

Favorite Paths of the North Berkeley Hills

Length: Six miles

Time: Two and a half to three hours

Difficulty: 4

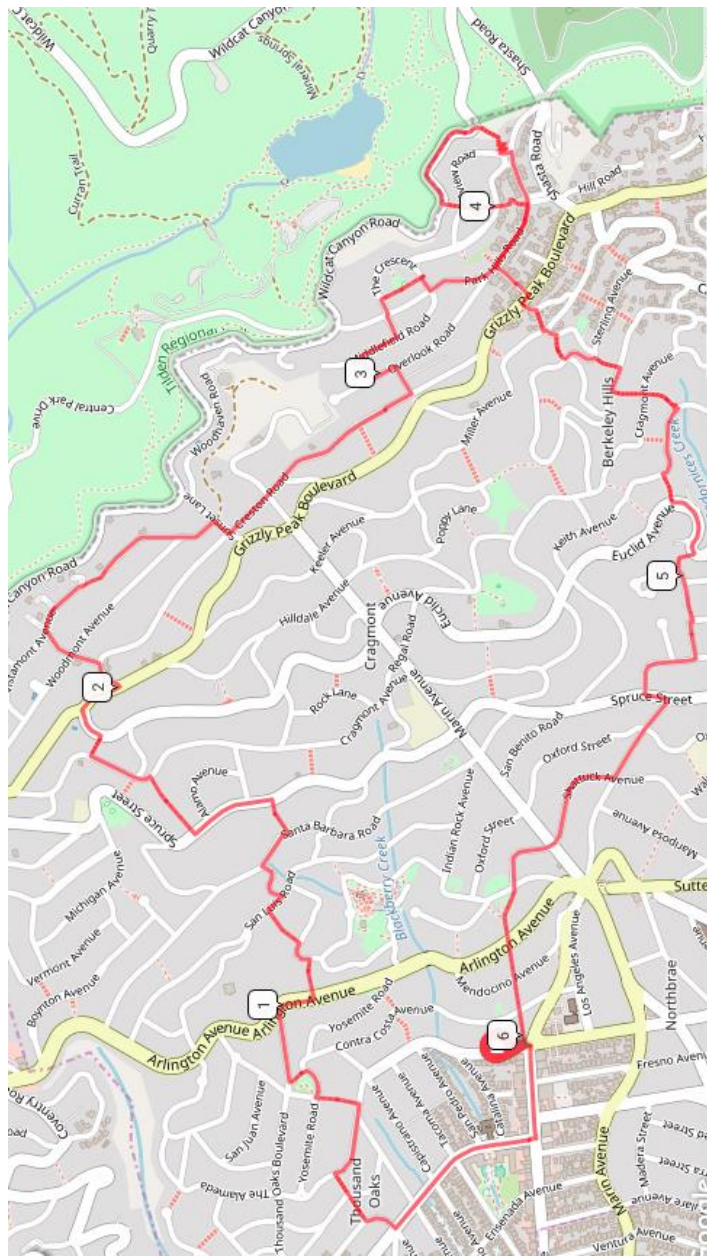
Elevation Gain: 1,150 feet

Starting Point: Solano Ave. and the Alameda

Transportation: AC Transit buses 7, 18, and 25 all stop within a block on Solano or just south of it on The Alameda

Overview:

If you asked us to name ten favorite North Berkeley paths, all ten of them would be ones you take on this walk. A six-mile loop, it gives an overview of all the types of paths: from the granite Indian Trail to the pine-needle-covered Acacia Walk to the stepping stones of Vistamont Trail or the switchbacks of Wildcat Path. You'll pass the park in the middle of Crescent Park Path, cross a tiny stream on Covert, and go up and down everything from the small wooden stairs of Whitaker Path to the giant, uneven concrete ones of Redwood Terrace. This walk takes you up paths through many different neighborhoods of Berkeley, loops along the easternmost paths—those near Tilden Park—and descends through the heart of PathLand to return to the starting point.



Directions and pictures:

Start at the intersection of Solano Ave. and The Alameda. Head down Solano (west) until you reach the traffic light at Colusa Ave and then turn right. After six very short blocks, you will have gone half a mile entirely on big streets without a single path. Now, let the paths begin!

Turn right onto Vincente Ave, then, shortly after, turn right again onto El Paseo Path. El Paseo ascends granite steps through the rocky terrain native to the Thousand Oaks area. At the top of the first block, cross the street and continue up the slightly less steep second block to where the path ends at Alameda. Turn right here and cross so that you are on the upper side. Just after the intersection with San Lorenzo, after house number 715, make a left up the steep and uneven granite-block bottom steps of Indian Trail. At the bottom and just left of this path, you will



The Indian Trail Urn

notice a huge stone urn, the last original of about a dozen that used to be scattered throughout this neighborhood. The rest have been destroyed over the years, but the city is working to replace them with replicas, such as the one in Great Stoneface Park (which you'll see in a few minutes). Climb Indian Trail, walking past a small rock cave, to where it ends at Yosemite Rd. Make a right, then a left soon after onto Great Stoneface Path, which runs through the east side of Great Stoneface Park (named for the large rock in the park's center that appears to have the features of a face). At the end of this short path, turn right up on Thousand Oaks Blvd, continuing up to where it ends at Arlington Ave. Cross Arlington and turn right; then, soon after, make a left up Tunbridge Lane. The path—an excellent place for picking street plums in the summer—climbs up uneven concrete stairs through a sort of tree tunnel and ends at Southampton Ave.



The granite steps of Indian Trail

Make a left up Southampton, then another left after a short block onto Chester Lane, just past house number 117. Climb more cement stairs, then make a right at the top, cross San Luis, then turn left soon after back onto Southampton. After one longish block, head right on Santa Barbara Rd. You will soon reach Alta Vista Path. Turn left to climb its steep stairs, looking back before the top at the *alta vista* down on the Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge, and much of Berkeley and Albany. Once you have finished enjoying the view (or catching your breath while pretending to enjoy the view), turn left up Spruce St. The top of the climb is near! Cross Spruce at the first crosswalk and continue north. Just past Alamo Ave, you will see the sign for Acacia Walk.

Turn right to climb the unexciting concrete steps with their black handrail. At the

top, you will get a surprise: Acacia Walk suddenly changes to a lovely dirt trail. Walk under the trees and over the pine needles as you gradually ascend to Cragmont Ave. Here, turn left. After one block, you will reach the sign for North Path. Turn right and climb one final set of concrete stairs, then make a left on Euclid, which will bring you to Grizzly Peak Blvd. Though the steepest section is over, the climb is not yet completed, and the great paths are just beginning.

Turn right on Grizzly Peak, then left on Creston Rd. after a very short block. Another short block will bring you to Rosemont Ave, where you should make a left and, two blocks later, a right on Vistamont Ave.



Vistamont soon dead ends at a driveway with No Trespassing signs. But have no fear, Vistamont Trail is here! Make a slight right past the street sign and across the stepping stones and dirt track of one of Berkeley's only north-to-south paths. At the end of the path, Vistamont Ave. restarts. Follow the gravel driveway and the street to where it ends at Woodmont Ave. and make a slight left. At Sunset Ln, make a right, then an immediate left back onto Creston Rd.

Left: Fred Herbert Path (coming soon), "stair-ing" you down

Creston climbs several hills to its summit at Miller Path East. Rather than taking this path, continue straight, down Creston to Latham Ln. Turn left on this quiet street to begin the descent past the peak of the Berkeley Hills and on towards Tilden Park. After one block, make a left at Overlook Rd;

after another block, turn right on The Crossways, then make another right onto Middlefield Rd. Another block will take you to The Shortcut. Turn left and descend to Park Hills Rd, then cross and continue straight, climbing gradually up The Crescent. After a very short block, just before address 10, make a right up a small flight of wooden stairs. Climb these and go through a gate to arrive at the green field of Crescent Park, site of a little-known playground, field, and water fountain accessible only via path. If you miss the steps up, there is no need to fear, as the park is also accessible via a concrete path from a little further along the road. Crescent Park is a great water or lunch stop but does not have any bathrooms. Continue straight to exit the park on

the south end, then turn left and right soon after onto Woodside Rd. Stay on the upper side of Woodside, then, opposite the intersection with Hillview Rd, turn right up the wooden steps of Patty Kates Path. You will soon reach a meadow between several houses; turn left through the grass and then right in the first gap between the chain link fences, to continue up the steps to the top of the path. This nice cut-through was formerly named after John Muir, but one day the Park Hills Neighborhood Association decided to spontaneously rename it after long-term board member Patty Kates. Because this neighborhood is unincorporated, as opposed to being part of the city of Berkeley, there was nothing the city could do to oppose the change. John Muir is now forced to be content with a new path named in his honor, running from Keeler and Grizzly Peak up to Creston. Given that he has major trails, parks, and even (somewhat ironically) a freeway named after him, we figure he would not mind too much this northward shift in the site of his Berkeley Hills legacy.

Next, the walk takes you on a short loop on two of Berkeley's easternmost paths. If you wish to skip this loop, head straight up Muir Way and skip to the next paragraph. Otherwise, turn left on Park Hills Rd. After two blocks, you will reach the five-way intersection with Woodside and Hillview. Cross them both and make a slight left, as if taking Hillview, then a right onto the steep hillside of the overgrown Wildcat Path. Follow the small wooden steps as they switch-back down the hill. At the bottom, a short optional detour to the right will bring you into Contra Costa County. If you are content with a one-county walk, turn left on Wildcat Canyon Rd. We recommend you cross for better visibility, then cross back at Fred Herbert Path, which you will reach after one block, just before a small grove of redwoods. Fred Herbert Path has a small wooden sign and steps like those on Patty Kates Path. Ascend three blocks, through trees and small clearings and up many steps back to Park Hills. Make a right and one block will return you to the top of Patty Kates Path.

At this point, the descent begins. Well, almost. Turn left up Muir Way and after one block cross Grizzly Peak Blvd. and jog right to continue down Stevenson. Very quickly you will reach the sign for Anne Brower Path. Turn right down the wooden steps through a sort of tree tunnel to the intersection of Whitaker and Miller. Take Whitaker to continue down the hill. then make a slight right to head down Betty Olds Path, which was built by the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association in 2013.

Make a left at the bottom onto Sterling, then your first right down Whitaker Path, which you will find at the intersection of Sterling and Whitaker. If it is a clear day, you will see a stunning view of the Bay near the bottom of Whitaker Path, which, you may notice, is the recipient of a recent handrail paid for by the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association. Make a right on Keeler Ave, then a few feet later a left down Covert Path. Covert Path descends first through a meadow down about 160 steps and then onto a second block with a small creek crossing and redwood saplings to use as handholds for the sharp turns. At the bottom of Covert Path, turn right onto Keith Ave, then left down Redwood Terrace, one of Berkeley's steepest paths with concrete steps, some of which have become nearly vertical due to the redwood roots underneath. Make a left on Euclid Ave, then cross carefully and turn right onto Oak St. Path and ascend the path's even concrete stairs. Go straight at the top on Oak St, then continue on down the second block of the path, through large, shady trees and down more steps. At the bottom, keep going straight, down Oak St. Turn right to climb a final hill on Arch St, then continue down around a bend to Spruce St. Make a left, then an immediate right down Los Angeles Ave. After

two blocks, turn right onto Shattuck Ave, which will take you in two much-longer blocks first to Marin Ave. and then to Indian Rock Ave. Cross the street and head down Indian Rock Path, Berkeley's only four block path. Indian Rock path is paved, and, though perhaps not that exciting after the paths you have seen, it makes an excellent short cut in returning you to Solano and the Alameda. The entire walk is just over six miles, with 18 paths and over a thousand stairs. Solano is filled with restaurants, if you feel the desire to follow up the 18 paths with an 18 course meal.

Right: Betty Olds Path

