

Trail Trekkers Cub Scout Progressive Hike Award

Rodeo Lagoon

Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin

This is an excellent hike for those just beginning to take nature hikes with scouts. Rodeo Lagoon in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area is a natural lagoon formed by beach buildup. It generally catches fresh water that flows down the valley from ridges above, but waves occasionally wash over the beach during winter storms, forming brackish water.

Hike statistics

Distance: 1.5 mile round trip

Time: One hour

Grade: None

Suggested Age: Tigers to Webelos

[Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin, CA](#)

[AreaPark's Golden Gate National Recreation Area Page](#)

Hike Description

Start the Rodeo Lagoon Trail Loop at the picnic area. First cross the footbridge, heading north towards Bunker Road. Go left towards the ocean, following the path around the lagoon. Be careful; when the lagoon is full of hikers may find themselves close to road, so be sure young boys keep safely to the trail.

Be on the lookout for migratory birds to identify, flowering coastal plants, and of course, poison oak. When you reach the beach take some time to identify the multi-colored pebbles you'll find there (namely chert, greenstone, jasper, carnelian, agate, and more).

Before you continue on the Rodeo Lagoon Loop, and if you have a couple of extra hours and lots of energy, you can head south along the beach, take the trail up the bluff and explore the batteries and bunkers you'll find up there. This would add a mile and a half and some steep climbing to your hike by the time you return to the beach. If you don't have time save the bunkers for a separate trip.

Return to Rodeo Lagoon Loop and continue to follow the path back to the picnic area.

Historical and Natural Features

Rodeo Lagoon is located in the Marin Headlands. Part of the Golden Gate Recreation Area, and is rich in wildlife, flora and interesting geology; and not far away are reminders of both World Wars and the Cold War.

Rodeo Lagoon was formed naturally by the action of ocean waves building up a berm of sand and pebbles. Rain water and run-off collect in the lagoon where ocean water washes in to make the water brackish. The character of the lagoon changes with the tide and the time of year, so visitors enjoy returning often.

Migrating birds use the lagoon as one of their stops along their migratory routes. Brown pelicans are common in the summer, and many kinds of ducks (mergansers, canvas backs, buffleheads and others) rest there in the winter.

The pebbles on the beach are startlingly colorful. They include chert, greenstone, carnelian, jasper and other kinds of stones. At low tide the south end of the beach offers a tide pool for examining the surf habitat. Please remember not to collect specimens of any kind from the park.

Guided walks around the lagoon start at the visitor center; call for information. The California Marine Mammal Center is located behind the visitor center. Visitors can see rescued seals and sea lions recuperating from injury or illness. Up on the bluffs on the south end of Rodeo Beach are many historic relics of the World Wars: bunkers and batteries which once protected San Francisco Bay. Not far from Battery Alexander there is what remains of a NIKE missile base (call the park to find out about tours).

Administration

Golden Gate National Recreational Area (GGNRA)

Marin Headlands Headquarters

Building 1050

Fort Cronkhite, CA 94965

For information call (415)331-1540

Suggested Season:

Hikeable all year round