

# exploring

## Staying Local Walking in Place Neil Wiley

Although we must avoid physical contact with other humans, it's good to get outside. Unfortunately, parks and beaches are often crowded or closed, so it's better to stay near home. (Before visiting a park or beach, check online to see if it is open.)

We are lucky. Living in our mountains, we can get out in nature without getting in our cars. It may not be Yosemite, but we have more trees, flowers, hills, and wildlife than the valley. So, let's enjoy walking local.

### Summit area

If you live in the Summit area, you can choose from several easily accessible trails. You can follow the **Summit Trail** from Old Summit Road at the Loma Prieta Volunteer Fire and Rescue station all the way to Summit Store. If this six-mile trip is too much, you can cut it short by going from Old Summit or Summit Store to Villa del Monte and back, a three-mile loop.

If you want more nature and fewer cars, walk **Morrill Road** on the Santa Clara County side down through some shady forest. You are walking on a road, but it's relatively flat, and there is very little traffic. This is an especially good cool walk on a warm day. If you don't like a two-mile out-and-back walk on the same road, you can



Morrill Road

complete the loop on the Summit Trail.

If you want a much shorter nature walk, go behind and to the right of the amphitheater, in the Loma Playfield across Summit Road from the main-school campus. A large "**Loma Prieta Nature Trail**" sign welcomes you, but only if the gate is open. Once inside the gate, just follow the loop marked by fallen tree branches. Embedded steps help on the steeper sections.

If you want a public walkway with a view, follow **Loma Prieta Avenue** to the dirt-road section. There is minimal traffic, and there are scenic views to the south as you walk toward the intersection of Mt. Bache Road and Loma Prieta Way.

Although many casual strollers, runners, and dog-walkers use the **Summit Christmas Tree Farm** near the schools, it is private property. Treat it with respect. If you bring your dog, be sure to clean up any messes.

Trail bikers love Highland Way's **Soquel Demonstration Forest**, but the long trails and limited scenic views aren't the best for walkers. (It may be closed due to COVID-19, overuse, bicycle accidents, and logging.)

### Lexington/Lakeside area

The two big MidPeninsula Open Space preserves, **Bear Creek** and **Sierra Azul**, are popular, which leads to crowds and closures, especially of Mt. Umunhum. Most Sierra Azul trails are long, especially those above Lexington Reservoir. Bear Creek does have a short trail around a small lake, but the longer trail is up a steep hill.

A better choice for a short walk may be a loop that combines the **Flume**, **Los Gatos**, and **Jones** trails. The Los Gatos Creek Trail from the Los Gatos History Museum at



Summit Christmas Tree Farm



The Flume Trail



West Glenwood Preserve

Forbes Mill to Lexington Dam offers a flat, easy trail, perfect for casual walking, biking, running, dog walking, and stroller pushing.

The Flume Trail takes you up a relatively easy uphill single-track trail from the Los Gatos Creek Trail to the Jones Trail. The Jones Trail provides a wide old road that runs above and parallel to the Los Gatos Creek Trail. Depending on your wants, each of these trails can give you some healthy exercise, but combining all three promises more variety and a richer experience.

About halfway between the Flume/Jones intersection and Lexington Reservoir on Jones Trail, you can see more by turning on the **Novitiate Trail** to the 1250-foot summit of St. Joseph's Hill. It's a bit of a climb up 1.5 miles of rocky trail, but on a clear day you'll enjoy the views of Santa Clara Valley, Lexington Reservoir, and the Sierra Azul mountain range.

The **Lake Ranch Trail** off Black Road in Santa Clara County's Sanborn Park is a nice, relatively flat trail that wanders along a 2000-foot ridge southwest of Lyndon Canyon. The round trip is about three-and-a-half miles. A newer section of trail (the John Nicholas Trail) takes you all the way up to Skyline.

**A short drive**

The new trails of the **West Glenwood Preserve** are well worth the short drive to Scotts Valley. Take Highway 17 south to the Granite Creek overpass to Scotts Valley. Turn right on Scotts Valley Drive, and then a quick left on Glenwood Drive. Watch for a parking lot on the right. From there, walk up Glenwood Drive, past the entrance to Scotts Valley High School, and a short walk to K Street on the left for the entrance to

the West Glenwood Preserve.

Almost every neighborhood has some secret trails. They may not be public or official, but your neighbors may take you there. If possible, ask the property owner for permission.

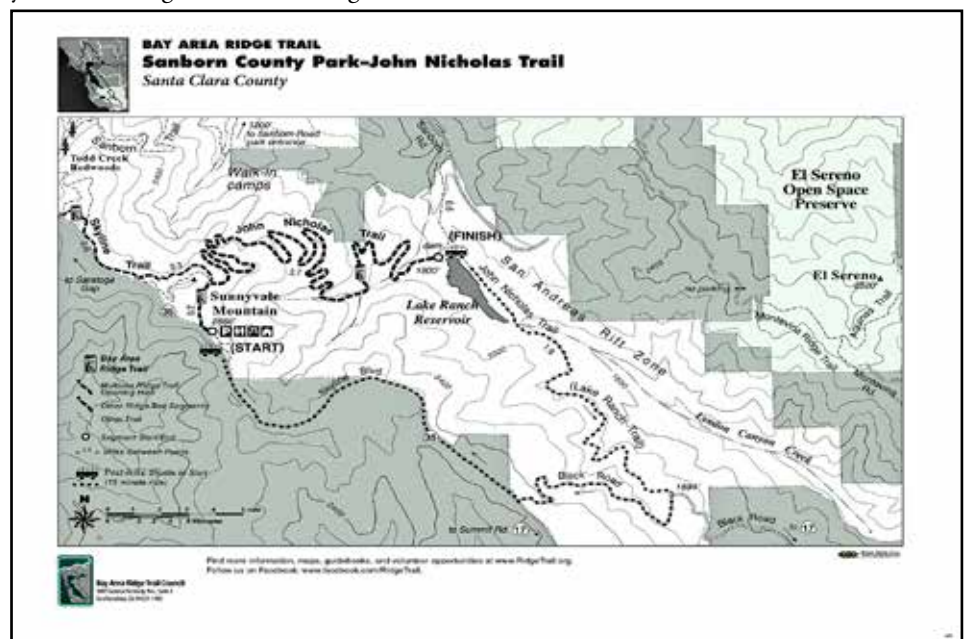
**Walking roads**

Although mountain roads are not particularly walker-friendly, they are a good alternative if you are careful. Remember that vehicle traffic has the right of way. Be sure to control your dogs and children. In most cases, it is safer to walk against the flow of traffic. Be especially watchful on blind curves or narrow passages. Always be ready to move or jump off the road.

And be sure to be friendly and wave to everyone you see. Even in the mountains, you are walking in someone's neighborhood.

**Santa Clara County  
Public Health Department  
Reflect. Relax. Reset.  
Dr. Laurie Cammon**

Our local parks are a wonderful way to get out and spend time in nature, as long as you maintain social distancing, and avoid park benches, picnic tables, and play structures. As always, practice good hand-washing with soap and water. You can walk, run, hike, or just enjoy being outside and breathing some fresh air. And, even if you can't get out to the park, going outside in your own yard or opening a window and listening to the wind in the leaves of the trees for just thirty minutes each day will help you feel better and be healthier.



Lake Ranch and John Nicholas Trail map