

A Short but Steep Northern Path Tour

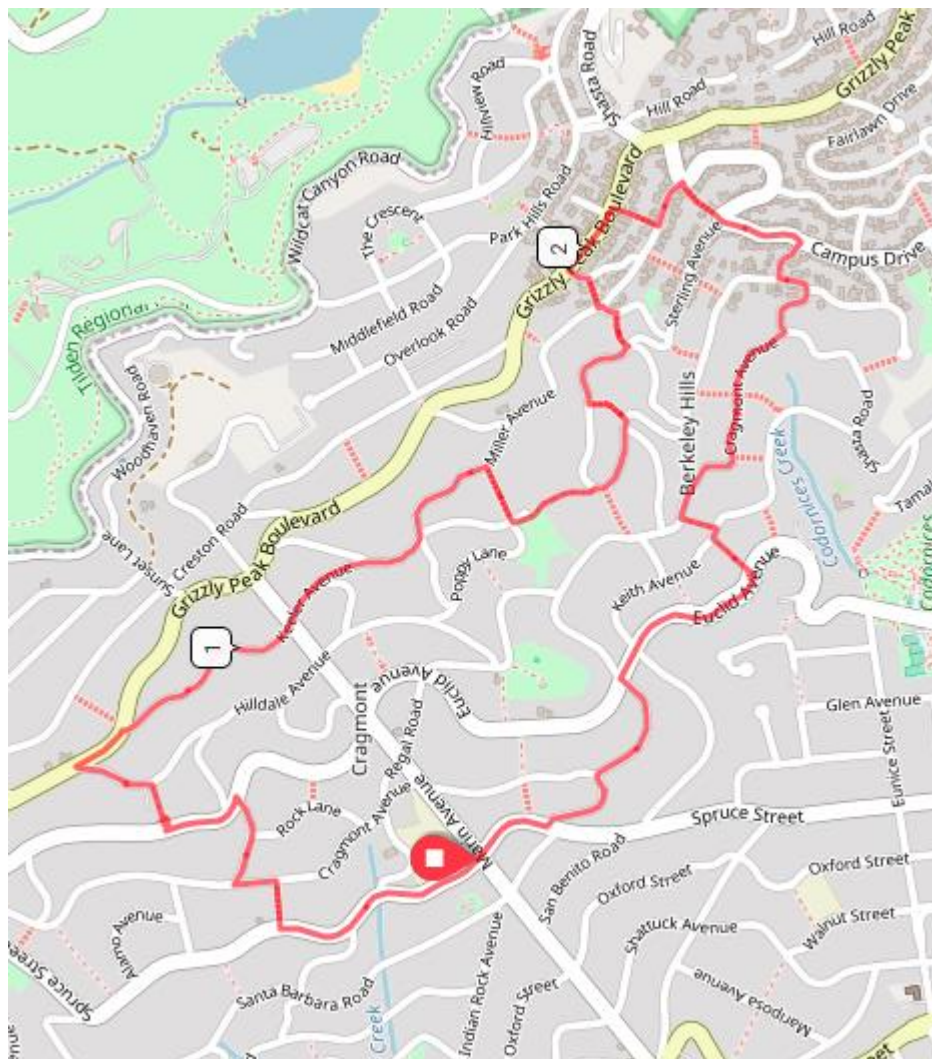
Length: 3.5 miles

Time: 1 ½ hours

Difficulty: 3

Elevation Gain: 650 feet

Starting Point: Spruce St. and Marin Ave.



Transportation: AC transit bus 67. There is also parking available on Spruce.

Overview:

This walk gives a great overview of the North Berkeley Hills, taking you up and down nine steep stair paths in a relatively short amount of time. From Spruce, you will climb to Grizzly Peak, traverse the hills on paths and small streets, summit near Shasta, and then descend efficiently on paths to return to the starting point.

Directions and pictures:

Start at the intersection of Spruce St. and Marin Ave. From here, head north up Spruce (or for a short cut, run up Marin). After two long-ish blocks you will reach Poplar Path. Turn right to ascend the cement steps through trees and up a gradual slope to Cragmont Ave. Turn left, then make your first right onto Poplar St. After two short blocks, turn left onto Euclid Ave, then right onto the wooden steps of Halkin Walk. The path is unsigned but the handrail and steps are noticeable, climbing the steepest hillside of any path in Berkeley. Follow the switchbacks and many stairs of Halkin Walk, a path built by the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association in 2014, to where it ends at Hilldale Ave. Make a left, then your first right onto Grizzly Peak Blvd. This is a very efficient route up to Grizzly Peak and, this being an efficient walk, the descent will begin soon. Well, not really. Make a slight right off Grizzly Peak on the first street you reach, Keeler



Ave, and follow it as it winds through the hills for three long blocks. At Miller Ave, make a left. Climb the hill, then turn right down the many wooden stairs of Poppy Path after one block.

Left: Poppy Path disappears into the distance

At the bottom of Poppy Path, you will reach the famous four way street sign marking the intersection of Keeler, Poppy, Keeler Path, and Poppy Path. This is the only quadruple street sign we know of. (If you find another or can one-up us with a quintuple, let us know!) Turn left onto Keeler Path and walk across its dusty, dirt trail past Remillard Park and up a few steps to where Keeler restarts. Make a slight right, then stay left to continue on Keeler. The first intersection is with Bret Harte Ave. Here, make a left to climb the perfect, concrete steps of Bret Harte Path, continuing afterward up some wooden stairs to Sterling Ave. Make a right, then your first left up

Betty Olds Path, renamed in 2013 for city council-women and path advocate Betty Olds. Betty Olds was friends with Anne Brower, for whom a nearby path is named, and was pleased to have path named for her so close to the one commemorating her friend. This path climbs yet more of the Berkeley Path Wanderers' signature wood steps from the intersection of Sterling and Twain.

At the top of the path, make a slight left on Whitaker Ave. for a very short way, then cross Miller and continue straight, up Anne Brower Path, named for the longtime resident of one of the houses next to the path and wife of environmentalist David Brower. The top of this short path leaves you on Stevenson Ave. A left takes you quickly back to Grizzly Peak, where you should turn right. After one block you will reach Stoddard Path and the highest point of the walk.

Make a right to truly begin the descent. Stoddard Path goes down a small dirt trail and then some wood steps back to Miller Ave. Make a left, then a right at the intersection with Shasta down the wooden steps of Shasta Path. After descending, stay straight to continue down Shasta, turning right when you reach Campus Dr. to remain on Shasta. At Keeler, stay left and at Northgate, stay right to proceed down—you guessed it—Shasta!

Finally, at Cragmont, turn right to leave Shasta behind forever. Take Cragmont past Covert and Martinez paths to El Mirador Path. If you get to Bret Harte Rd, you've gone a bit too far. Make a left to descend the now-familiar wood steps, which join the similar steps of the neighboring houses, and bring you through the redwoods to Keith Ave. If descending these steps looks daunting, you can also go straight on Cragmont until it hits Euclid and skip the next few sentences. Assuming you did go down the path, take a right for a few feet, then go right to continue down the lower block of El Mirador which goes through more redwoods and down a steep cement staircase (with a railing) and slope to Euclid Ave. Turn right. After a block on Euclid, cross Keith Ave. and soon after turn left onto Cragmont Ave. Follow Cragmont down the hill and around the curve, then turn left onto Santa Barbara Rd. After one winding block, Santa Barbara hits Spruce. Make a right, and you will return to the starting point. The whole walk is three and a half miles and covers nine paths, mostly ones the Berkeley Path Wanderers have built within the last fifteen years.



Right: The steps of Stoddard Path