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Best Hikes Near San Francisco (Best Hikes Near Series)



Synopsis

Who says you have to travel far from home to go on a great hike? In *Best Hikes Near San Francisco* Linda Hamilton details the best hikes within an hour's drive of San Francisco perfect for the urban and suburbanite hard-pressed to find great outdoor activities close to home. Each featured hike includes detailed hike specs, a brief hike description, trailhead location, directional cues, and a detailed map.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Take a Hike! Who says you have to travel far from home to go on a great hike? *Best Hikes Near San Francisco* details forty of the best hikes about an hour's drive from the greater San Francisco area: San Francisco and the Bay Point Reyes and West Marin Mount Tamalpais area Mount Diablo/Las Trampas foothills San Mateo County coastline Northern Santa Cruz Mountains East Bay foothills/San Pablo Oakland/Berkeley Hills Sunol Ridge Ranging from easy nature walks to strenuous day hikes, this guide offers something for every hiker—all within easy reach of the city. Each featured hike includes a brief route description; at-a-glance data including the length and difficulty level; thorough directions to the trailhead; directional cues; and a detailed, accurate trail map. Inside you'll find full-color photos and maps; approximate hiking times, canine compatibility, fees and permits required; and sidebars on local lore, points of interest, and area wildlife.

A native to the Bay Area, Linda Hamilton was elated to rediscover the incredible beauty of her home region, beyond the crowded highways. Her first (of so many) solo hiking adventure occurred at age four, when she happily wandered off alone to explore nature, scaring the daylights out of her family. After nine years of teaching high school English, drama, and college composition, and with an MA in English under her belt, she set out to achieve the daunting goal of writing for a living. Her work has appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, American Heritage of Invention and Technology Magazine, MyFamily Travel newsletters, Americaslibrary.gov, and many online business sites. When not on foot or hugging her laptop, Linda is singing, drawing, traveling, kayaking or laughing with her husband Doug in their Oakland home.

When I first glanced through this book I was sure it would garner a 5 star review: bright pages with clear, well organized text, detailed maps and a great selection of trails. As I read more closely, I found I had a few concerns (do all photos come from Shutterstock these days?) but upon further reflection, this is still a five star review. The Bay Area has some of the most spectacular hiking of any urban area in America the 40 routes described here are among the best to be found. (20 "honorable mentions" round out this book.) On top of that, this book not only captures the best of Bay Area trails, it captures a Bay Area ethos as well. The author, Linda Hamilton, assures us that her book will be different from other Bay Area hiking guides by offering new routes, some of which require permits, a sure fire way to cut down on crowds. (The extended loop at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve is an example of this.) But for the most part, Hamilton simply reworks existing trails to form new loops for hikers. For example, she has those looking for a longer trek out of Muir Woods hike up the Bootjack trail, but return on the Dipsea trail instead of the more conventional Ben Johnson route. But having noted that, one simply cannot argue with the selections: An extended loop through Point Reyes National Seashore, the Waterfall Loop Trail in Big Basin Redwoods, Sibley Volcanic, ... the list of top hikes goes on and on. Coastal trails, open ridges, and heavily forested mountains are all well represented. Of course, what would a good Bay Area guidebook authored by a resident be without lots of advice on how to go "green" while hiking? So, interspersed throughout the text are numerous bright green sidebars with "tips" like use rechargeable batteries and hiking is a "carbon free" winter activity. (Not entirely true, since you release carbon dioxide as a by product of the food you combust to exercise.) For the most part I find these sort of things trite and would not include them in most hiking books, but in this case I think it adds to the ambiance of planning day treks in the Bay Area. One piece of green advice, however, should be taken with some caution. The author recommends that you wear "organic cotton and other recycled materials." Now, aside from the fact

that organic cotton is not a recycled material, you should be cautious about wearing it if there is a chance you will get wet on the trail. Hypothermia is a real possibility when wet even if temperatures are in the 50s. And a significant part of the Bay Area often has wet weather with temps in the 50s. Also adding to the text are the wonderful (bright yellow) sidebars dealing with natural and local history. Discussions about Elephant Seals and the lifespan of Redwoods, reflections on Tao House and the old resorts that attracted tourists of years past (crookedest railroad, the Diablo Resort) really add to the text and one's appreciation of hiking. Finally, Hamilton includes an appendix in the book listing Bay Area hiking clubs. My favorite: the Commonwealth of Nature Fanatics Unofficial SF/South Bay Excursion Division, or CONFUSED for short. A similar Berkeley group, CHAOS, supports outdoor experiences, fun, and chocolate. What more could you ask for from hiking companions than that? Maybe a good book to help you along, and this is it.

Great book. I went to Castle Rock Park. The route was described pretty good, there was no problem finding the way, the map was very helpful. I am planning to do other hikes soon.

This book describes 60 hikes in the Bay Area. 16 of the hikes are located east of the Bay, while the other 44 are located west of the Bay. Most of the hikes are substantial hikes of several miles, with the average hike around 6 miles long. Each hike features directions to the trailhead, public transportation options for reaching the trailhead, a map (more on that below), some main points of interest on the trail in paragraph form, and a trail summary in bullet point form. It would have been better to combine these last two items into a single description so that you read about the point of interest when you arrive there during your hike. Still, the method used here seems to work OK with no major breakdowns. I now move to a couple of this guide's main weak areas. While each hike has a map, some of these maps may not be all that useful. In particular, one very helpful feature is missing from all of the maps: contour lines! I normally would not make too much of this omission, but it amazes me how most of the trail maps you can download freely from state and local park agencies have contour lines while this guide, which you have to pay your hard-earned money for, does not. Moreover, contour lines are particularly helpful in areas of high relief such as the Bay Area. For this omission, I docked the guide one star. Also, on some occasions (Angel Island, for example), the author takes you down unofficial, unmaintained, unmarked trails. Most unofficial, unmaintained, unmarked trails are this way for a reason: the park supervisors do not want you on them. In the Angel Island case, I saw the trail she was referring to, and I would not want to hike down that trail; it was too steep and too poorly maintained. Such trails are fine for webposting but

need to be avoided in published trail guides. For this, I docked the guide another star. In summary, the judgment on this guide comes down to: given all of the great, free information available on the web, do you really need to purchase a guide to hiking in the Bay Area? If your answer is yes, then this guide deserves some consideration as a decent but not great source of entertainment and information. For me, the answer was no. After browsing this guide in a library, I felt no need to pay for the information contained herein. I was able to download most of this information and everything I needed for free directly from the park agencies.

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