air and exercise with ice cream! There's a restroom along the hike, just before you get to the Camp Wood area.

Hike Three: **Oregon Ridge Park, Loggers Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **1.6 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's easy to get to, and it offers a wide, well-marked trail that's suitable for all ages.

Hike Description: When you take kids on a hike in Oregon Ridge Park, you not only give them an experience of woodland nature. You also give them a geology lesson. As they walk on the Loggers Trail (and the others in the park), kids are walking on bedrock that's three billion years old! The metamorphic rock here is some of the oldest in Maryland. But on the surface, what you'll see is lush forest of chestnut oak, tulip poplar and mountain laurel, among other species of trees. You'll also pass the shoreline of tiny Lake Orange. The wide path of the red-blazed Logger's Trail was originally cut by horse teams as they hauled lumber from the surrounding ridges. Mining was also a thriving enterprise here in the 1840s, although few signs remain. If you want to add another 2.35 miles to your hike, you can follow the yellow-blazed S. James Campbell and Ivy Hill Trails off the Loggers Trail.

Driving Directions: From the Baltimore Beltway, drive north about six miles on I-83. Take Exit 20-B (Shawan Road West). Follow Shawan Road to the first light, and turn left on Beaver Dam Road. Immediately after you turn, there's a fork in the road. Take the right fork. Follow the driveway to the parking lot. The nature center is a short walk to the top of the hill. Parking is free.

Tips: Be sure to stop at the nature center to see its many wonderful nature displays. There are restrooms in the nature center.

Hike Four: **Gunpowder Falls State Park, Mingo Forks Trail**

Rating: **Moderate**

Distance: **3.8 miles roundtrip, 120' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: It's just a great hike! In the summer, you can watch inner tubers cooling off in the Gunpowder River.

Hike Description: You can walk this loop hike in either direction, beginning at the restroom area near the Gunpowder River. There are plenty of ups and downs, and the trail reaches some of the highest points in the park. The open fields at these points offer some great views of the area. You'll also cross the east and west forks of the Mingo Branch, a tributary of Gunpowder Falls. If you've got young anglers in the family, bring your tackle (and licenses for those 16 years or older). Note that, for about 0.5 miles, this loop uses the Gunpowder South Trail (white blazes). The Mingo Forks Trail has blue blazes (as do the other tributary trails in the area).

Driving Directions: From the Baltimore Beltway (I-695), go north about 12 miles on I-83. Take Exit 27 and turn east onto Mount Carmel Road. Turn left (north) on York Road. Just past Hereford High School, turn left on Bunker Hill Road and follow it to the end. Use the Bunker Hill South parking lot, on the left. Start on the Gunpowder South Trail (white blazes), a few yards uphill from the parking area. Parking is free.

Tips: On a hot day, you might want to bring your inner tubes and towels and join the folks in the river. If you do, we recommend that kids wear flotation vests. There are restrooms during the summer at the trailhead, near the handicapped parking.

Hike Five: **Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area, Serpentine Trail**

Rating: **Easy**

Distance: **2.2 miles roundtrip, 100' elevation gain**

Why This Hike: This rolling terrain is very different than in other parts of Maryland.

Hike Description: This area's unusual geology makes it home to more than 30 rare, threatened or endangered plant species. Among those plants that can only be found here are the Flame Flower and Sandplain Gerardia. Because of the sensitive ecology, it's a great place to teach kids Leave No Trace principles and environmental stewardship. The underlying rock—serpentine—is high in magnesium and deficient in plant nutrients. So early settlers called the area "barrens" because they couldn't grow crops. But generations of Native Americans hunted here, and so did the king's men back in the 17th century. That's how it got the name "Soldiers Delight." The hike takes you primarily through open, prairie-like landscape. But along the way you'll also pass through wetland and forest.

Driving Directions: From the Baltimore Beltway (I-695), take Exit 18 (Liberty Rd.) and go west about five miles to Deer Park Rd. Turn right on Deer Park and go two miles. Turn left into the Soldiers Delight Natural Environment Area and proceed to the visitor center. Parking is free.

Tips: Be sure to stop in the visitor center for information about the rare plant life that can be found here. There are restrooms in the visitor 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 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.