

A FAMILY GUIDE TO THE

COAST REDWOODS

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TO GO

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TO DO

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Dear Friends,

Two children, ages 7 and 5, sit in the sun, munching huckleberries. Suddenly, the 5-year-old waves an arm. “Horsey, horsey,” he shouts, as a deer pokes its head out of the forest. The boy gasps—then grins at his discovery. “I pointed it!” he says.

This happy scene is one of many that took place on a camping trip a couple of decades ago. The whole family decided that getting out into nature was the most enjoyable and memorable way to spend time together.

“A Family Guide to the Coast Redwoods” is aimed at families who want to build their own adventures and create their own memories. No outdoor experience necessary. No fat bank account either—camping or renting a cabin or an RV can be among the most economical ways to travel. All you need is a spirit of adventure and a well-thought-out plan.

This guide will help you make that plan. Informed by the century-long experience of Save the Redwoods League, it includes sections on when to go and what types of park and lodging to choose. It describes seven kid-friendly redwood parks along the California coast, suggesting activities that will make your trip more entertaining and educational. (See “A Family Guide to the Giant Sequoias” for parallel information about redwoods in the Sierra Nevada.)

Be sure to share your redwood memories with the League at SaveTheRedwoods.org.

Enjoy your trip!

Save the Redwoods League



WHEN AND WHERE TO GO



Once you've decided to take your family to the redwoods, there are decisions to make: When should you go? Which park should you choose? Should you camp in a tent, rent an RV, or stay in a cabin, lodge or motel? Here are some factors to consider.

WHEN: CHOOSING A SEASON

Late spring or summer. If you travel from Memorial Day through Labor Day you avoid times when rain drenches the coast. Campgrounds are generally open, and children's programs are numerous. The downside is lots of company and competition for limited camping spaces, especially in the most popular parks, such as Big Sur and Muir Woods.

Fall, winter, early spring. In the off-season, everything is quieter . . . and wetter. But some caveats apply. Some parks and campgrounds are closed. If you find one that's open, you'll need clothing and equipment to match the weather. Up near the Oregon border, for example, Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park has average winter lows of 30 degrees Fahrenheit. Total rainfall from November through May is about 100 inches—four times the average rainfall of San Francisco and five times that of Los Angeles!

WHERE: CHOOSING A PARK

Coast redwoods grow in a 50-mile-wide band of foggy, rainy coastline from southern Oregon to Central California. On pages 6-13, we profile seven parks with excellent children's programs. Choose one of those—or use our [Redwoods Finder interactive map](#) to consider a longer list. The map divides California's coast redwood parks into three zones: Northern, Central, and Southern.

The Northern zone has trees that are up to a hundred feet taller than those in the Southern zone. But the Central and Southern groves have their share of splendid old trees and stunning scenery—as well as larger towns and more amenities nearby.

HOW: SLEEPING—OUTSIDE OR IN?

It's easy to reserve a campsite for either a tent or an RV. For national parks or national forests, go to recreation.gov or call (877) 444-6777. From outside the United States and Canada, call (518) 885-3639. For state parks, go to reserveamerica.com. Plan well ahead for popular parks in the summer and on holiday weekends.

If camping sounds too rustic, consider renting a cabin—or a room in a motel or lodge. The advantages of motels and lodges are obvious: warm rooms, soft beds, private showers, TVs and wi-fi. The disadvantages? Warm rooms, soft beds, private showers, TVs and wi-fi. In other words, if you're in a place with all the comforts—and distractions—of home, it's less of an adventure than immersing yourself in something amazingly different.

Picture this: You're snug in your sleeping bags, reading a story by flashlight, when a great horned owl says "hoo-hoo-hoo-HOOO" right outside your tent. Your toddler asks "Where is my home?" "Right here, under the stars," you say.



DREAM

EXPLORE

“Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So...sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Mark Twain



IF YOU STILL NEED REASONS TO HEAD TO THE REDWOODS, HERE ARE JUST A FEW TO THINK ABOUT.



DISCOVER

**OUT IN THE
REDWOODS, YOU'LL
BE ADOPTING NEW
RHYTHMS OF LIFE AS
YOU MAKE MEMORIES
TOGETHER.**

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS INSURANCE.

Are your kids dazed by too much time with TVs, phones, computers and other electronic gizmos? The more comfortable your family feels in nature, the healthier and happier you'll all be.

A LESSON IN RESPONSIBILITY. Years ago, the people who started Save the Redwoods League joined together to

fight for the forests we have today. When you visit a redwood park, your children will learn what they can do to take care of this precious heritage, now and in the future.

A TREAT FOR THE GROWN-UPS. Maybe the best reason for taking your kids to the redwoods is that you yearn to go yourself. You like the tall trees, fresh air and dappled sunlight. You

know—or can imagine—what it's like to be cozily nestled in your tent when an owl hoots, coyotes sing or a thunderstorm crackles. It's also a lot of fun just getting away from it all!

Back at home, your family may at times feel fragmented and frazzled. Out in the redwoods, you'll be adopting new rhythms of life as you make memories together.



SEVEN GREAT PARKS

for
kids



Which park will be best for your family? Well, it depends on where you live and how much time you have. From dozens of possibilities, we've profiled seven great parks for kids. The first two, suggested as day trips, are within an hour's drive from the San Francisco Bay Area. The next five are each worthy of an entire vacation: two north and three south of San Francisco Bay.





1

DAY TRIP

MUIR WOODS NATIONAL MONUMENT

BAY AREA REDWOODS

Eleven miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge, Muir Woods attracts hundreds of thousands of people each year. The trees are not as big as those you'll see in wetter places up north, but according to the park's namesake, John Muir, it's "the best tree-lover's monument that could possibly be found in all the forests of the world."

Arrive early in the day to avoid the crowds during the summer months and on any weekend or holiday. Entry costs \$7 a person; kids under 16 are admitted free.

ACTIVITIES

- **HIKE** a flat half-mile to Cathedral Grove, where the monument's largest and tallest trees grow. Look for deer, ladybugs, wildflowers, woodpeckers, banana slugs, and salmon and steelhead along the way.
- Try the "Quest" **TREASURE HUNT** (funded by Save the Redwoods League) or the Muir Woods [ecology tour](https://www.nps.gov/muwo). Both are self-guided. The latter is part of the park's Junior Ranger program for kids age 8 through 12. Check [nps.gov/muwo](https://www.nps.gov/muwo) or call (415) 388-2595 to find out what's happening on the day you plan to visit.
- Help out at the **REDWOOD CREEK NATIVE PLANT NURSERY**. On certain Wednesdays people of all ages may weed, plant or help restore habitat. To sign up, call (415) 383-4390.
- For daily updates about wildlife sightings, special events, road conditions and weather, follow the park on Twitter, @muirwoodsnp.

SEVEN GREAT PARKS FOR KIDS

- 1 MUIR WOODS NATIONAL MONUMENT: DAY TRIP
- 2 REDWOOD REGIONAL PARK: DAY TRIP
- 3 HUMBOLDT REDWOODS STATE PARK: MULTI-DAY TRIP
- 4 REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS: MULTI-DAY TRIP
- 5 BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK: MULTI-DAY TRIP
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- 7 PFEIFFER BIG SUR STATE PARK: MULTI-DAY TRIP



DAY
TRIP

2

REDWOOD REGIONAL PARK

BAY AREA
REDWOODS



Redwood Regional Park, in the Oakland hills, is a relaxed place where you can fly a kite, walk the dog and have a picnic. Expect good trails, a playground, a swimming pool nearby and glorious views of San Francisco Bay.

ACTIVITIES

- **HIKE** to the park's highest point, 1,619-foot Redwood Peak. It's a short walk from the Redwood Bowl Staging Area, just off Skyline Boulevard on the west side of the park.
- **EXPLORE** Redwood Creek from the Canyon Meadow Staging Area at the south end of the park. There's a playground, as well as a "nature art" trail, where any budding Andy Goldsworthy in your family can add to the display of artfully arranged natural objects near the picnic site.
- Take a **GUIDED WALK** to see a historic redwood. All but one of this area's oldest redwoods were cut down to build San Francisco, Sacramento and Oakland during and after the Gold Rush. On some guided walks, you can peek at the lone survivor from a distance. For more information on free walks, check ebparks.org or call (510) 544-3187. (That's the number for Crab Cove Visitor Center, whose naturalists lead hikes at Redwood Regional.)
- Combine a **PLAYGROUND** visit with a **SWIM** (May through September) at neighboring Roberts Recreation Area.
- To the north, also off Skyline, visit family-friendly **CHABOT SPACE AND SCIENCE CENTER**. Here, with support from Save the Redwoods League, citizen scientists of all ages have been helping to document the effects of climate change in Redwood Regional Park. For more information, contact Chabot's environmental education manager, Eric Havel, at (510) 336-7326 or EHavel@ChabotSpace.org.

3

HUMBOLDT REDWOODS STATE PARK

MULTI-DAY TRIP



NORTHERN REDWOODS



Two hundred miles north of San Francisco, Humboldt Redwoods State Park offers visitors a chance to see the largest continuous stretch of old-growth redwoods in the world. Just off Highway 101, the 32-mile Avenue of the Giants winds through many of the park's best hiking, swimming, camping, fishing, rafting and picnicking experiences.

ACTIVITIES

- **ON THE DRIVE** to the park, listen to Save the Redwoods League's 11-minute Avenue of the Giants audio tour, with stories told by naturalist and third-generation Humboldt County resident Dave Stockton. [Download here: https://itunes.apple.com](https://itunes.apple.com).
- Stop at the Humboldt Redwoods **VISITOR CENTER**. It's crammed with as many treasures as your grandfather's attic, and nice people too. While you're there check out the well-stocked kids' book section, try the center's scavenger hunt and pick up an eight-stop auto tour brochure.
- Sign up for the park's **ANNUAL TREE-LIGHTING EVENT**, with caroling, homemade treats and a visit from Santa, on the second Wednesday of each December.
- In summer, try one of the daily **JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAMS** for kids age 7 through 12. Or round up your whole family for an evening campfire program. For a schedule, check parks.ca.gov or call (707) 946-2263.
- About 3 miles north of the visitor center, visit the **WOMEN'S FEDERATION GROVE**, with its skyscraping trees and four-sided fireplace designed by famed architect Julia Morgan. Another major attraction: a **SWIMMING HOLE** in the inviting turquoise waters of the Eel River.

- About 4 miles north of the visitor center, walk the length of the fallen **DYERVILLE GIANT**. This renowned redwood measures 362 feet, and once stood about as tall as a 30-story building. Getting there is easy, with ferns, flowers, nurse logs, goose pens and other curious sights along the way (1.3 miles round-trip).

LODGING

Humboldt Redwoods has more than 250 campsites in three locations, with flush toilets and showers. There are no electrical hookups or dump stations. Contact ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-7275 or reserveamerica.com to make a reservation.

If you are seeking more comfort, a less rustic option is the [Benbow Inn](#), 2.5 miles south of Garberville, where the rooms are historic and kids can stay free.

FOOD

Save the Redwoods League staff members have a number of favorite restaurants along the route from the Bay Area to Humboldt Redwoods. Among them are [Cecil's New Orleans Bistro](#) in Garberville, [Bluebird Café](#) in Hopland, and [Avenue Café](#) in Miranda.



4

REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS

MULTI-DAY TRIP

NORTHERN REDWOODS



Thanks to abundant fog and rain, four jointly-managed parks near the Oregon border nurture 45 percent of all the redwood forests in the world. Each has its own special attractions. Starting in the south, Redwood National Park boasts the tallest tree in the world (379.1 feet) and, in May and June, broad swaths of pink rhododendrons. Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park offers elk viewing, windy camping on the beach, and a cozy little canyon full of ferns. Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park has tide pools to explore along 8 miles of rugged coastline. The farthest north, Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park features a scenic drive, excellent hiking, and boating and fishing on the mighty Smith River.

ACTIVITIES

- When you arrive, pick up a **SELF-GUIDED JUNIOR RANGER BOOKLET** and a schedule of events at any one of five visitor centers: from south to north, the Thomas H. Kuchel Visitor Center for all four parks at Orick; Prairie Creek Visitor Center in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park; the Jedediah Smith and Hiouchi centers (open May to September only) on Highway 199; and the Crescent City Information Center in Crescent City. Evening campfire talks, forest walks and Junior Ranger programs are available most days in the summer. For information, call (707) 465-7335.
- **HIKE** the 0.6-mile Stout Grove Trail in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park. A paved trail leads to the Stout Memorial Grove, where you can stick your toes in the Smith River and gaze up at trees with 20-foot diameters—wider than most people’s living rooms.
- **HIKE** the 1.5-mile Lady Bird Johnson Grove Nature Loop Trail in Redwood National Park. With the brochure provided at the trailhead, your kids can tell you what you’re seeing.

- **HIKE.** If you’re strong hikers, consider the Damnation Creek Trail in Del Norte. Starting flat in an exquisite ancient forest, the trail winds down a thousand feet to a rocky beach. Starting an hour or so before low tide will give you good conditions for exploring tide pools. Allow at least three hours for the 4.4-mile round-trip. (The trailhead is at a turnout marked with a sign west of Highway 101 at mile marker 16.)

- **EXPLORE** the more accessible tide pools at the terminus of Enderts Beach Road, a few miles south of Crescent City in Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park.

LODGING

Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park and Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park all have campgrounds. Mill Creek Campground in Del Norte, open from Memorial Day through Labor Day, is a good launching place for visits to all the other parks. Amenities include picnic tables, fire rings, bear-resistant lockers and restrooms with showers. Campgrounds at Prairie Creek and Jedediah Smith are open all year. Contact ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-7275 or reserveamerica.com to make a reservation.

To put a roof over your head, try [Elk Meadow Cabins](#), just east of Prairie Creek State Park. Originally built for timber mill workers, these newly remodeled 1,200-square-foot homes each have three bedrooms, a complete kitchen, and at least a bath and a half. Contact the [Crescent City Chamber of Commerce](#) for other indoor lodging suggestions.

FOOD

Crescent City has four grocery stores and several restaurants along Highway 101 and in the harbor. One Save the Redwoods League staff favorite is the [Good Harvest Café](#).

5

BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK

MULTI-
DAY
TRIP

NORTHERN
REDWOODS

Nestled in the Santa Cruz Mountains 65 miles south of San Francisco, Big Basin Redwoods is the oldest state park in California. There you'll find spectacular waterfalls, 20-foot azaleas, and the largest stand of ancient redwoods south of San Francisco. The park's conveniences make it great for families new to camping.

ACTIVITIES

- Across from the park headquarters and information center, in the **NATURE LODGE AND STORE**, learn about Big Basin habitats, as well as the birds, mammals and reptiles that call them home.
- Participate in one of the park's **FREE PROGRAMS** and explore various activities, from playing Ohlone games to tracking wildlife. For information about hours and events, check BigBasin.org or call (831) 338-8860.
- **CELEBRATE** Founders' Day (the last Saturday in September) with skits, games and hikes.
- Gaze up at gargantuan trees on the 0.63-mile **REDWOOD LOOP**, including the Mother of the Forest, the Father of the Forest, and the Chimney Tree—a living, growing redwood that is hollow from top to bottom. The loop is stroller-friendly.
- **HIKE** all or part of the 30-mile Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail, which leads from the top of the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. Only for strong hikers!

LODGING

Big Basin has three drive-in campgrounds with restrooms and showers (Blooms Creek, Huckleberry and Sempervirens); two group camps (Sequoia and Sky Meadow); and some walk-in sites at Wastahi. Contact ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-7275 or reserveamerica.com to make a reservation. The park also has three trail camps in the backcountry. To reserve a trail camp site, call (831) 338-8861.

Or try Big Basin's tent cabins: inside each are two beds, a wood stove, a bench and a table; outside are a picnic table and a fire ring with grill. For reservations, call (831) 338-4745.

If you need camping gear, such as stoves, tents or sleeping bags—or even a complete camping package—you can rent it at the [park store](#) (reservations recommended).

SUPPLIES

Food, beverages, firewood and camping supplies may be available in the park store, depending upon the season. Head to Boulder Creek, 9.3 miles south of park headquarters, for the nearest restaurants and gas stations.



6

PORTOLA REDWOODS STATE PARK

MULTI-
DAY
TRIP

SOUTHERN
REDWOODS

Five miles north of Big Basin, Portola Redwoods State Park is a less developed, wilder park with some of the tallest, most majestic redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

ACTIVITIES

- Introduce your family to Portola on the **SELF-GUIDED** 0.75-mile Sequoia Nature Trail.
- In the **SUMMER**, roast marshmallows with the park naturalist, go on guided hikes, or participate in Junior Rangers, “little rangers” or activities for the whole family such as “coffee and crafts” and “creek sneak.”
- View a **1,200-YEAR-OLD TREE** only a quarter mile from the Old Tree Trailhead. It stands 305 feet tall, with a diameter of more than 13 feet.
- **HIKE** all or part of a scenic 5-mile loop along Pescadero Creek. On the way to the loop, there’s a shallow and easily accessible part of the creek that children like to play in when the weather is nice.
- **CHALLENGE** the strongest hikers in your family with a steep, 12.5-mile trek along the Peters Creek Loop, which contains the most impressive redwoods in the park. (In 2013 Save the Redwoods League and its partners were halfway to a fundraising goal that will permit easier access to these magnificent trees.)

LODGING

Portola has 53 drive-in sites for families and four for groups. Contact ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-7275 or reserveamerica.com to make a reservation. For reservations in the trail camp that is about halfway to the spectacular Peters Creek trees, call (831) 338-8861.

FOOD

Stock up in La Honda (12 miles to the northwest), Woodside (15 miles north), Saratoga (20 miles east) or one of several other neighboring towns.



7

PFEIFFER BIG SUR STATE PARK

MULTI-
DAY
TRIP

SOUTHERN
REDWOODS

ACTIVITIES

- Satisfy your curiosity at Big Sur Station. Located just 1 mile south of Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, this state-federal **VISITOR CENTER** has maps, books and experts to answer your questions about the Big Sur Coast.
- Help your child earn **JUNIOR RANGER** credentials with guided hikes, childrens' programs and other activities. In summer, the park offers Junior Ranger programs five days a week: Monday through Thursday, and Saturday. Most meet at the Pfeiffer Big Sur Campground kiosk. Check the schedule at bigurlodge.com.
- Take a self-guided **HIKE**. The 2-mile Valley View Loop, for example, will lead you to towering redwoods, Pfeiffer Falls and views of the ocean.
- Watch **CALIFORNIA CONDORS**. The Ventana Wildlife Society leads condor tours, using radio telemetry to figure out where the birds are lurking. At nine feet, the wingspan of the condor is the largest of any bird in North America!
- **LEARN** more about condors at the Discovery Center in nearby Andrew Molera State Park.
- **SPOT A WHALE**: grays, blues and humpbacks swim by Big Sur in most seasons. The state parks department offers guided tours that meet at a scenic overlook south of the park.

Twenty-six miles south of Carmel, the Big Sur River winds its way to the Pacific Ocean in spectacular Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. People from all over the world come here to explore a famously rugged stretch of the California coast. If you're lucky, you may spot a condor or a whale!

LODGING

The Pfeiffer campground has 156 sites and offers showers, bathrooms, a store and laundry facilities. Contact ReserveAmerica at (800) 444-7275 or reserveamerica.com to make a reservation.

Big Sur Lodge (inside the park) rents kitchenettes and fireplace rooms that can each accommodate up to six people. Its restaurant has a kids' menu with sure-to-please items such as chicken strips, hot dogs and grilled cheese sandwiches. For reservations, go to bigurlodge.com or call (800) 424-4787.

AMENITIES

Two miles north of the park, the tiny town of Big Sur has food, lodging, art galleries and gift shops.





WHAT TO BRING

You want your trip to be safe, fun, exciting and maybe even educational. To increase the chances of success, consider bringing some of these items.

LAYERS. In the rainy season, pack warm hats, scarves, mittens and plenty of thick, fast-drying socks. And don't forget the raincoats and rainpants. If you are camping with messy eaters, dress them in rainsuits at dinnertime to protect their clothes. After dinner, just sponge them off!

EXTRA PLASTIC BAGS. To keep young children warm and happy when it's wet, put small plastic bags over the socks on their feet and then put on their shoes.

WHISTLES. Bring one for each child to wear on a string around his or her neck. Blow in emergency, e.g., when separated from his or her parents.

BANDANAS. Bring a few of these colorful cotton squares to use as scarves, placemats, napkins, sweatbands, washcloths, blindfolds, bandages, arm slings and more.

FOOD. Keep it simple! Have snacks to keep kids cheery on long car rides: fruit, nuts, carrots, celery, string cheese, peanut butter and crackers are good possibilities. In camp, older children can be chefs and you can be the scullery maid(s). Or vice versa. But don't try to do everything yourself. That's no fun for anybody. Mac and cheese, anyone?

EDIBLE HIKING INCENTIVES. Take a small stash of special treats. Use them on the trail for an energy boost or incentive for accomplishment. Let's say a child with a flair for drama is lying flat on the trail. "My legs are broken," she says. "But I have lemon drops," you reply. "If you walk for 15 minutes without stopping, we'll stop and have some." Suddenly, miraculously . . . the legs begin to move.

A FIELD GUIDE. Books about trees, birds, rocks, flowers and mushrooms are readily available at park gift shops. Choose a simple, sturdy one, and let an older child be your guide.

BINOCULARS. These are especially important if you want to learn about birds.

A STAR CHART (or smartphone application). You've seen the night sky at home, but when it's shining brightly outside your tent, you'll all be the more curious about what you're seeing.

A SONGBOOK. *Rise Up Singing* by Peter Blood and Annie Patterson (Sing Out Publications) offers the words and chords to 1,200 songs: folk, blues, gospel, pop oldies and show tunes, with at least one shout-out to redwoods (in Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land").



**CONNECTING
YOUR KIDS TO
NATURE IS A
LONG-TERM
PROJECT.**

PLAYING CARDS. Have some in your entertainment bag. You might also consider a specialized pack of cards, *52 Nature Activities* by Lynn Gordon (Chronicle Books), that encourages drawing, writing, listening and learning.

A BALL. There was once a small boy who liked camping well enough, but loved baseball even more. So his family slipped a deflated beach ball into the car. When they arrived at camp, they blew it up and used a stick (or a fishing pole case) as a bat. Instant happiness!

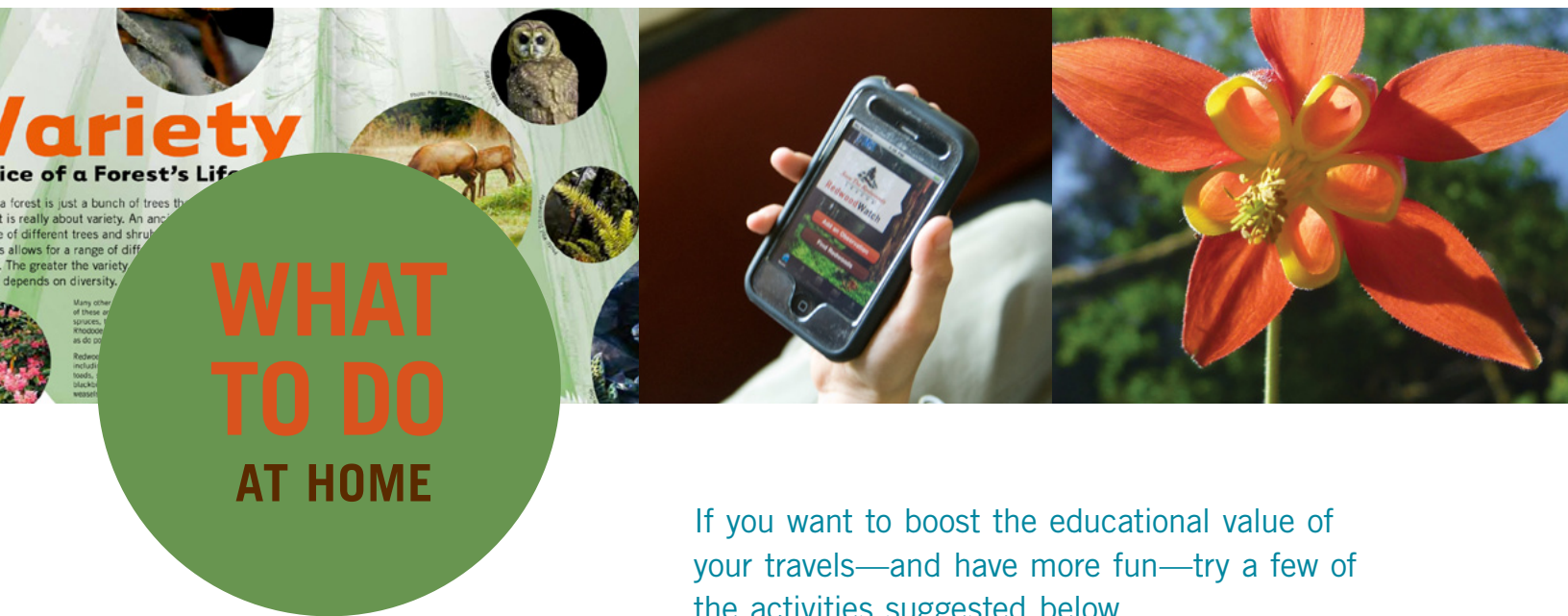
TOOLS FOR THINKING AND REMEMBERING. Bring notebooks or journals, markers or colored pencils, and cameras. If your child is too young or doesn't feel like writing or drawing, he or she can dictate a story or journal entry to you. Cameras are another way of focusing attention on what's around you. Consider bringing one for each older child. Or use your smartphone(s)!

A RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD DIRT. We know one mother who felt she had to give her children a bath every night, no matter what. It only took three days for her to decide that camping was way too much work. So she missed out on the family's best times together. Don't let it happen to you. Be sanitary, but don't worry about the dirt that naturally adheres to multi-day adventurers.

A CALM OUTLOOK. Learn about the hazards where you're going (mosquitoes? nettles? poison oak? ticks? mountain lions?). Then take sensible precautions, knowing that families have been safely camping out in the redwoods for decades.

REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS. There will be times when "all your good feelings go to Antarctica," as one young camper described it. You'll wish you had left the kids with relatives or friends. At those times, remember that connecting your kids to nature is a long-term project. Your reward may be the trip itself. Or it may come a decade or two later, when a grateful grown child pulls you aside and says, "Remember that time we went camping in the redwoods?"





If you want to boost the educational value of your travels—and have more fun—try a few of the activities suggested below.

Help your children explore the web for redwood-related materials. First, check out the web page of the park you want to visit. If it's a unit of the national park system, you'll see a "for kids" option in the homepage navigation menu. That's where you'll find out about special events, programs and materials for kids. On the [Muir Woods site](#), for example, you can download a "Quest" game that will lead your family on a forest walk in search of hidden natural treasures. You can also check out Junior Ranger activities and sometimes watch short videos. Additional web resources for nature activities are available on the [California State Parks' "kids page."](#)

SAVE THE REDWOODS LEAGUE LEARNING CENTER

Our [online Learning Center](#) will help you create an excellent bag of travel tricks.

GAMES [Download games](#) at Save the Redwoods League or [print out pages](#) for coloring, sketching and poetry activities. In one of the games, kids compare human heights to the stature of a 320-foot redwood. (If you're curious, it is about as tall as 80 four-foot kids or 53 six-foot parents!) In another, they learn how to read the animal tracks they'll be seeing on the forest floor (those of salamanders, owls, mountain lions and more).

DOWNLOAD BOOKLETS In addition, the League offers [downloadable booklets](#) on coast redwoods and sequoias that are tailored for different grade levels. There's also a list of books you can get at the library, organized by age groups: everything from *Hannah and the Talking Tree*, a story by Elke Weiss, and *Who Pooped in the Park?*, a story by Gary D. Robson, to *Julia Butterfly Hill: Saving the Ancient Redwoods*, non-fiction by Rachel Lynette. Don't be surprised if you end up checking out some titles for yourself.

WEBSITES Finally, the League's list of redwood websites can help you dig even deeper into redwood lore. One California State Parks page, "[Imagine, Experience, Explore the Redwood Neighborhood](#)," uses art, soaring music and sound effects to help you identify and learn about plants and animals in the redwood forest. Older children can go to the [California Academy of Sciences site](#) to learn about burls, fairy rings, goose pens and marbled murrelets. [Humboldt State University's site](#) offers a slide show of researchers measuring trees, installing data monitors and exploring treetop ecosystems. A [KQED video](#) focuses on rare albino redwoods, "the phantoms of the forest."



WHAT TO DO IN THE CAR

Your kids can dip into the bag of travel tricks you downloaded (see facing page) and work independently. But doing things together can be fun—and strengthen family ties. Here are a few suggestions.



DOING THINGS TOGETHER CAN BE FUN—AND STRENGTHEN FAMILY TIES.

PLAY “REDWOOD 20 QUESTIONS.” Think of something found in the redwood forest and then let the other players ask up to 20 yes-or-no questions to figure out what it is. The first person to guess correctly starts the next round.

PLAY A BIRDERS’ VERSION OF “I SPY.” The lead player spots a bird outside and says “I spy with my little eye, something [color]!” Others in the car try to name the bird.

READ A BOOK ALOUD. For redwoods-related suggestions, see [the League’s list](#).

WATCH A MOVIE SET IN THE REDWOODS. Are you set up to have your kids watch movies in your car? If so, try one filmed in the redwood forest. Some possibilities: *Return of the Jedi*, *The Lost World*, *Jurassic Park 2*, or *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*.



WHAT TO DO IN THE PARK



You're in the park. There's no TV and you've all turned off your electronic devices. You've stretched your legs, inhaled the fresh air and said hello to the friendly folks in the visitor center. What next?

First, find out if there's a self-guided trail nearby. That's often a good introduction to what the park has to offer. Or is there a river you can safely splash in? A sunny place where you can picnic? A not-too-steep hill you can climb?

Pick interesting goals, but make sure they are right for your kids, not what you might have done with your buddies a few years ago. If your family is inclined to look and listen (or gather acorns, climb trees or make a leaf collection) rather than march down the trail, be flexible. It's not how far you go; it's how much fun you have.





Photo by Paolo Vesclia

HIKES WITH-A-PURPOSE

IT'S NOT
HOW FAR YOU GO;
IT'S HOW MUCH
FUN YOU HAVE.

Hiking can be puzzling to children. People with long legs are telling them to walk and walk for no apparent reason? Kids want to be doing something. Help them hone their observational skills with one or more of these hikes-with-a-purpose.

WALK A TRAIL, stopping every 10 steps to draw something you see: an animal track, spider web, fern, flower, feather, fish, cone, scat (poop), bird, insect, banana slug and so forth. Save the Redwoods League describes what to bring, look for, and do on its [transect page](#).

PLAY THE REDWOOD BINGO GAME. Like the transect walk above, it involves observation, with no drawing required.

WALK IN PAIRS, with one person leading and the other person blindfolded. Have the blindfolded person describe what he or she hears, smells and feels. Then switch.

COUNT BUGS OR BIRDS you see in one hike. If you can't identify them, don't worry. It's mostly about noticing the variety and the differences.

COUNT ANIMAL HOMES you can find. Speculate about who might live in each.

EXPLORE A REDWOOD STUMP or a goose pen (a hollowed out redwood with open space in the middle). While being respectful of other visitors and nature, play hide-and-seek in the forest.

WALK IN SILENCE for a certain length of time. Then talk about what you heard.



WHAT TO DO IN THE PARK

PHOTOGRAPHY

If sketching lacks appeal, try photography—possibly taking one camera for each (older) child. Or use a smartphone and instantly send your work to Grandma! Photography is another way of focusing attention on what’s around you—and creating lasting memories. For inspiration, have a look at our photo library.

PARK PROGRAMS

The state parks listed in this document (Big Basin, Del Norte Coast, Humboldt, Jedediah Smith, Portola, Prairie Creek and Pfeiffer Big Sur—pages 6-13) all have active Junior Ranger programs, usually running Memorial Day through Labor Day. These ranger- or docent-led programs, generally for kids age 7 through 12, offer your child a chance to play games, take hikes, learn and explore with other children.

If you prefer family activities, you and your kids can work your way through the 16-page [Junior Ranger Adventure Guide](#) together. Download the guide, pick it up at the visitor center, or call (916) 653-8959 to order a copy.

The National Park Service (NPS) also has Junior Ranger programs at the park units listed in this booklet (Muir Woods and Redwood). For some parks, the NPS offers Junior Ranger booklets free on the web. For others, you have to purchase them at a visitor center.

SKETCHING AND WRITING

You brought several notebooks along with markers or colored pencils, right? If your child sees something exciting, encourage him or her to stop and sketch it. When you get back to camp, you can look over your sketches and write about your day, or your child can dictate a journal entry to you—or tell you a story.

The goal of this effort is not to draw or write like a pro, but to observe like an eagle. When you get home, you can send your children’s best sketches and writings to be considered for our online gallery. But, whatever you do, save those journals—a priceless record of your family’s discoveries in the redwood forest.

AT CAMP

You’ve had dinner, cleaned up, brushed your teeth and used up the last of your quarters in the state-park showers. But it’s still early. How about bundling up to take a little walk? Dusk might reward you with a chorus of frogs, a varied thrush solo or an owl serenade.

Later in the evening, don’t forget to gaze up at the stars. Or you can read, tell stories and converse. Ask your children what forest animal they’d each like to be. Then ask them which animal is most like their sibling, friend, parent or grandparent. Don’t take it personally if you turn out to be the banana slug.



**READY
FOR ACTION**

You've come home inspired by your visit to the redwoods! Here are some ways your family can take action to protect these ancient trees and the forests that surround them.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

You can start by [signing a pledge](#) offered by Save the Redwoods League. "I can help redwoods!" is the main idea, followed by a checklist of actions, including "educate yourself" and "experience the redwoods," which you've already done if you've visited the redwoods. Other actions include "spread the word," "plant a native tree," "reduce, reuse and recycle" and "volunteer."

LEARN ABOUT THREATS

A combination of climate change, pollution, habitat loss and invasive species are making life difficult for redwoods and their ecosystems. You can learn more from the EPA's online publication "[A Student's Guide to Climate Change,](#)" the US Department of Energy's [science education pages](#) and the National Park Service's "[Web Rangers](#)" pages.

JOIN A GROUP

Find out [how you can help Save the Redwoods League,](#) and other groups working to protect redwood forests.

BECOME A CITIZEN SCIENTIST

You and your family can help efforts through the [League's Redwood Watch program](#). Find a redwood tree in a park, in your own backyard or in a botanical garden anywhere in the world. A tree on the edge of redwoods' natural range would be particularly interesting, but anywhere will do. Then use the free [Redwood Watch iPhone application](#) or your own camera to take a photo of the tree and submit it online. Your efforts will help scientists amass good data on where redwoods are growing today, so they'll be better able to predict where the forests of tomorrow can thrive.

**WHEN YOU VISIT
A REDWOOD PARK,
YOUR CHILDREN WILL BE
INSPIRED TO PROTECT
THIS PRECIOUS
HERITAGE.**



Save The Redwoods
LEAGUE®

Save the Redwoods League
114 Sansome St, #1200
San Francisco, CA 94104

phone (888) 836-0005
main (415) 362-2352
fax (415) 362-7017

info@SaveTheRedwoods.org
SaveTheRedwoods.org

THE MORE
COMFORTABLE YOUR
FAMILY FEELS IN NATURE,
THE HEALTHIER AND
HAPPIER YOU'LL
ALL BE.

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