

A Walk in the Park(s)

Length: 11.1 miles

Time: Four hours

Difficulty: 3 (an easy walk, but a long one!)

Elevation Gain: 151 feet

Starting Point:
University Avenue and Santa Fe Right of Way, two blocks below Sacramento Street

Transportation: AC Transit 51B. Parking is available on Acton or Curtis, cross streets off University.

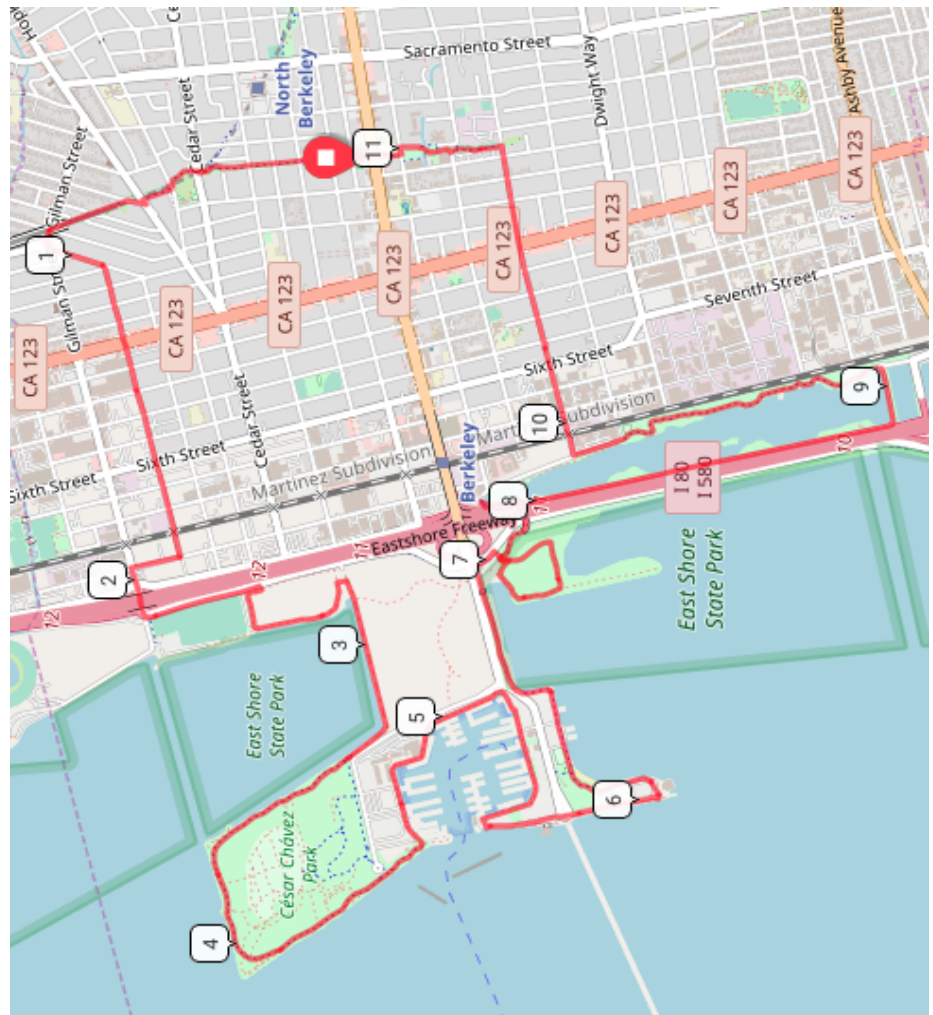
Overview:

This hike is a walk in the park, literally! Actually, it's a walk in several parks throughout West Berkeley, from the rolling bayside hills of Cesar Chavez Park to the burbling stream at Strawberry Creek Park. This walk takes you through

some of West Berkeley's nicest parks and connects them with bike paths and residential streets, passing murals, bakeries, and restaurants along the way.

Directions and pictures:

From its start at University and the Santa Fe Right of Way, head north (left as you face up University) on the Santa Fe Right of Way, formerly the route of the Santa Fe Railway and now a lovely bike path. You'll pass lovely patches of bright orange California poppy, until you reach a large sign announcing loudly that you have reached THE END. You have not, however, reached the end, so continue straight, across some basketball courts and slightly left onto the Ohlone Greenway, which will bring you to the first of today's parks, Cedar Rose, which can



make a nice stopping point. Leaving the park and continue north on the Ohlone Greenway to Hopkins Street. After crossing, keep going straight on Peralta, then stay left to continue on the greenway where it starts up again. After passing some wonderful blackberry patches, note the mural detailing the history of Berkeley, entitled ELK TRACKS TO BART TRACKS. Extending from prehistoric to modern times, this mural depicts Berkeley's history over time as it has become more developed. At the end of the mural, you'll find yourself at Gilman's commercial district; turn left down Gilman, passing the renowned Berkeley Bagels. You can continue down Gilman if you don't mind walking on a busy street, but an alternative is to take quiet, residential Camelia, one block to the south. To do this, turn left on Santa Fe and then right on Camelia. Camelia will take you past Picante, a great Mexican Restaurant just to the right on Sixth Street, before it ends at 2nd street. Turn right here and make a left under I-80 on Gilman, then turn left onto the San Francisco Bay Trail, a paved walkway found across the street from the Golden Gate Fields entrance off Gilman. Once you pass the ball fields, take a right on a dirt road (the unsigned Virginia Street Extension), which will take you to the shores of San Francisco Bay itself, a great place for bird watching, or just sitting by the water. Turn right along the dirt track that parallels Marina Boulevard, and continue walking along the water into Cesar Chavez Park. If you want, you can cut across the hills here to the opposite shore of the peninsula and turn left when you get there. It's fun to cross the rolling hills here until you get to the Bay, waiting outside



ground squirrel holes until the cute rodents appear. The Bay here is great too, though, especially given that this is one of the few places that it takes on an almost oceanic feel, the wind slamming its waves against the rocks. Follow the shoreline around the northern end of Cesar Chavez, staying left to head toward the southwestern end of the peninsula at the mouth of Berkeley Harbor.

Left: An egret wades into the Aquatic Park lagoon

Continue around the Harbor, pausing to gawk at the huge yachts on the way, until you reach Horseshoe Park. You can cut through here, or walk to Horseshoe Point and then turn south, eventually reaching the Berkeley Pier. The Berkeley Pier once stretched halfway across the Bay, and was the Eastern terminus for the San Francisco to Berkeley ferry (before the Bay Bridge was built). A "mere" 3,000 feet of this pier remains open to the public today, and is often frequented by fishermen and crabbers. Head east on University Avenue, cutting south on a path soon after to reach Adventure Playground and Pebble Beach. Turn right here, and continue along the shoreline. This whole section of Berkeley, everything west of I-80, including the freeway itself, was once underwater. After 1920, this became the city's dumping area, and the land that you are walking on now consists mainly of garbage. It's amazing to see how nature has taken it back, though, with the ground squirrels burrowing at Cesar Chavez and the shore birds flitting across the surface of the Bay next to Adventure Playground. This next area is especially impressive; turn right onto a dirt path to walk

along a virtually deserted area of the shore, past huge clumps of invasive (but delicious) Himalayan blackberry. You'll soon spot the pedestrian bridge arching over the freeway to your left.



Left: The Pedestrian Bridge arches majestically over Interstate 80

Rather than taking the bridge, follow the lagoon shoreline back toward the Marina, and walk south paralleling I-80. This section of Aquatic Park is not very pleasant, and if you don't mind retracing your steps, so we recommend you walk south along the much nicer eastern side of the lagoon. Otherwise, after a mile of somewhat unpleasant walking you will reach another trail; turn left on it and loop around the southern end of the lagoon to the much more pleasant eastern side. Here, loop back to the Pedestrian Bridge, then cross and stay right once on the other side. The paved trail hugs the clear water, with views of the bridge reflected in the placid lagoon. Turn left at the first opportunity, after about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, to cross the lagoon, then make a left again once on the

other side. The path becomes crowded with families as you near the "Dreamland for Tots" Playground. Stay right by the water fountain to continue north onto a paved parking strip, then turn right and walk east on Bancroft Way, departing the lovely lagoon-side path. After about a mile through residential neighborhoods you will come to the southern entrance to Strawberry Creek Park, just past the intersection with Bonar St. Turn left, and a paved bike path will take you through a basketball court and over a daylighted section of Strawberry Creek. Strawberry Creek once drained much of Berkeley, but its lower section was almost completely culverted in the 1920s. In the '70s, the section around Strawberry Creek Park was daylighted and, if one can ignore the immense concrete slabs, one can almost imagine that this creek flows through natural terrain all the way to the Bay. After crossing the creek on a wooden bridge, climb a steep dirt trail to a large lawn which stretches up to Addison Way. Cross the street and continue one more short block of bike path to return to your starting point.