

Hike Statistics**Starting point:** Parking lot**Distance:** 2.5**Time:** Allow about 2 hours**Grade:** Moderate Mostly gentle with steep grades near the peak.**Suggested age:** Bears through Webeles**Suggested Season:** All seasons except when recent Rain.**Wildcat Peak** Tilden Nature Study Area, Tilden Regional Park in Berkeley

A view of Mount Tamalpais rising from San Francisco Bay will be the reward for hiking to the top of Wildcat Peak in Tilden Park. This trail loops through eucalyptus and oak forests, up moderately steep hills, then back to one of the best nature study areas in the Bay Area.

EastBay Parks: Tilden Nature Study Area, Tilden Regional Park, CA**Hike Description**

Be sure to pick up a Tilden Nature Study map at the Environmental Education Center (EEC); it contains a legend of trail symbols to help you follow the right paths. The trail begins at the edge of the eucalyptus forest directly behind the EEC. Look for the Jewel Lake Trail sign and the Sylvan Trail marker.

This trail affords an excellent opportunity to compare different biomes. The first part of the hike is a gentle climb through pungent eucalyptus, abruptly yielding to oak woodland as you near Peak Trail. Then hikers climb moderately steep switchbacks through grassy hills (covered with wildflowers in spring) and chaparral slopes to Wildcat Peak at the top of the loop.

Here there is a spur(.10 mile) which leads to the top of Wildcat Peak high above the tops of the eucalyptus trees. You will find a circular stone observation plaza at the top. On a clear day hikers can view San Francisco Bay with Mt. Tamalpais rising above the bridges in the west, and Mt. Diablo looming above rural Contra Costa County to the east.

To descend and complete the loop, retrace your steps on the spur back to Peak Trail. At this point continue on towards Nimitz Way. About 30 yards before the paved road the trail makes a right turn and begins to weave through a lush canyon.

When you come to the fire road (Laurel Canyon Road) follow it to the right until you come to the marker for Laurel Canyon Trail. Going left, you'll follow switch backs and cross tiny streams in the shade of large oaks and laurels. The trail continues on the other side of the next fire road, but about 10 yards to the left.

The last leg of your trek takes you out of the oaks, back into the eucalyptus grove, across one more fire road and finally deposits you back in the meadow behind the EEC.

Alternate Routes

The trail described above is probably the most interesting and scenic route to the top of Wildcat Peak, and back again. See the Tilden Nature Study Area brochure and map for other ideas.

Historical and Natural Features

Tilden Nature Study Area has had a long history: first as a nature camp for Oakland school children in the 1930's, then as part of the East Bay Regional Park District. Since the 1960's Tilden has operated a wonderful nature study program with professional naturalists.

The Nature Study Area consists of many habitats: Eucalyptus and oak forests, grasslands and shrub areas.

Before it was a nature study area it was a cattle grazing area, and in the 1930's trees were planted in what was once open grasslands to preserve the watershed.