

Loop Hikes on Mt. Tamalpais From Rock Spring

The following directions are minimal and should not be attempted without a map unless you are familiar with the trails. The time given for each hike is average. Strong hikers will complete the route in less time. Over-the-ankle hiking boots are advised.



Acorn
Woodpecker

Distance: 2.0 miles
Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes
Elevation Change: 500'
Route: Mtn Theater Fire Trail, Old Mine, Old Stage Road,
Easy Grade to Mtn Theater, short connector to Rock Spring

Cross **Ridgecrest Blvd.** and start up **Mtn Theater Fire Trail** (at white gate) which climbs for a short distance and joins **Old Mine Trail**. As you progress down the trail, note the tremendous views. The trail enters a mixed forest for the last half of this leg. Take a left up the paved **Old Stage Road** and watch for a small rise on your left signed **Easy Grade Trail**. It is a moderate climb of nearly 500 feet to the **Mountain Theater**. A short rest here to view this beautiful facility will be well worth your time. Climb to the top of the theater on the left (west) side and turn right down the hard surfaced road. Cross **Ridgecrest Blvd.** and follow the unsigned connector trail back to **Rock Spring**.

Distance: 3.0 miles
Time: 2 hours
Elevation Change: 500'
Route: Cataract, Simmons, Mickey O'Brien, Cataract

Walk down the **Cataract Trail** and shortly turn right on the **Benstein Trail**. After about 200 yards, turn left on the signed **Simmons Trail**. This trail begins in the open, enters a wooded area and then crosses a wooden bridge. After a short climb, the trail enters another open area followed by a moderately steep climb in rocky serpentine changing to wooded again at the crest. Continue on the trail going left at an unmarked fork to **Barth's Retreat** and follow the well-marked **Mickey O'Brien Trail** to your left. Here you will descend in a heavily wooded area following a stream on your right. The trail levels when you reach **Cataract Trail**. Turn left to return to **Rock Spring** or for a delightful side trip, turn right and go to the **Laurel Dell** picnic area. Walk through the picnic area and down the trail for a short distance and you will see **Cataract Creek** as it tumbles down to **Alpine Lake**; a spectacular sight during the winter and spring. Retrace your steps up **Cataract** to **Rock Spring**.



Prepared by the **Friends of Mt Tam**,
support organization for Mt. Tamalpais State Park
Check for weekly hikes on Friendsofmttam.org



Distance: 4.6 miles
Time: 2-1/2 – 3 Hours
Elevation Change: 600'
Route: Connector to Mountain Theater, Rock Spring, Nora, Matt Davis, Old Mine

Take the connector trail to the north of the trees at **Rock Spring** and cross **Ridgecrest Blvd.** to the **Mountain Theater** entrance. Follow along the upper tier of seats to join the **Rock Spring Trail**. You will have excellent views to the south along much of this route. At **West Point Inn**, relax for a few minutes before continuing on the **Nora Trail** which you will join in the middle of the lower picnic area. Turn right at the signed **Matt Davis Trail**. There are several good view areas on this leg. When you reach **Bootjack** picnic and parking area, follow the trail above or below the old restrooms. The trail joins the paved **Old Stage Road** shortly before reaching the **Pantoll Ranger Station**. Turn right on the road and then left up the signed **Old Mine Trail**. The trail climbs through mixed woodland before it opens up for spectacular views to the south and west. You will join the **Mtn Theater Fire Trail** for the final .10 mile to **Rock Spring**.

Distance: 6.0 miles
Time: 3-4 hours
Elevation Change: 500'
Route: Mtn Theater Fire Trail, Old Mine, Matt Davis, Coastal, Willow Camp Fire Road or Trail, Laurel Dell Fire Road, Cataract

Cross **Ridgecrest Blvd.** and start up **Mtn Theater Fire Trail** (by white gate) which shortly joins **Old Mine Trail**. Initially, you will be walking in an open area while climbing. As you start down you will enjoy spectacular views in all directions. The lower half of this trail is mixed woodland. Turn right at the paved **Old Stage Road** and right again on the **Matt Davis Trail**. Cross the paved highway near the large **Mount Tamalpais State Park** sign and follow the **Matt Davis Trail**. You will be hiking initially in a woodland area changing to grasslands after about 1 mile. In less than another mile you will bear right at the signed **Coastal Trail**. For the next 2 plus miles you will be in open hillside with great views of **Stinson Beach, Bolinas** and **Point Reyes**. Turn right at the **Willow Camp Fire Road** and follow the narrow parallel trail to **Ridgecrest Blvd.** Cross the paved road and head for the iron gate to join the **Laurel Dell Fire Road**. At a sharp left turn of the road you will see the **Cataract Creek** ahead of you. Take the unsigned trail on your right and shortly, after crossing the bridge; turn right on the **Cataract Trail**. You will be treated to the sight of lush ferns and to the sounds of running water most of the way back to **Rock Spring**. To lengthen this hike by 1-2 miles turn left on the **Cataract Trail** and go through the **Laurel Dell** picnic area continuing on the **Cataract Trail** to a lovely waterfall especially in winter and early spring. Then reverse direction to return to **Rock Spring** on the **Cataract Trail**.
