

ARTICLES & NEWS CLIPS

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Five ways to celebrate surviving another pandemic year

by Ugur Dursun, Bay City News Foundation December 29, 2021

When ABBA sang “the history book on the shelf is always repeating itself,” I doubt they imagined we would all be scrambling to make socially distanced New Year’s Eve plans for the second year in a row.

Despite the wide availability of the vaccines, 2021 did not bring the end of the coronavirus pandemic like many hoped this time last year.

With breakthrough cases surging nationwide and indoor celebrations seeming likely to come to a halt, here are five entertaining activities that can help you ring in the new year with your loved ones while keeping some of your coronavirus concerns at bay.

Walnut Creek: ‘The Last Hike of the Year’



The East Bay Regional Park District invites locals to take a final hike of 2021 at Diablo Foothills Regional Park. (Photo courtesy Michael Short/East Bay Regional Park District)

If you would like to start New Year’s Eve day off with some fresh air and physical activity, East Bay Regional Park District offers a “last hike” at the Diablo Foothills Regional Park in Walnut Creek. You can register

to join a group led by park staff at 10:30 in the morning or plan a visit yourself between 7:30 a.m.-7 p.m. to admire the scenery and catch breathtaking panoramas of the sunrise or the sunset at your own pace. Find more information about directions, parking, accessibility and RSVP for the guided hike at <https://www.ebparks.org/parks/diablo-foothills#events>.



HAYWARD WINS THIRD A-LIST RECOGNITION AS GLOBAL LEADER AMONG CITIES IN CLIMATE PROTECTION

December 27, 2021

HAYWARD, Calif., Dec. 27, 2021— Hayward has been recognized as one of 95 cities worldwide and among five in the San Francisco Bay Area on the 2021 CDP Cities A List for its ambition, leadership, and transparency on climate action.

The CDP [A-List designation](#) was announced last month and it is the third time in four years that Hayward has earned the honor.

The designation recognizes the City for moving Hayward electricity customers to entirely carbon-free sources of power including all municipal accounts; for municipal investment in on-site renewable energy generation and recycled water infrastructure; for commitment to developing zero-net-energy facilities including Hayward's new library; for new building standards to phase out reliance on natural gas; and the adoption of the Hayward Regional Shoreline Adaptation Master Plan in 2021.

Other Bay Area cities that made the A-List for 2021 were San Francisco, San Jose, Piedmont, and Fremont.

[CDP](#), formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project, is a not-for-profit charity based in the United Kingdom that runs a global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states, and regions to manage their environmental impacts.

Every year, more than 600 cities report their climate data through CDP's environmental disclosure platform and in so doing demonstrate commitment, transparency, and ambition in climate protection. All disclosed data is made available free of charge on CDP's [Open Data Platform](#).

In 2018, CDP began to score cities from A to D based on their disclosures for how effectively they are managing, measuring, and working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and for adapting to climate risks. That year, Hayward was one of just seven percent of cities who reported their environmental data through CDP to receive a grade of A. Since then, Hayward has received two more A-List designations.

Wetland restoration project planned in Knightsen

Tony Kukulich, Correspondent

Dec 26, 2021 Updated Dec 26, 2021



Graphic provided by East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy

The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy has over the last 14 years purchased 41 land parcels totaling nearly 14,000 acres in East County for the purpose of protecting habitat and wildlife, and earlier this month area residents got a chance to tour one of the agency's sites intended for wetland restoration.

The 645-acre parcel – located in Knightsen east of the Byron Highway and north of Eagle Lane – was

purchased in 2016 by the conservancy (ECCCHC) and the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). The project as it is currently envisioned will restore wetland habitat for the benefit of a variety of target species including red-legged frogs, fairy shrimp, tricolored blackbirds and burrowing owls. The project will also provide improved stormwater drainage for the area and improve the quality of water draining into the Delta.

According to Abigail Fateman, ECCCHC director of restoration, adaptive management and grants, stormwater drains onto the property and collects there because there is no outlet for it. The property's prior owner pumped the collected water into nearby No Name Slough.

"(The project) provides an opportunity for us to find a more natural mechanism for doing this," Fateman said. "That is restoring wetlands and having drainage flow naturally across the landscape, and while doing that, provide (wildlife) habitat."

Purchased from the Nunn family for \$6.1 million, the ECCCHC provided about 90% of the cost using funds obtained through state and federal land conservation grants. The EBRPD provided the remaining 10%. The Nunn family leased the property back after the sale and continued to irrigate and farm the land, which is classified as low-grade agricultural land. Their lease expires at the end of the year and was not renewed, though Fateman said they had the opportunity to do so. With the expiration of the lease, the land will transition from irrigated agricultural use to grazing.

Because the plot is already relatively flat and above sea level, the construction effort required is relatively small as wetland restoration projects go.

"I don't envision this as a two-year nonstop project at all," Fateman explained. "My hope would be that we can do the work in one construction season, possibly two, which would be from July through October. All of that is still being worked out. We don't have a final design. We don't have final plans. We're still working through that process."

While the project initially received support from the Knightsen Town Community Services District (KTCSD), the district later withdrew its endorsement of the project. In an interview, Trish Bello-Kunkel, KTCSD chairperson, cited concerns that it could increase the risk of flooding on properties adjacent to the project, potentially degrading wells and septic systems. She added that farmers are concerned that an increased presence of threatened or endangered wildlife species in the area could interfere with established farming operations.

In a letter dated Feb. 13, 2020, Bello-Kunkel wrote to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors advising them of the district's revised position and asking the supervisors to also withdraw their support, a move the supervisors did not take.

"We do not believe the proposed project benefits the Knightsen community with regard to flood control and drainage," wrote Bello-Kunkel. "In fact, the proposed project may increase the flood hazard for many Knightsen residents. Therefore, any assertion that the proposed project provides multi-benefits with regard to drainage and flood control is highly questionable at best."

A project timeline presented at a Nov. 9 community meeting projected the project's final design and permitting would be complete in 2023 and that construction would start in 2025, though Fateman stressed that those dates are not yet firm. In the meantime, the EBRPD continues to manage the property.

"As the project is implemented by the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy, we'll continue to be responsible for operations, public safety and that sort of stuff," said Brian Holt with the EBRPD. "Plans for public access aren't part of this project right now. Our role right now is that we're the landowner and we'll provide on-the-ground operation of the property."

Fateman expects that there will be four more public meetings in 2022 to continue to gather community input on the project. The dates for those meetings have not yet been determined.

"Anytime there is an opportunity to restore and protect local habitat for future generations, it is a great thing," said Joel Bryant, mayor of the City of Brentwood and vice chair of the ECCCHC Governing Board. "This project does just that. It will provide much needed, permanent habitat, for several of our indigenous protected and endangered species, as well as bringing a piece of ancient wetlands back to its original, natural condition."

For more information, visit: Contra Costa County Conservation and Development at https://bit.ly/thepress_knightsenwetland; the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy at www.cocohcp.org and the Knightsen Town Community Services District at https://bit.ly/thepress_KTCSD.



City Of Albany: Update On Albany Hill Landscape

The City has partnered with UC Berkeley, the US Forest Service, independent arborists, and East Bay Regional Park District to objectively analyze the condition of Albany Hill and to get preliminary recommendations for action. At the October 18th Albany City Council meeting, Albany's Public Works Department presented the results of several studies looking into the decline of the trees on Albany Hill. These studies include an independent arborist's report, as well as a scientific study of the pathogenic decay that has set in as a result of drought conditions.

Press Release Desk, News Partner

Posted Sat, Dec 18, 2021 at 7:40 am PT

[Press release from the City of Albany:](#)

12/17/2021 10:15 AM

Albany Hill is a precious natural resource at the heart of Albany, both as a recreational area for residents to enjoy, and as an essential part of our City's ecological landscape. As a result of statewide drought and climate change, we are seeing that many of the eucalyptus trees on Albany Hill are dead and dying. This poses a long-term serious risk to residents and structures in the area. This issue is not unique to Albany Hill, as many agencies have found similar conditions in eucalyptus groves all over the region and state. Albany staff, Parks Recreation & Open Space Commission, and City Council are working together to plan a solution for hazard mitigation that also protects our Monarch and other wildlife habitat and preserves Albany Hill as a place for everyone to safely enjoy.

The City has partnered with UC Berkeley, the US Forest Service, independent arborists, and East Bay Regional Park District to objectively analyze the condition of Albany Hill and to get preliminary recommendations for action. At the October 18th Albany City Council meeting, Albany's Public Works Department presented the results of several studies looking into the decline of the trees on Albany Hill. These studies include an independent arborist's report, as well as a scientific study of the pathogenic decay that has set in as a result of drought conditions.

At that meeting, the City Council received the presentation and took action to establish a Capital Improvement Project to address the dead and declining trees while also protecting sensitive Monarch habitat. Staff are currently in the process of engaging an experienced consultant to develop a plan that would incorporate both careful tree removal and deliberate, thoughtful site restoration.

Once drafted, this plan will be presented at the City's Parks Recreation and Open Space Commission for public comments and City Council for approval.

The plan will also be subject to CEQA review. The City anticipates this planning process taking 1-2 years to complete, which is required before on-the-ground work can begin. The City is investigating grants to fund the project long-term.

In the meantime, staff from Public Works and the Fire Department are continuing to conduct ongoing analyses on fire load, tree condition and Monarch Habitat, as well as monitoring the Hill for any removal issues that become more urgent while a plan is developed. Additionally, as requested by Friends of Albany Hill, the City is working on enhancements to the Oak Woodland Trail, including installing hand rails on steeper sections of trail. The trail work is estimated to be completed in spring or summer after the rainy season.

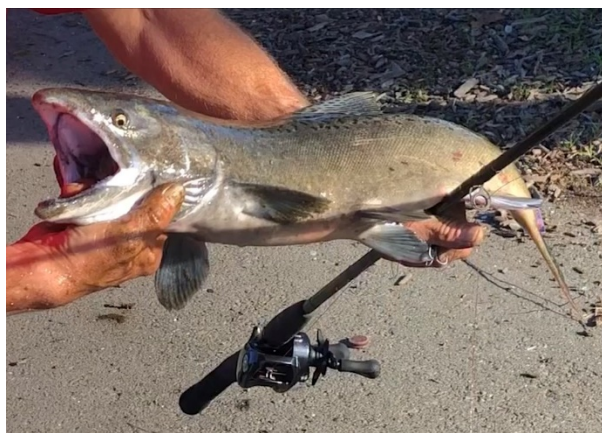
The City would like to thank you for your patience and will continue to provide updates throughout this process. Please contact Albany Public Works Department at 1(510) 524-9543 with any urgent concerns.

This press release was produced by [the City of Albany](#). The views expressed here are the author's own.

Salmon in Lake Merritt? More rainfall is causing some fish to wander into Oakland's lagoon

The fish are returning to East Bay streams for the first time in decades, and some are winding up in the unlikeliest of places.

by **Ricky Rodas** December 16, 2021



A Chinook salmon recently caught in the channel that connects Lake Merritt to the Bay. There have been multiple salmon sightings in the lake following recent rains. Credit: Bob Noonan

On December 4, Oakland resident Peggy Rehm went out to the south shore of Lake Merritt as she normally does on Saturdays to admire the birds and look

for other wildlife that sometimes comes in through the channel connecting the lake to the bay. “I’m a huge fan of Lake Merritt and her critters,” Rehm said. “I often see bat rays, stripers, and I’m always looking for birds.”

It proved to be a memorable day for Rehm, who struck up a conversation with a man who was fishing recreationally nearby, on the bridge by the Laney College football field. The man told Rehm to look down at the water, and she was shocked by what she saw: several Chinook salmon swimming in the channel. “He was very excited by the salmon coming through,” said Rehm. “He said he had caught three earlier in the week, and then he pointed them out to me.”

Chinook salmon, also known as king salmon, [have been spotted in East Bay rivers and streams](#) since late fall. According to Joe Sullivan, who manages the fisheries program for the East Bay Regional Park District, salmon have been showing up in the hundreds, something that hasn’t happened for two decades in part due to drought conditions throughout the region.

“It makes me super excited and I think it shows the resiliency of this species,” Sullivan said, who counts the Chinook salmon as one of his favorite fish. “They’re definitely in the top ten.”

Chinook salmon live in the Pacific Ocean but breed in freshwater rivers and streams. Shortly after giving birth, the salmon die and either become nutrients for nearby plants or a tasty meal for birds, raccoons, bears, and other wildlife.

The resurgence of salmon in Oakland and other parts of the East Bay is due to heavy seasonal rainfall in the Bay Area, said George Neillands, a senior environmental sciences supervisor for California’s Department of Fish and Wildlife. “In a year like this, where we got rain from that big October storm, we have lots of attraction flows from all the streams around the bay,” Neillands said, referring to the influx of freshwater that creates ideal breeding conditions for salmon. “So these fish fall straight into these streams looking for a place to spawn.”

Apparently, some are now looking in Lake Merritt, which isn’t unheard of, but highly unusual.



A dead chinook salmon spotted in Lake Merritt. Credit: Peggy Rehm

“They come in when there’s a big influx of freshwater from the bay, which would be through the Lake Merritt channel,” explained Katie Noonan, co-chair of Rotary Nature Center Friends, a citizen’s group advocating for the Rotary Nature Center in Lakeside Park that works to protect Lake Merritt wildlife. Noonan noted that a number of the salmon spotted in the lake have died because they couldn’t find their way out and back to a natural breeding ground.

Salmon becoming lost or trapped in an area before they can find a spawning ground is common in California for a couple of reasons, said Sullivan. Salmon routes are often blocked by dams, which many can’t get past.

“That’s why we typically don’t see as many salmon in streams as we did before we started putting up all these barriers,” Sullivan said.

Sometimes this can be helped by fish ladders, constructs that allow fish to easily pass over dams to the other side. But “it’s expensive to build a fish ladder,” said Sullivan. “It’s millions of dollars. It’s not impossible to do, we just need to convince the right people that they need to provide access for these fish to get to their original spawning grounds.”



A chinook salmon attempting to cross a concrete barricade in Alameda Creek so it can reach its spawning grounds. Credit: Dan Sarka

Drought conditions are also to blame, said Neillands. Since 2014, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has been trucking salmon to the Bay Delta to “improve their survival and for harvesting and commercial reasons,” Neillands said. However, the trucking process doesn’t allow the salmon [to remember the route](#) back to their native streams.

“So when they return to the bay, a certain number of them can’t figure out where to go,” Neillands said. “Many do, but it increases the number of stray fish.”

Warming temperatures have also caused salmon populations to drop at [an alarming rate](#), even leading some commercial salmon fishers in the Bay Area to [quit the business](#). Chinook salmon in California are not designated as endangered, but they are [threatened and have protections](#) under the Endangered Species Act that make fishing them for consumption an illegal practice. “They’re a huge commercial resource,” Sullivan said, “so it’s to protect the species and make sure they’re sustainable.”

The success of this season’s salmon run will be reliant on a continuous amount of rainfall in the coming weeks, but Sullivan is hopeful that more of the salmon will be able to make it to the streams they were born in and usher in a new generation.

“Kids are getting excited about it and I’ve had schools contact me that want to learn more [about the salmon],” Sullivan said about recent sightings in East Bay waterways. “The amount of buzz that these salmon have generated in the community is even more reason to try and get them back to their streams.”

Meanwhile at Lake Merritt, Noonan wants to make it clear to visitors that it's [illegal to fish for Chinook salmon](#) without a state fishing license and salmon card, and only someone with a state scientific collector's permit can collect them after they die.

"Let's just enjoy their visit," Noonan said.

EAST BAY TIMES

Walnut Creek: Gasoline spill from cracked pipeline leads to \$2.5 million fine

Kinder Morgan previously paid \$15M for 2004 pipeline burst that killed five people

By [SHOMIK MUKHERJEE](#) | smukherjee@bayareanewsgroup.com |

PUBLISHED: December 16, 2021 at 6:12 p.m. | UPDATED: December 18, 2021 at 6:50 a.m.



WALNUT CREEK, CALIF. – DEC. 16: California Attorney General Rob Bonta speaks at a podium concerning the sentencing of Kinder Morgan in Contra Costa Superior Court while standing near the Walnut Creek Canal in Walnut Creek, Calif., on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. In November 2020 a cracked pipe discharged over 63,000 gallons of gasoline into a waterway that flowed into the Walnut Creek Canal. Kinder Morgan Energy Partners was sentenced to pay a

total of \$2.5 million in fines, penalties and assessments for cleanup, restitution and investigative costs and placed on probation for 18 months. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group)

WALNUT CREEK — One year after a ruptured oil pipeline [leaked large amounts of gasoline into a local water channel](#), the company that owns the pipeline was fined \$2.5 million and given 18 months probation, California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced Thursday.

SFPP, a subsidiary of energy giant Kinder Morgan, had pleaded no contest in Contra Costa County Superior Court to two criminal misdemeanor counts of failing to notify state officials about the spill, which resulted in 63,000 gallons of gasoline seeping underneath the rocks and soil of a drainage canal.

The pipeline, which runs from Concord to San Jose, cracked under pressure from surrounding tree roots beneath the Iron Horse Trail footbridge south of Ygnacio Valley Road, near Civic Park in Walnut Creek.

Bonta made the announcement near the site where the pipeline cracked, saying Kinder Morgan needed a “wake-up call” for being environmentally reckless. In addition to having to pay the fine, company officials were ordered to follow stricter guidelines for notifying state officials about potential spills.

“Today’s sentencing should serve as a reminder to corporate polluters everywhere: If you endanger our communities and environment by failing to follow the law, you will be held accountable,” Bonta said. “When corporations pollute our waterways and endanger our health, we all pay the price.”



WALNUT CREEK, CALIF. – DEC. 16: California Attorney General Rob Bonta speaks at a podium concerning the sentencing of Kinder Morgan in Contra Costa Superior Court while standing near the Walnut Creek Canal in Walnut Creek, Calif., on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. In November 2020 a cracked pipe discharged over 63,000 gallons of gasoline into a waterway that flowed into the Walnut Creek Canal. Kinder Morgan Energy Partners was sentenced to pay a total of \$2.5 million in

finances, penalties and assessments for cleanup, restitution and investigative costs and placed on probation for 18 months. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group)

Houston-based Kinder Morgan, which operates 85,000 miles of oil pipelines across the country, has previously caused environmental damage in Walnut Creek, with deadly consequences.

In 2007, it [pleaded no contest to six felonies and agreed to pay \\$15 million](#) after five people were killed and others injured three years earlier in a high-pressure natural gas pipeline explosion near South Broadway.

According to its website, Kinder Morgan expects to make \$1.7 billion by the end of this year.

In a statement from Kinder Morgan, SFPP denied any illegal wrongdoing and said it worked closely with first responders, local officials and residents who live nearby to address the spill as soon as the company became aware of it.

“We provided a thorough and robust response, and we are proud of the Kinder Morgan personnel who worked around the clock for months to take care of the community impacted by this unfortunate event,” the company stated.

The company said late last year that it shut down segments of the pipeline after noticing a pressure drop. It wasn’t until 12 days later that a worker saw and smelled traces of gasoline in the canal water.



WALNUT CREEK, CALIF. – DEC. 16: Walnut Creek resident Peggy Dodds points at California Deputy Attorney General Brett J. Morris who was speaking at a podium concerning the sentencing of Kinder Morgan in Contra Costa Superior Court while standing near the Walnut Creek Canal in Walnut Creek, Calif., on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. Dodds came to the press conference and was furious about the way the spill was handled by authorities. In

November 2020 a cracked pipe discharged

over 63,000 gallons of gasoline into a waterway that flowed into the Walnut Creek Canal. Kinder Morgan Energy Partners was sentenced to pay a total of \$2.5 million in fines, penalties and assessments for cleanup, restitution and investigative costs and placed on probation for 18 months. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group)

Two residents who attended Thursday's press conference were not pleased with Bonta's address, saying that oil had seeped into their backyards after the spill and remediation crews had kept them from sleeping by working noisily into the night.

They accused the officials present — including Bonta, a state Fish and Wildlife officer and Walnut Creek Councilman Kevin Wilk — of not doing enough to keep them informed about the spill and its cleanup.

"Don't tell us you did everything you could... because I'm here to say, you did not send one piece of information to my home," said Peggy Dodds, who lives right by the channel. "And we were severely impacted."

The drainage canal doesn't contain water used by humans. Wildlife officials did find 17 dead fish near the site of the spill during their investigation, but they were too small for a necropsy to determine whether their deaths were caused by the leaded gasoline.

Steve Gonzalez, a spokesman for California Department of Fish and Wildlife, said oil companies receive plenty of training each year on spill prevention and response — enough to know how to respond when one occurs.

"The onus is on them — it's a state law that when (companies) notice there's a spill, they need to notify state agencies," Gonzalez said. "It's pretty straightforward and simple."

WALNUT CREEK, CALIF. – DEC. 16: Current view of the site where spilled gasoline was recovered in 2020 at the Walnut Creek Canal in Walnut Creek, Calif., on Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021. In November 2020 a cracked pipe discharged over 63,000 gallons of gasoline



into a waterway that flowed into the Walnut Creek Canal. Kinder Morgan Energy Partners was sentenced to pay a total of \$2.5 million in fines, penalties and assessments for cleanup, restitution and investigative costs and placed on probation for 18 months. (Jose Carlos Fajardo/Bay Area News Group)

Earlier Thursday, a federal grand jury [indicted Amplify Energy Corp. for a pipeline crack off Long Beach that leaked 25,000 gallons of crude oil](#) into the ocean. The company was similarly accused of not notifying officials quickly enough, despite eight alarms in its leak detection system over a 13-hour period.

In Kinder Morgan's case, officials said they anticipate new technology will allow oil companies to become aware of spills more quickly.

"The reporting statutes haven't changed, but the companies need to beef up and better train their employees and follow their own spill plans," said Brett Morris, the deputy state attorney general.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

EAST BAY TIMES

4 Bay Area hikes for the New Year — with pre-hike bagel options

By [MELISSA OZBEK CORRESPONDENT](#) |

PUBLISHED: December 15, 2021 at 6:45 a.m. | UPDATED: December 16, 2021 at 4:10 a.m.



The trails at Los Altos Hills' Foothills Nature Preserve offer a moderately strenuous hike and gorgeous views. (Courtesy Melissa Ozbek)

Loop hikes with healthy climbs and inspiring vistas are an invigorating way to kick off the new year and see out the old one. Crisp winter air, a calming nature jaunt and a sense of accomplishment bring fresh perspectives — and the timing couldn't be better. Newly clear, wintery vistas peek out from the coast range foothills,

greening up and cooling down after the latest winter rains.

So go out and greet the new year on one of these hikes in Berkeley, Sunol, Morgan Hill or Los Altos Hills.

Since New Year's and bagels go together like butter and bread, I've paired each hike with options to grab a bagel or breakfast nearby. One spot in particular reminded me of the bagels of my New York childhood — can you guess which one? (If you're doing this hike on the actual holiday, be sure to double check eatery hours, as they may change.)

Berkeley Rose Garden and Staircase Hike, Berkeley Hills



Berkeley's rustic, leafy stairways, sandwiched between homes in the Berkeley Hills and often draped in tree branches, vines and flowers, are a delightful gateway to neighborhood parks, gardens and San Francisco Bay views. The highlight of a staircase hike is the chance to discover little neighborhood pockets, secret places, hidden nooks and surprise vistas.

A New Year's hike from the Berkeley Rose Garden, pictured, to Tilden Park explores Berkeley's hidden staircase trails and

expansive views. (Courtesy Melissa Ozbek)

Pick up the Berkeley Path Wanderers Association's comprehensive map of paths and stairways (\$12, berkeleypaths.org) to get started. You can join a walk with the BPWA or follow this 3.9-mile loop between the Berkeley Rose Garden and Tilden Regional Park for a bun-burning workout on more than a dozen staircases.

Begin at the Berkeley Rose Garden, climbing a mix of neighborhood roads and staircases to the Selby Trail at Tilden Regional Park. Please be careful on the neighborhood roads, as some crossings do not have crosswalks. Take the Selby Trail southeast to the Atlas Path, with its beautiful 180-degree vistas of San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge and Mount Tamalpais on a clear day. Descend hidden stairways in Glendale La Loma Park, then turn north on Euclid Avenue to head back to your starting point at the Rose Garden.

Trail map: tinyurl.com/berkeleyrosegardenandstairways

Details: The Berkeley Rose Garden is open daily from dawn to dusk at 1200 Euclid Ave. Free on-street parking is available. Dogs are not allowed in the Rose Garden. Find more details at cityofberkeley.info.



Grab a pre-hike bite at Berkeley's Boichik Bagels. (Courtesy Melissa Ozbek)

Grab a bite: Fans line up for the East Coast-driven Boichik Bagels, which offers up classics such as lox and bagel sandwiches (\$15.50) from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (or until sold out) Tuesday through Sunday at 3170 College Ave. in Berkeley. Learn more at boichikbagels.com.

Flag Hill-Indian Joe Creek Loop, Sunol

Sunlight washes over the mountaintops and filters down into the pastoral valleys of Sunol Regional Wilderness, a former ranchland with 6,859 acres of idyllic glades, streams and grazing cattle. This 4.5-mile loop visits 1,360-foot Flag Hill, with breathtaking views of Sunol Valley and the Alameda Creek watershed.



Begin at the pedestrian bridge over Alameda Creek, crossing over it and turning left onto Flag Hill Trail. The climb is a strenuous one, gaining 1,000 feet in the first 1.3 miles, yet rewards are sweet, with views of Loma Prieta, Mission Peak and the Maguire Peaks rising above the meadows.

Sunlight washes over the mountaintops and filters down into the pastoral valleys of Sunol

Regional Wilderness. (Courtesy Melissa Ozbek)

After tagging Flag Hill, descend east on Flag Hill Road, High Valley Road and Cave Rocks Road to the Indian Joe Creek Trail at 2.9 miles. The narrow, shadier trail weaves among sycamore and Indian Joe Creek back to park headquarters and the bridge.

Trail map: tinyurl.com/flaghillloop

Details: Hours vary by the season, but the park gates at 1895 Geary Road in Sunol are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through March 7. Parking is \$5 per vehicle on weekends and holidays. Dogs are allowed; fee is \$2 per dog. Learn more at ebparks.org.

Grab a bite: The newly renovated and reopened Bosco's Bones & Brew is a jovial gathering place and keeper of Sunol history, offering breakfast, lunch and dinner daily (\$8.50 for a breakfast burrito) beginning Dec. 18 from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. at 11930 Main St. Find details at boscosbonesandbrews.com.

Mayfair Ranch-Longwall Canyon Loop, Morgan Hill

Rancho Cañada del Oro Preserve is that rare destination that's as beautiful to get to as it is to hike, combining a Sunday-drive feel through the Santa Cruz Mountains foothills with rolling hillsides, oak-studded canyons, and hay-colored peaks. The 4.3-mile Mayfair Ranch-Longwall Canyon Loop travels through the preserve's exquisite woodland, mountain and valleys.

Begin on the Mayfair Ranch Trail, hiking clockwise beneath coast live oak trees. Beside you, the 0.5-mile ADA-accessible Llagas Loop Trail circles a quiet glade with blooming lupine in spring. Climb 650 feet over the next 1.6 miles through oak woodland and grasslands — with spring-blooming wildflowers like fairy lanterns and mariposa lilies, so this is a hike you'll want to do again this spring.



On the Mayfair Ranch-Longwall Canyon loop trail at Rancho Cañada del Oro Preserve, you'll emerge from the forest onto a sunny ridge with views of the region's peaks and valleys. (Courtesy Melissa Ozbek)

Emerge from the forest onto a sunny slope with views of Mount Umunhum and Diablo Range peaks. About halfway through your hike, you'll find a picnic table that overlooks the trees and ridges above the valley.

Descend among California bay laurel and along Baldy Ryan Canyon Creek, merging onto the Longwall Canyon Trail at 3.1 miles to complete your loop.

Trail map: tinyurl.com/mayfairranchloop

Details: The preserve is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily at 4289 Casa Loma Road in Morgan Hill. No fees. Dogs are not allowed. Find more details at openspaceauthority.org.

Grab a bite: Pick up a breakfast bagel (\$3.99 for an egg and cheese) from friendly Regal Bagel, which opens at 6 a.m. Monday to Saturday and 6:30 a.m. Sundays at 125 Bernal Road in San Jose. Peek at the menu at regalbagel.com.

Los Trancos Loop, Los Altos Hills

Foothills Nature Preserve's woodsy trails traverse deep valleys in the Santa Cruz Mountains foothills, offering views of the Santa Clara Valley and San Francisco Bay. Visit the park's highlights on the 7.7-mile Los Trancos Loop, a moderately strenuous hike with beautiful views, wildlife and shady greenery.

Begin at the Orchard Glen Picnic Area, hiking clockwise into Wildhorse Valley to pick up the Los Trancos Trail. Steadily climb 1,000 feet over the next two miles through shrubby chaparral and valley. A trail highlight is the pedestrian bridges: There are 21 on this loop, and it's fun to count them as you go.



The Los Trancos Loop at Los Altos Hills' Foothills Nature Preserve includes 21 little pedestrian bridges. (Courtesy Melissa Ozbek)

The bench at the 2.3-mile mark makes a fine resting point overlooking the bay, Mount Diablo and the Santa Cruz Mountains. When ready, descend to Los Trancos Creek, where the trail narrows along a shady corridor. After another short climb, continue descending to Las Trampas Valley and a great lawn. Turn right to return to Orchard Glen and close your loop.

Trail map: tinyurl.com/lostrancosloop

Details: The preserve is open from 8 a.m. to sunset daily at 11799 Page Mill Road in Los Altos Hills. There is a \$6 vehicle fee. Leashed dogs are allowed on weekdays; dogs are not allowed on weekends and holidays. Learn more at cityofpaloalto.org.

Grab a bite: Izzy's Brooklyn Bagels are the chewy bagels of my childhood. This cafe offers housemade bagels (\$2.95 for a bagel with butter) and sandwiches from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily at 477 S. California Ave. in Palo Alto. View the menu at www.izzysbrooklynbagels.com.