

Hikes for Vikes

A collection of the best hiking and walking adventures for personal growth

Asandy alcove nestled along Crissy Field's pedestrian path in San Francisco offers a breathtaking view of the Golden Gate Bridge and the breaking waves of the Bay. Stopping to take in the views, you might notice an inscription by naturalist and Sierra Club founder John Muir on the sanctuary's stone bench: "I only went out for a walk and I finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."

Paly's Mountaineering Club attracts students who share Muir's love of the outdoors. With weekly hiking trips for up to ten students, The Mountaineering Club sources great hikes that bring people together.

Like John Muir, Paly senior Finley Craig thoroughly enjoys hiking. A treasured ritual that she began at a young age, hiking gives Craig opportunities to explore local trails with a camelback filled with electrolyte-infused water and a good sandwich.

"I always loved hiking – even when I was a kid I never complained," Craig said. "They just get bigger and better now."

Nature provides a valuable place for introspection and a refuge from Silicon Valley's infamous always-on culture. To get outside of her academic life, Craig often finds herself hiking alone with her head-

phones on or listening to the nature around her.

"Especially this year and last year, hiking has been a great outlet to escape the stress of school [and help] me momentarily forget [about assignments and tests]," Craig said.

Craig is not alone in her love of local trails. Paly senior and Mountaineering Club member Morgan Greenlaw started hiking with her family during the pandemic, as an excuse to get out of the house, and she has continued to hike with friends since. For Greenlaw, hiking is a social activity.

"It's really nice to have the connection to Paly through a weekend activity, [hiking with the Mountaineering Club], that's not at school," Greenlaw said. "I need to rely on my parents [to drive] but sometimes they are not available, so this way I can still go on a hike, and it's just fun to meet new people."

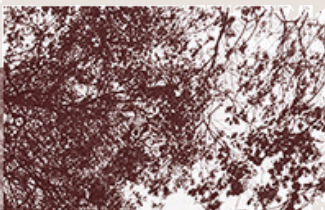
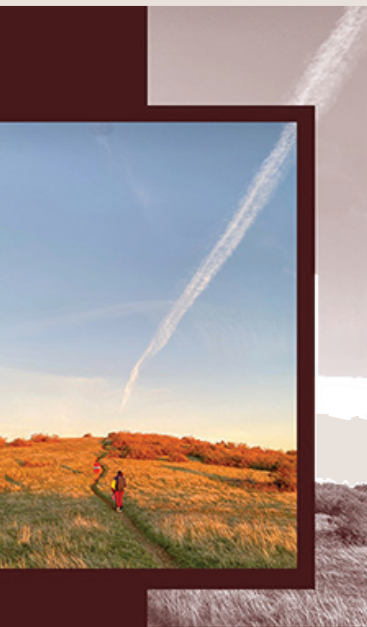
The Bay Area's many hidden treasures, from coastal walks with expansive vistas to steep wooded labyrinths with canopies stretching for miles, give Paly students a wide range of options to explore that are just a short drive away.

Windy Hill, the Stanford "Dish," and Palo Alto's Baylands are popular local destinations, but for many people, personal preferences factor heavily into what makes a great hike.

"I'd say my favorite place [to hike] is Huddart Park in Woodside because [with so many trees] it's not too open," Greenlaw said. "I don't like to be in the sun [and the] shade there is nice."

A hike that is satisfying can keep students coming back to specific trails again and again. Students like Craig appreciate a mix of inclines and the physical challenge of a steep climb followed by a return down to a base.

"I have this hike by Montara State beach that I like because of its variety, five miles uphill and then five miles downhill- it's perfect," Craig said.



Other people prioritize the social aspects of hiking with friends, while still others view it as an escape, valuing the scenery and freedom from devices and obligations.

Greenlaw embraces the verdant landscapes of the hikes she embarks on, and appreciates the motivation they give her to continue going.

“A good hike is the one that makes me feel good afterwards,” Greenlaw said. “I’m stressed out from school and college applications, but after [a hike] my mood always improves.”

Paly alum Will Glasson started his hiking journey by trekking along Palo Alto’s hills and has officially concluded a semester-long backpacking trip with the National Outdoor Leadership School in India.

Glasson has taken many things away from his experiences and continues to reflect on the trails he has trodden in the Bay Area and beyond.

“Dipsea is my favorite hike in the world, I love it,” Glasson said. “You start in Mill Valley, go up 600 stairs, and then go down for a little bit to reach a valley. From then on you are just hiking the coast all the way up to Stinson.”

Though many people appreciate music during their endeavors, Glasson absorbs the topography that surrounds him, without any distraction.

“I used to be an escapist about it, put headphones on and tune out for a while,” Glasson said. “I am now the opposite, I

aim to be completely in the present and take in everything around me.”

Not only does Glasson treasure the environments he absorbs, but also acknowledges the perspective he receives.

“Taking stuff back from what I’m doing especially when I hike is the most important part for me, that is something that I have learned in these past months,” Glasson said.

Leaving the road and taking the trails helps people find peace in the midst of chaos.

“It’s really cool to go out and explore nature, but it doesn’t actually matter unless you’re learning, growing, finding the value of it and reflecting at the end,” Glasson said.

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Finely Craig, 12

