

San Francisco Office
312 Sutter Street, Suite 510
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 543-6771

**BEAUTIFUL BERKELEY HILLS
A WALK THROUGH HISTORY * ALAMEDA COUNTY**

Overview

This fairly strenuous, 6-mile hike follows Strawberry Creek from downtown Berkeley through the University of California campus into Strawberry Canyon, then over the ridge into Claremont Canyon and back down to the Berkeley flatlands. This hike highlights the land use decisions that have created the greenbelt of open space within easy reach of Berkeley’s vibrant communities.

Location: Berkeley, CA

Hike Length & Time: 6 miles, Allow 3-5 hours depending on your uphill speed

Elevation Gain: 1000 ft

Rating: Challenging

Park Hours: No restrictions

Other Information: Dogs on leash, no bikes on fire trails, kid friendly

Getting There

Driving: From Hwy 80/580 take the University Ave. exit and drive east toward the hills for about 2 miles to Shattuck Avenue. Turn right onto Shattuck and in 2 blocks you’ll hit Center Street where the hike begins. Street parking can be hard to find, and is limited to 2 hours (except Sunday). You can pay to park in garages on Addison and Center streets (go right off Shattuck), or in a parking lot on Kittredge Street (go left off Shattuck).

Public Transit: This hike is easily accessible via AC Transit lines 40, 51, 64 and others, or via BART to the downtown Berkeley BART station. See www.bart.gov for train schedules or www.transitinfo.org for information on Alameda County Transit.

Trailhead: The trailhead for this hike is the rotunda above the main entrance to the downtown Berkeley BART station at the corner of Shattuck Avenue and Center Street.

Before You Get Started: A Brief History

Beginning at least 5,000 years ago, people inhabited a settlement near the mouth of Strawberry Creek, just west of present day 4th Street between University and Hearst avenues.

When the first Spanish explorers arrived in Berkeley on March 27, 1772, the Huichin people (part of the larger Ohlone linguistic and cultural group) inhabited the area. The Huichin resided in villages of small, conical shaped thatch houses in the North Berkeley hills and at the mouth of Strawberry Creek. They hunted rabbits, deer, elk and antelope; gathered shellfish from the mudflats and acorns from the trees; and caught steelhead, salmon, and trout in Berkeley's streams. Grizzly bears roamed the land, and mountain lions competed with humans for food.

Beginning in the 1780s, Spanish missionaries moved the Huichin across the bay to Mission Dolores in San Francisco. Small pox, measles and other diseases essentially destroyed the Huichin people, who had no immunity to the European diseases. Berkeley was apparently emptied of its native human population by the early 1800s.

Berkeley became "property" in 1820, when the Spanish government ruling Mexico granted 46,800 acres in the east bay to retiring soldier Luis Maria Peralta. After Mexican independence from Spain, Berkeley was part of Mexico until 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transferred it (along with the rest of California) from Mexico to the United States. The gold rush of 1849 brought many people to the Bay Area, and squatters soon settled on the Peralta land.

Modern Berkeley started to take shape in 1853, when Peralta's son Domingo sold most of what is now Berkeley to speculators. The first American community in Berkeley was Ocean View, initially a small commercial center at the mouth of Strawberry Creek on the site of the ancient Huichin village. Elsewhere in Berkeley settlers established farms and cattle ranches.

In 1860 the trustees of the College of California dedicated the site of their future home at the foot of the Berkeley hills, between the North and South forks of Strawberry Creek. The campus opened for classes in the fall of 1873 and the neighboring community soon started to grow. On April 1, 1878, the more liberal, working class Ocean

View merged with the more conservative, academic community near campus to form the City of Berkeley. Berkeley's population at that time was 2,000.

In the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake, many San Franciscans seeking "safer ground" moved to Berkeley and the population more than tripled from 13,000 in 1900, to 42,000 in 1910. An expansive light rail system developed that linked Berkeley's growing neighborhoods and established Berkeley as a bedroom community for Oakland and San Francisco. Growth had a price, however, as the wetlands along the bay were filled, housing developments replaced farms, and Berkeley's creeks were largely diverted underground.

By the 1940s, Berkeley had become part of the Bay Area's urban core, and its 1950 population of 115,000 is roughly equal to today's. Berkeley is now known the world over for its university and political activism, but the city is also a prime example of a diverse community composed of vibrant, livable neighborhoods with easy access to public transportation and open space.

Downtown

This hike begins at the Berkeley BART station at the intersection of Shattuck and Center streets. The BART station sits adjacent to Berkeley Square (the wedge-shaped block on Shattuck between Addison and Center), which was the site of the first railroad terminal in Berkeley, completed in 1876. The original steam trains that came up Shattuck from Oakland were replaced in the early 1900s by electric streetcars. Then, as now, commuting students exited trains on Shattuck and made their way up Center Street to campus.

Begin the hike by walking up Center Street toward campus. The stretch of Center between Shattuck and Oxford was redesigned in 1997 to widen the south sidewalk, creating a promenade that now features restaurants and cafes with sidewalk seating. For contrast, look across the street at the blank walls and parking lot, and you will quickly recognize how urban design can enhance a neighborhood's attractiveness.

There has been talk around town for decades about ripping up Center Street and "daylighting" Strawberry Creek along this stretch. The Friends of Strawberry Creek, <http://www.strawberrycreek.org>, is a community-based group that advocates daylighting and creek restoration and leads walking tours along Strawberry Creek and its forks.

Strawberry Creek

Cross over Oxford Street onto the UC campus and follow the path that bends to the right and crosses a small wooden bridge over Strawberry Creek. The North and South forks—the original boundaries of the campus—meet in the

Eucalyptus Grove to your left and flow underground into a culvert at Oxford Street. For roughly the next half mile you'll follow the South fork of the creek eastward and uphill through campus into Strawberry Canyon.

Strawberry Creek was once a healthy stream supporting an abundance of plant and animal life. That changed, however, in the late 1800s, when land clearing for cattle grazing in Strawberry Canyon increased runoff from the hills, causing severe erosion downstream. By 1900 Strawberry Creek became an all-purpose sewer system for the campus and neighboring community, and the creek's water quality was seriously degraded. Fish and other aquatic species virtually disappeared from the creek, and salmon, which had migrated up Strawberry Creek to spawn for thousands of years, were last seen on campus in the early 1930s.

In 1987, a faculty-staff "Creek Committee" undertook a restoration project to restore the ecological integrity of the creek. Project activities included re-routing and fixing sewer pipes, improving erosion control structures, and educating the campus community about pollution control measures. The result was an improvement in water quality, which facilitated the re-introduction and return of many native species, making this a prime example of an urban aquatic restoration project that could be repeated in other Bay Area towns.

Continue on from the bridge through the grove of coast live oaks. The towering Eucalyptus Grove on the left was planted in 1877 as a windbreak for the adjacent Cinder Track (now the site of the Life Sciences Addition). Continue across the next bridge you encounter and head straight up the path, passing the Football Players statue on your left and redwood trees on your right.

Where the path meets a road, cross the road and go over the creek on the wooden deck-bridge, then go left immediately after the bridge, continuing uphill until you emerge in front of Sather Gate. In 1873, when the university first opened for classes, students traveled up Telegraph Avenue to campus via horse-drawn railcar, and later, in steam trains and electric railcars. Sather Gate was built in 1911 as the main entrance to campus, and the stretch of Telegraph between Bancroft Avenue and Sather Gate was converted into Sproul Plaza in 1961. Sproul Plaza has been the site of many political demonstrations during the last forty years, perhaps most notably the 1964 Free Speech Movement.

Continue eastward uphill on the road and sidewalk that hug the right (south) bank of Strawberry Creek. After passing through a small redwood grove as the path bends to the left, you emerge into Faculty Glade. The open hillside to your right was reportedly once a camping ground of the Huichin people. Note the fantastic old buckeye tree on the left just before the Faculty Club. It is an amazing survivor with a huge, mostly hollow trunk and a single branch that functions as the new trunk. Continue straight along the path and cross further intersections, following Strawberry Creek as you go.

Follow the path as it heads behind a building known as the Faculty Club, and after crossing a small footbridge, turn right and cross a second bridge. You are now passing in front of Senior Hall; a log cabin built in 1906 from Mendocino County redwood trees. Turn left up the steps after the building and continue uphill. Cross the road and go up the first set of steps to the left of Earl F. Cheit Hall, then turn right and walk up the second set of steps to the top of the symbolic "dry creek" courtyard of the Haas School of Business. Cross through the courtyard, head to the left, and go up the third long set of stairs. At the top of the courtyard you'll see Memorial Stadium across the street to the right.

Where the stadium now sits, Strawberry Creek used to cascade down waterfalls toward campus. In part because of concerns about the destruction of the natural landscape and the loss of wildlife habitat, a community-based "Campus Protective Association" formed in 1923 to oppose the stadium's construction. This effort failed, however, and the mouth of the canyon was excavated and the creek diverted into an underground culvert. The stadium also straddles the Hayward Fault, which passes along the length of the Berkeley foothills.

Strawberry Canyon

From the business school, walk a few feet to the right down the street and use the crosswalk to approach the north end of the stadium. Walk to the far end of the parking lot and up the rustic staircase that lies between the fence on your right and oak trees on your left. When you reach the top of the stairs, go right on Stadium Rim Road to the stop sign, then cross over to the sidewalk that goes east up Centennial Drive into the canyon.

At the time of the arrival of the Spanish explorers, the Berkeley Hills including Strawberry Canyon were largely covered by perennial bunch grasses, with oak, bay and madrone trees confined to stream channels. After the 1850s, several dairy farms were located in Strawberry Canyon. The university acquired the entire canyon in 1909 and maintained a dairy farm where the playing fields on your right now stand; cattle grazed on the hillside near the mouth of the canyon until the 1930s.

In 1913, the university started planting thousands of eucalyptus, redwood, cypress and pine trees throughout the canyon to "beautify" the area and create habitats for scientific study. During subsequent decades, the university established the east, south and west parts of the canyon as recreational and ecological study areas. The north side of the canyon was first used for veterinary studies, but during World War II it supported a fast-growing community of scientific research buildings that evolved into the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and other institutions.

Walk up Centennial Drive, and where you see a sign for the Haas Clubhouse and Pools (past the parking lot), continue uphill on the gravel path next to the road (watch for joggers who frequent this narrow trail). To your right are the swimming pools and clubhouse of the Strawberry Canyon Recreation Area, created in 1959.

About a quarter-mile up the dirt path, you will see a parking lot. At this point, cross over the low wall separating the path from the road and walk across the small parking lot parallel with the guardrail. Walk down the wooden steps beneath the oak tree, then up the wooden steps on the other side and turn right onto the dirt fire trail, known as the Jordan Trail. This trail is popular with joggers, hikers, and dog-walkers; no bikes are allowed. As you walk up the fire trail you'll see a fence on your left, which is the boundary of the UC Botanical Garden.

The Jordan Trail brings you up the canyon past picturesque oak and bay trees (during the rainy season this trail is muddy, but not impassable). *About a third of a mile from the beginning of the trail you will come upon a patch of redwoods on the left where the fire trail takes a sharp right uphill turn (the third sharp right since you joined the Jordan trail). A small, barely noticeable wooden sign marks this as the Woodbridge Metcalf Grove, which was planted by students in 1926. Take the small trail on the right to enter the woods, then continue uphill to the top of the grove, where the trail levels off and leads you out of the redwoods to the right. Follow the trail along the hillside until the path gently curves to the left and deadends onto the upper part of the Jordan Trail.*

Go left on the Jordan Trail. You'll soon see the redwood grove below to your left. A quarter mile or so up the trail, just past the five-foot high black water tank hidden in the bushes on your right, take a right turn onto the fire trail that branches off from the main trail. It's the first major split that you come to after rejoining the Jordan Trail. A short but steep uphill climb brings you to the top of Panoramic Ridge and the East-West Trail.

Claremont Canyon

The East-West Trail marks the northern boundary of the 205-acre Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve, which is part of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD, <http://www.ebparks.org>).

East Bay residents concerned about the loss of open space created the park district in the midst of the Great Depression. The state legislature authorized the district in 1933, and a petition drive collected 14,000 signatures to place a park district funding measure on the November 1934 ballot. Voters in the district, which included the cities of Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Piedmont and San Leandro, approved the measure by a margin of 2 to 1. In 1936, the funds created by this measure enabled the park district to purchase and open its first parks: Wildcat Canyon, now Tilden; Roundtop, now Sibley; and Lake Temescal. The park district now protects 92,000 acres in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The park system, combined with lands held by the university and East Bay Municipal Utilities District, forms a greenbelt along Berkeley's eastern edge that complements the "bluebelt" along the bay.

At the top of the hill, turn right. As you walk down the trail towards the bay, look across the canyon at the housing development covering the adjacent hilltop. This side of Claremont Canyon was slated for similar development in the 1960s, but community-based "Friends of Claremont Canyon" helped block development plans. Through hard

work and determination, Friends of Claremont Canyon convinced the park district to purchase the land you now walk through and make it a park for all to enjoy.

Claremont Canyon has a rich history. The Pony Express rode down Claremont Canyon in 1860-61, carrying mail from Sacramento to Oakland and San Francisco. Later the first telegraph connecting San Francisco with the East Coast passed through the canyon.

The road through Claremont Canyon also served as a major thoroughfare for traffic traveling over the hills until the Claremont Tunnel opened in 1937.

Claremont Canyon was used for cattle grazing until the 1940s, and horses continued to graze the slopes until the 1970s. Since the grazing animals have departed, the canyon has been overtaken by brush, and non-native species including Eucalyptus trees are common in the canyon. The changing landscape has crowded out native species and created a fire danger. In October 2001, local residents formed the Claremont Canyon Conservancy (<http://ccconservancy.homestead.com/home.html>) to promote the conservation and restoration of the canyon, including restoring native plant life and improving public access in the park area.

Stay to the right at the first trail split, then follow the main trail to the left at the second split. A hundred yards down the trail you'll come to a wooden gate that hides a hilltop home. Go left down the paved road until you reach the metal gate and dirt trail on your left. Go down this trail and take a rest on the bench to soak in the beauty of the view before you.

The view from this spot symbolizes what Greenbelt Alliance is all about: creating livable communities within existing developed areas and protecting and preserving the open spaces that surround them. In the distance you can see Oakland, which is planning to bring thousands of housing units, including affordable housing, into the downtown area, as part of an urban revitalization effort. To the right of downtown, the Bay Bridge stretches out from the former wetlands of Emeryville, where a thriving Huichin village existed until the Spanish missionaries arrived.

To the right of the Bay Bridge, you can see the recently restored wetlands that mark the southern boundary of East Shore State Park, the new eight and a half mile long park stretching from Emeryville to Richmond. The park was created thanks to the perseverance and hard work of "Citizens for the East Shore State Park" (CESP), a coalition of local residents and organizations including Save the Bay, the Sierra Club, and the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The park has already become popular with walkers, bike riders and birdwatchers, and CESP is working to increase public access and usability of this bayside treasure.

Across the bay you can see San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Marin Headlands and Angel Island. The Marin Headlands and Angel Island were targeted for development in the 1950s and 60s, but local residents and organizations including "Citizens for Regional Recreation and Parks" and "People for Open Space" (the forerunners of Greenbelt Alliance) worked together to permanently protect them as open spaces for future generations to enjoy.

Proceed down the main firetrail, paying attention to your footing on the steep parts and avoiding smaller side trails. As you get closer to the bottom of the hill, stay right at the first fork you come upon. When you come to a hairpin turn, go left and head downhill, avoiding the major branch to the right. You'll see a gate at Stonehill Road just down the trail in front of you. Just before the gate, take the dirt trail that horseshoes around an oak tree, then proceed along the trail into UC's Clark Kerr Campus. This campus was carved out of ranchland and housed the California Schools for the Blind and Deaf until 1980. UC now operates this campus, which is primarily dormitory housing for students, although a senior housing facility occupies a small part of the campus.

Fifty yards up the trail, go left onto the first road you encounter. Passing sand volleyball courts on your left, walk down the road as it curves to the right and ends next to a charming little redwood grove. You will be at the intersection of Eastway Drive and a curving Sports Lane. Turn right and follow Sports Lane until you see Court Street. Turn left onto Court Street and follow it downhill. Look up for a nice view of the Golden Gate Bridge, then follow the road as it bends to the left and leads to Building 8, Maslach Hall. Take the steps to the right of the doors, and you'll emerge onto the Grand Court. Take a rest by the fountain, or continue toward the covered walkway to the right of the small clocktower. Take your first left after the building, then hang a right and go down the stairs and the sidewalk until you hit Warring Street.

At this point, you can pick a path back to downtown Berkeley. The downtown BART station is about a mile to the northwest. *You might want to go right on Warring and walk one block to Dwight Street, then go left and walk until you hit Telegraph Avenue about six blocks later. Go right on Telegraph and walk four blocks up to the entrance of campus at Bancroft Ave. As you walk along, reflect on the value of having this vibrant neighborhood so close to the protected greenbelt. Go left on Bancroft down three blocks to the edge of campus at Fulton Street. Cross over to the other side of Fulton and go right. Walk two blocks until you hit Allston Way, then go left on Allston.*

Pause for a moment at the GAIA Cultural Center at 2116 Allston. This is an innovative infill development that has 91 rental apartments (20 percent of them designated "affordable") and a creative triple-stacked parking system that takes cars for an elevator ride to their parking place. The placement of housing near shopping, schools, transportation and job centers is one way smart growth can relieve pressure to develop in greenbelt areas while at the same time creating livable communities.

Keep going down Allston to Shattuck, and you are back where you started. As you head home by train, bus, bike, car or on foot, think about how land use decisions have created livable communities next to open space, and reflect upon how you can help replicate this model in your community.