

# The Albany Hill Traverse

**Length:** 4.6 miles

**Time:** Two hours

**Difficulty:** 2

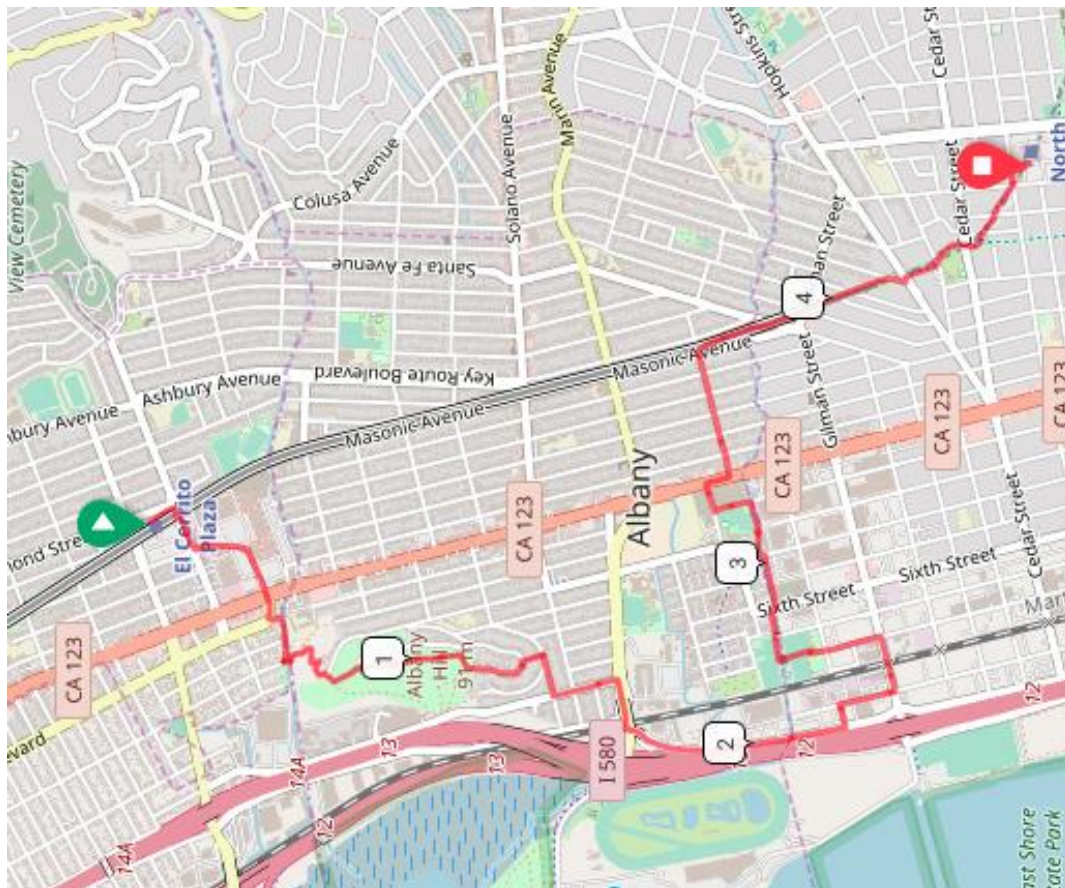
**Elevation Gain:** 365 feet

**Starting Point:** El Cerrito Plaza BART

**Ending Point:** North Berkeley BART

**Transportation:** BART and AC Transit Buses 25G and 52. Parking is available at BART, or on the residential streets nearby

**Overview:** Rising from the surrounding flats, Albany Hill looms to an impressive, or maybe not so impressive, 300 feet. This short walk explores its scenic trails and then crosses the flats to end at North Berkeley BART, with an option to loop back to the start.



Step It Up: An Adventurer's Guide to Forty Walks on the Paths, Trails, and Streets of Berkeley and Beyond© 2020 by Jacob Lehmann Duke and Zeke Gerwein. All rights reserved.

## Directions and pictures:

Begin by walking west on Fairmount from the El Cerrito Plaza BART station, and then cut southwest through the El Cerrito plaza, a chaotic conglomeration of shops, parking lots, and cars that does not start the walk off on an especially auspicious note. You should emerge from the mall at the traffic light where Carlson hits San Pablo (across the street from the Peet's). Head down Carlton, then make your first left on Adams Street and turn right where the street ends onto a lovely pathway that parallels Cerrito Creek. Cerrito Creek has been daylighted and restored in this section, creating a beautiful urban oasis that sets the tone for the rest of the walk through Albany. Upon reaching a playground, ford the creek (it is narrow and can easily be jumped across) and start south on a grassy, somewhat exposed trail with surrounding eucalyptus trees. Pretty soon, the trail forks; take the upper fork, which switchbacks through dense forest. In summer, the blackberry bushes overflow with sweet berries, practically bursting off the bush. The trail occasionally comes to a pocket view, and you will be surprised at how much you have already climbed. Below you the BART tracks bisect the Albany and Berkeley flats, and beyond them tower the ever-present East Bay Hills. You'll start to see large houses as you climb, and soon after you should emerge at the top of Jackson Street; near the large sign reading "END," the trail continues climbing through more grassy terrain. Eucalyptus trees are prevalent here. Stay left at the fork, and you'll find yourself at the dead-end of Taft Street. Cross,



and continue to follow the trail toward the summit of Albany Hill.

*Left: The bump that is Albany Hill, as seen from a distance*

Once you reach the summit, you can peer east through the vegetation at the panorama of the flats. West of you, I-80 is visible, with

the nearby Bay stretching west toward Marin. Follow the trail south from the summit, as it widens and descends gradually to a set of steps. Stay left at all forks, and the steps will come out on Taft. Stay right to curve onto Hillside Ave, then make a left a block later down Catherine Steps, which sport a nice view of the Bay. Catherine Steps ends at Washington Street. If you are looking for a shortcut here, take Washington east, turn left on Polk, right on Buchanan, left on Jackson, and left on Monroe, rejoining the main route at the corner of Tenth and Monroe (skip to the next paragraph for continuing directions). The main route, over a mile longer, turns west (right) on Washington instead, and then left on Pierce. A right turn on Buchanan and a left on the Eastshore Highway bring you to the Berkeley frontier (did you bring your passport?) and

across Codornices Creek. Follows Eastshore Highway to Harrison, your first substantial left turn, then stay right onto Second Street, which brings you to Gilman. Turn left to cross the railroad tracks, then make another left onto Fourth St. From here, you arrive at Harrison Park and Codornices Creek. Continue straight to cross back into Albany at the bridge, then turn right and follow a lovely paved bike trail along the north shore of the creek. The bike trail crosses back into Berkeley and passes by a restored stretch of creek. Here, where the Transfer Station and Target are thankfully absent, one can sit by the creek and absorb the scene, with insects skimming over the water, and small birds standing by the shore. You'll also pass by Urban Adamah, one of Berkeley's urban farms, recently moved to this locale from San Pablo and Parker. Soon you must depart from Codornices Creek, and, after crossing back into Albany, jog left at Eighth street and continue right to cut through University Park to Tenth Street. Make a left.

At Monroe, the alternate route from earlier rejoins the main route. Regardless of which direction you came from, head east up Monroe, then turn right at San Pablo and left on Dartmouth, reaching the Ohlone Greenway at Masonic after several blocks. To loop back to the start at El Cerrito BART, turn left here and follow the Greenway 1.4 miles back. If you're not looping, turn right onto the Ohlone Greenway, soon crossing Codornices Creek for a final time and reentering Berkeley.

*Right: Cedar Rose Park on a quiet morning*

After passing some wonderful blackberry patches, note an extensive mural detailing the history of Berkeley, entitled ELK TRACKS TO BART TRACKS. Extending from prehistoric to modern times, this mural shows

Berkeley's history progressing as you travel from its southern to northern end. The Greenway seems to end at Peralta, but turn right to where it restarts just across Hopkins. After a short stint past a couple basketball courts, the trail passes Cedar Rose Park. This park is not very exciting, but as you continue along the Ohlone Greenway, there is a bench situated in the shade of a small grove of trees, which makes for a nice stop. On weekends this park is bustling and it is fun to watch the multitude of people that turn up here. Continuing on the Ohlone Greenway, you'll cross Cedar and pass more basketball courts. Stay left where the trail splits, and follow it past a multitude of parking lots. Crossing Virginia, you will see North Berkeley BART on your left. It's just one stop on the train to ride back to your starting point.

