

FOOTHILLS PARK

NATURAL RESOURCES

Bounded by Portola Valley, Los Altos Hills, the Pearson-Arastradero Preserve and Los Trancos Open Space, the 1,400-acre Foothills Park is a nature lover's paradise. Fifteen miles of trails provide access to three distinct habitats: chaparral, oak woodland and grasslands.

Chaparral plant communities, found on many south-facing slopes and ridges in the park, are adapted to hot, dry conditions. Deep root systems and small, thick leaves positioned to reduce surface area exposed to the sun, are adaptations these plants have developed to help conserve moisture. Chamise is the dominant plant species, along with manzanita, ceanothus, and scrub oak.

The **Oak Woodland** community is represented by coast live oak, California buckeye, madrone, California laurel, and the ever-present poison oak.

California's summer-gold **Grasslands** are dominated by annual species that arrived here as seeds in the fur and hooves of livestock brought by early European settlers. These grasses have largely crowded out the native grasses that colored the hillsides gray-green in summer.

HISTORY

For at least 3,000 years, these hills were the hunting grounds and summer home of the native Ohlone people. During the dry season they left their permanent settlements along the bay shore for seasonal camps near upland creeks and streams.

Dr. and Mrs. Russel V. Lee, a founder of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic, bought the property in 1941 and built an A-frame barn and stable, now the Nature Interpretive Center. In 1958 he sold 1,194 acres to the City of Palo Alto for \$1,000 an acre, with the intention of preserving the land for open space. Foothills Park was opened to residents of Palo Alto in 1965.



Scarlet Pimpernel

POPULAR HIKES

Chamise Trail .75 mile • 30–40 minutes.

Scenic hike through open chaparral from Vista Hill to Boronda Lake, with views of Las Trampas Valley and Wildhorse Valley. Beautiful fall foliage. Side trail leads to the Arbolejo Overlook with views of Wildhorse Valley. Moderate; grassy slopes rise 225 ft. Packed dirt trail tread with no major obstacles. Appropriate for children.

Costanoan Trail .83 mile • 30–45 minutes.

Narrow path meanders through dense woodland. Strenuous; steep trail with switchbacks that, together with Fern Loop, rises 520 ft. in 1.5 miles. Trail tread is packed dirt. Not appropriate for children.

Coyote Trail 1.01 miles • 35–45 minutes.

Sunny, mildly sloping trail wanders through chaparral and oak woodland. Coyote are often glimpsed in this area. Side trail to the Madera Point overlook. Easy; moderate slope. Packed dirt trail tread. Appropriate for children.

Fern Loop Trail .57 mile • 20–30 minutes.

Loop trail climbs through a heavily wooded canyon past ferns and small seasonal waterfalls. Moderate slope. Trail tread is packed dirt. Appropriate for children.

Los Trancos Trail 7.39 miles • 3–4.5 hours.

This is the longest trail in the park. It has scenic views and crosses through several plant communities. Strenuous; steep and rugged terrain, rises 985 ft. Trail tread is packed dirt; obstacles include slide area on the back side. Not appropriate for young children.

Steep Hollow Trail .6 mile • 25 minutes.

This steep, oak-shaded trail connects to Sunrise and Los Trancos trails in Wildhorse Valley. Rare leatherwood and snowberry native plants grow near the trail. Strenuous; rises 425 ft. Trail is packed dirt through steep woodland, with many steps. Very strenuous for young children.

Sunrise Trail .32 mile • 10–20 minutes.

This short connecting trail provides scenic views of Wildhorse Valley and Boronda Lake. Connects Los Trancos and Steep Hollow trails. Easy; gentle slope, rising 125 ft. Trail tread is packed dirt; no major obstacles; some 3-inch rocks, loose gravel. Appropriate for children.

Toyon Trail .99 mile • 30–40 minutes.

Self-guided nature hike. This shady, woodland trail features numerous native trees and wildflowers. Printed nature guides are available at both ends of the trail. Easy; mild slopes. Packed dirt trail tread. Very appropriate for children.

Woodrat Trail .4 mile • 15–20 minutes.

This is a short connection between the bottom of the Boronda Lake dam and the Toyon trail, with moderate, wooded slopes. Look for woodrat nests, which look like large mounds of sticks and twigs. Easy; moderate slope rises 200 ft. Packed dirt trail tread. Appropriate for children.

FACILITIES & ACTIVITIES

■ Foothills Park Interpretive Center.

■ Towle Campground.
8 campsites open May 1 to October 31, call to reserve.

■ Picnic facilities and barbecues.

■ Fifteen miles of hiking trails, including the Toyon self-guided nature trail. No bikes on trails.

■ Bird watching.

■ Boating in non-motorized, hand-launched boats and canoes. Canoe rentals weekends and holidays May 1 to October 31.

■ Fishing in Boronda Lake, license required.

■ Grassy meadows near the Interpretive Center for relaxing and watching the deer.

■ Dogs permitted on leash on weekdays (except holidays).

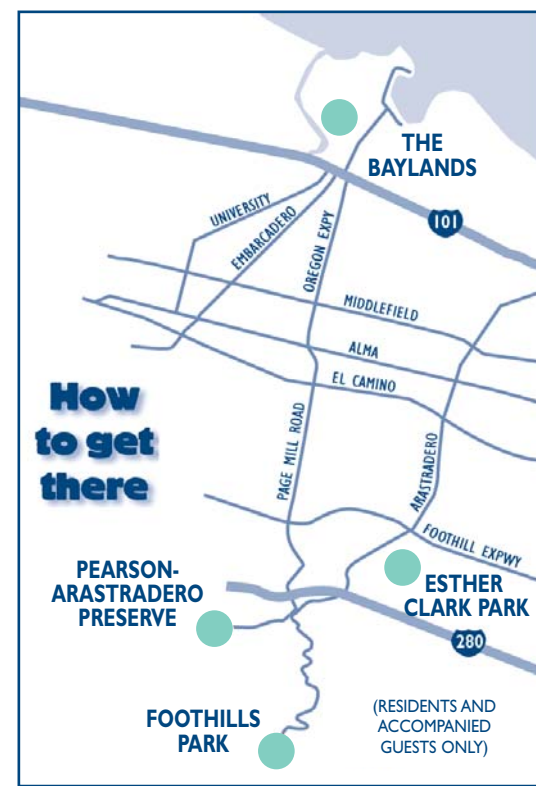
Foothills Park Hours

Open to Palo Alto residents and their accompanied guests (15 guests, 3 cars maximum). Non-residents are welcome to enter the park when through-hiking the Bay to Ridge Trail. Open 8 a.m. to sunset, every day.

The entrance gate is closed 30 minutes before park closing time, which is shown on signs at the preserve entrance. All vehicles are required to leave the parking lots before closing time.



Black-tailed Deer



Pearson-Arastradero Preserve, Baylands Nature Preserve, Esther Clark Park and Foothills Park include almost 4,000 acres maintained and managed by the City of Palo Alto as open space for recreation and wildlife habitat preservation.

Nature walks and programs on ecology and natural history are presented for all age groups and are offered throughout the year. A schedule of programs is available in the City's Enjoy! catalog or on the internet at www.cityofpaloalto.org/enjoy. Call 650-463-4900 for information, times, and reservations.

For preserve information, call 650-329-2423, email open.space@cityofpaloalto.org, or find us online: www.cityofpaloalto.org

Twitter: [@PAranger](https://twitter.com/PAranger)
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Palo Alto Open Space

City of Palo Alto
Community Services Department
1305 Middlefield Road
Palo Alto, CA 94301



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Red-tailed Hawk

Baylands Nature Preserve and Pearson-Arastradero Preserve. In addition to routes between the neighborhoods of Palo Alto and local parks or open space areas, this guide also features descriptions of many of the popular trails in Foothills Park.

Where to Start?

Palo Alto has been a leader in the development of innovative bike projects for over four decades. The basic grid of the City's bikeways system now exceeds 30 miles of bike lanes and 9 miles of off-road bike paths. The network has been enhanced by highly successful projects such as the Bryant Street Bicycle Boulevard, Adobe Creek Trail under Highway 101, and new bicycle bridges to adjacent communities.

ON THE TRAIL

Start your hike or ride slowly. Increase your pace after ten minutes. If you are too out of breath to speak, you are probably over-exerting yourself. Towards the end of your walk or ride, slow your pace to allow your pulse to return to its resting rate.

Wear comfortable and loose-fitting clothing. It is best to dress in several light layers so that you can shed or add clothing. Remember to wear a hat and sunscreen.

Walk with a buddy and let someone know where you are going and when you plan on returning. Take a cell phone for emergencies.

Don't walk or ride off-trail. Cutting across switchbacks erodes the hillside and destroys sensitive habitat.

Be able to recognize poison oak along foothill trails and paths. Avoid ticks or rattlesnakes by staying on trails and out of tall grasses and brush. Pay attention to special advisories for narrow paths or dangerous conditions.

Keep your parks and neighborhoods beautiful.

- Dogs can frighten wildlife and may destroy sensitive habitat. Always keep your dog on leash and be mindful of trails where dogs are restricted.
- Litter can contaminate waterways. Injure people and wildlife, and cause fire hazards. Besides, litter is ugly! Pack out your bottles, cans, garbage and dog waste.
- Please do not pick wildflowers, seed cones or fruit along the trails. Allowing flowers to finish their reproductive cycles will ensure there will be more on your next visit.
- Don't feed the animals! Feeding wildlife makes them dependent upon people for their food.

Make time in your schedule to walk or ride at least three times a week.

Physicians recommend 60 minutes of physical activity every day for school-age children.



Coyote

CONNECT WITH THE VAST OPEN SPACES AROUND PALO ALTO!

Take a hike, ride a bike, or jog from the neighborhoods of Palo Alto to the scenic trails, lakes and picnic areas of the baylands and foothills.

In addition to 29 neighborhood parks, Palo Alto has dedicated 4,000 acres of open space for recreation and conservation. From the shores of the Bay to high in the mountains, there are more than 40 miles of paths and trails to explore and enjoy. This map will help you plan safe and fun trips from town, along bike routes to connections with open space trails or larger regional trails.

POPULAR HIKES AND RIDES

Arastradero Creek Trail 1.44 miles.
Leads from Arastradero Lake towards Foothills Park. Riparian corridor, shaded by oaks and bay laurels. Steep terrain—rising 2 ft. in 10 ft. in places on the west end of the trail. Wide, compacted gravel surface; no obstacles.

Arastradero Lake .57 mile • 20 minutes one-way from the parking area.
Follow the path past the Gateway facility across Arastradero Road and then along the de Anza Trail to the Lake. Once a ranch stock pond, now a home for many species of fish, reptiles and birds. Quiet place for resting and nature watching. Mixed terrain including loose and compacted gravel and native soil. Generally flat, broad trail except one stretch that rises 40 ft. in 350 ft. No facilities.

Bowl Loop Trail .68 mile.
Seasonal access—posted closed during periods of heavy rain. Provides fun riding for mountain bikers of various skill levels. Hilly terrain through open grassland on narrow dirt trails. Trail leads through a dry stock pond and a small quarry. 400 ft. elevation rise from parking area to Loop.

Juan Bautista de Anza Historic Trail 1.28 miles • 30 minutes one-way.
This regional trail leads from the border of Los Altos Hills through the Preserve and back out to Alpine Road. Broad, multi-use trail travels past Arastradero Lake through mixed terrain including stands of wildflowers. Very steep in places— at the steepest place the trail rises 1.5 ft. in 10 ft. Mixed trail surfaces including natural soil, loose and compressed gravel and wood footbridges.

Meadowlark & Woodland Star Trails 2.45 miles.
Partial seasonal access—posted closed during periods of heavy rain. For those who want a long trek, the winding Meadowlark Trail branches from the de Anza Trail and rises 300 feet on natural soil tread through open grassland to Vista Point. Best valley views. Trail continues on wide, hilly compressed gravel trail to Woodland Star Trail. Woodland Star Trail loops back to the de Anza Trail through shady oak woodlands. Steep in areas. Some root and rock obstacles on natural soil trail tread. Favored by equestrians.

Redtail Loop Trail 1.50 miles • 40 minutes round-trip.
Leads from north edge of the parking lot up steep grassland trails. Views of Stanford and Palo Alto to the Bay. Hilly terrain, trails are very steep in places—at the steepest place the trail rises 1.5 ft. in 10 ft. Trail tread is natural soil with few obstacles.

THE BAYLANDS

More than a century ago, the Palo Alto Baylands salt marshes extended inland, approximately to the location of the Bayshore Freeway. The marshes were a valuable resource providing Native Americans and early city residents with fish, shellfish, waterfowl and plants for food, medicine, and construction materials.



Palo Alto's stewardship of the Baylands began in 1921 with the purchase of 40 acres. In the 1930s the yacht harbor clubhouse, a saltwater swimming pool (now the Duck Pond), and the lagoon were constructed.

Today, the Baylands covers 1940 acres. The preserve includes some of the last remaining salt marsh/mudflat habitats on the West Coast. It is home to the endangered California Clapper Rail and Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse.

Unlike other Bay marshes which have plants that grow in distinct zones, the Palo Alto marshes have a mixed plant distribution that includes pickleweed and cordgrass habitats that are interspersed between mudflats.

POPULAR HIKES AND RIDES

Adobe Creek Loop Trail 5.6 miles • 2-3 hours.
Bay views, bird life, converted landfill. Easy, flat terrain; trail mostly on bayside gravel levees and pavement.

Boardwalk Trail .2 mile (one way) • 15 minutes.
Best area to view California clapper rails. Easy, flat terrain; mixed terrain trail tread includes gravel levee and wood boardwalk.

Duck Pond Loop Trail .7 mile • 10-15 minutes.
Dogs prohibited. Easy, flat terrain; crushed oyster shell and decomposed granite trail tread; no obstacles.

Byxbee Park Hills 1.0 miles • 10-30 minutes.
Bay views, wildlife, wildflowers, landfill conversion process. Hilly terrain-trails are steep in places. Trail tread is decomposed granite and crushed oyster shell.

Marsh Front Trail 1.0 miles • 25-30 minutes.
Descriptive natural history panels. Easy, flat terrain; crushed oyster shell and decomposed granite trail tread; no obstacles.

San Francisquito Creek Trail 3.2 miles • 1-2 1/2 hours.
Easy, flat terrain, can be extremely muddy during rainy season. Mixed terrain trail tread includes decomposed granite, crushed oyster shell, paved sections.



Byxbee Park Hills

FACILITIES & ACTIVITIES

■ Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center
Hours: Tues-Fri 2 p.m.–5 p.m., Sat and Sun 1 p.m.–5 p.m.

■ Byxbee Park Hills (Art Park).

■ Wildlife observation platforms and benches.

■ Emily Renzel Wetlands.

■ Baylands Athletic Center (baseball and softball).

■ Picnic facilities and barbecues.

■ Walking and biking trails, bird watching, boating and sailboarding on non-motorized canoes, kayaks or small, hand-launched boats and sailboards.

■ Bird watching in the Baylands is excellent year-round. Wintertime extreme high tides bring bird watchers from around the world. In the spring and fall the Baylands are a prime stopover or destination for birds migrating along the Pacific flyway.

■ Please do not feed wildlife!

■ No hunting or collecting.

Bayland Preserve Hours

Open 8 a.m. to sunset, every day.

The entrance gate is closed 30 minutes before park closing time, which is shown on signs at the preserve entrance. All vehicles are required to leave the parking lots before closing time.



Bird Watching

Palo Alto Open Space

