

## WHERE ARE THE BEST PLACES TO WALK?

Start in your own neighborhood and become more familiar with the nature surrounding your school or home. Urban and suburban sidewalks are home to a wide variety of interesting weeds and bugs. Make a point of noticing which yards have the most colorful gardens. Who is growing vegetables? Which tree-lined streets provide the most shade on a hot sunny day? Walking regularly in my suburban neighborhood, I encounter turkeys, foxes and hawks. I also find many unusual little treasures lying on the ground and notice interesting changes through the seasons, as well as subtle changes in the landscape over time.

Search for economic, cultural and historic destinations that are within a walkable distance. I arranged for an urban-based afterschool walking club to tour a paperboard packaging manufacturing facility that was within 15 minutes of walking distance from the school. From my home, I can walk to an armory museum, town hall, a church with a notable collection of stained glass windows, the ruins of an old textile mill and a saltwater cove.

Beyond the immediate neighborhood, our state offers an extensive system of bike trails, state park paths and waterways that wind through breathtakingly beautiful areas rich in natural resources and wildlife. Many of these paths lead through some intriguing sites of cultural, industrial, and military history. There are many fascinating destinations to share with a classroom of students, as well as with family and friends on a weekend or holiday break.

There are also some well-organized books and online resources that describe walkable destinations in detail. Jeanine Silversmith, founder of *Rhode Island Families in Nature*, wrote the [Rhode Island Family Hiking Guide and Journal](#), which features 42 strolls and treks for all ages in the state of Rhode Island. Her website [rifamiliesinnature.org](http://rifamiliesinnature.org) offers a searchable list of places by name and county, as well as tips for hiking with kids and games for the trail. People can order the book through the website.

Another good book is [Look Up, Rhode Island!](#) by Doug Gelbert, which features twelve walking tours towns in the Ocean State. This book can be found with hundreds of other printed guides and walking tour ebooks covering North America can found at [walkthetown.com](http://walkthetown.com)