

**Hike Statistics****Starting point:** Visitor center**Distance:** 4**Time:** Allow about 2-3 hours**Grade:** Easy to Moderate**Suggested age:** Tigers through Webelos**Suggested Season:** Fall, Spring, Summer.**Coyote Hills** Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont

This short hike will introduce your pack to the marsh and hills of Coyote Hills Regional Park and give you a chance to see a great Visitor Center.

EastBay Parks: Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont, CA

**Directions:**

Coyote Hills is at the west end of Patterson Ranch Road/ Commerce Drive in Fremont. From I-880, take Highway 84 west, exit at Paseo Padre Parkway and drive north. Turn left on Patterson Ranch Road (parking fee).

**Hike Description**

First Head into the marsh by crossing the park road at the south end of the Visitor Center parking lot. The kids will enjoy walking on the boardwalk. Stop at the wildlife viewing platforms to observe water fowl and possibly muskrats.

When the boardwalk ends, keep heading straight, gradually curving to the left, until you reach the D.U.S.T. Trail. Turn left on this trail, then right on Lizard Rock Trail. You will then join Bayview Trail, a paved bicycling trail which encircles the hills. Turn left on the Bayview Trail. When you reach Nike Trail, follow it up to a saddle. Once on the saddle, head south on the Hill Trail. After a short steep climb, you'll reach Red Hill Top, a hill formed of red chert. Watch out for poison oak among the rocks.

On a clear day, the views are great. You'll want to point out some of the sights - the salt evaporation ponds to the west, the marsh and boardwalk below you to the east (can you see where you were?), and some of the high peaks in the Bay Area. Some of these peaks are "Rim Rover" peaks which the boys can climb when they become Boy Scouts - Mission Peak just a little southeast, Mt. Tamalpais to the northwest (beyond San Francisco), and Mt. Diablo to the northeast.

Continue south, stopping at Glider Hill to watch people flying model gliders. Go slowly down the steep hill to Soaproot Trail and go left, passing above Dairy Glen, the group campsite. Turn left again, back to the Visitor Center (you'll be approaching the Visitor Center from behind.)

**Alternate Routes**

Longer or shorter loops can easily be made - consult the park map. The minimum requirement for this patch is to hike to Red Hill Top.

**Historical and Natural Features**

Coyote Hills got its start at the bottom of the ocean. Silica deposits on the ocean floor hardened into chert, the hard red rock you'll find on the high peaks in the park. Chert was highly valued by the Indians because it could be fashioned into spear points and other tools. The other

common rock found in the park is volcanic greenstone which also formed under the ocean. The greenstone is hardly recognizable as a volcanic rock here, however, having become crumbly and orange-colored due to extensive weathering. These sea-floor rocks became folded and contorted as the ocean floor drifted east and smashed into the North American continent. People often wonder by there is such a flat expanse of land between Coyote Hills and the surrounding hills. The block of land lying between the Hayward fault, at the base of the hills to the east, and the San Andreas Fault to the west, was at one time the same level as the hills of either side, but stretched and sunk during the course of millions of years of earthquakes. This lower-elevation land became flooded by bay water or filled by stream deposits (Fremont consists of sediment deposited by Alameda Creek), and only the high points of this folded, contorted landscape are still visible - Alcatraz, Angel Island, and Coyote Hills, to name a few. Coyote Hills is an important wildlife sanctuary. Its marshes are part of the Pacific Flyway, an aerial highway for migrating waterfowl and other birds. Deer are frequently seen here, as well as raccoons, foxes, muskrats, and skunks. Look for their tracks in muddy areas. The Ohlone settled here over 2000 years ago, leaving a substantial shellmound full of artifacts. More recently Coyote Hills has seen a variety of uses, including a duck hunting club and a NIKE missile base (you can get more details about the history at the Visitor Center). Salt evaporation ponds between the hills and the open bay are refilled in August, when the bay waters are saltiest. Over the course of five years, the water is pumped south from one pond to the next, on its way to becoming a finished product at the Cargill salt plant in Newark. The reddish color is due to algae and bacteria which can survive the salty conditions. The ponds attract a variety of birds.