

Circuit of Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline

- 1. Summary of Trail:** This hiking circuit of Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline features railroad and WWII history, sandy beaches, rocky ridge lines, native grasslands with wildflowers and stunning vistas overlooking San Francisco and San Pablo Bays: San Francisco, Oakland, Angel and Brooks Islands and Mounts Tamalpais, St. Helena and Diablo.
- 2. Modes of Transportation:** hiking
- 3. Length:** 5.1 miles. Allow up to three hours.
- 4. Location:** Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline in Richmond.
- 5. Level of Intensity:** moderate
- 6. Overall Elevation Gain:** Total elevation gain is about 700 feet spread over five short, steep ascents. Downhill stretches are moderate except for one short, steep descent.
- 7. Trail Features:** This hike is unusually scenic and rich in both cultural and natural history. The Potrero Hills forming the backbone of Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline were an island until 1900 when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad built a causeway for trains bringing freight and passengers from Chicago to Ferry Point for transshipment to San Francisco. These hills represent one of the few remaining sites in the East Bay with native coastal prairie habitat containing perennial bunch grasses. The Miller/Knox lagoon picnic area offers good bird watching opportunities. This hike includes an overlook of Point Potrero with structures remaining from Shipyard 3, which was one of Richmond's four Kaiser Permanente shipyards responsible for building 747 ships during WWII -- more than any other facility in the nation.

Possible adjuncts to this hike include visiting the Golden State Model Railroad Museum, which is open noon to 5 PM Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday with trains operating only on Sunday (confirm at <http://gsmrm.org/> or telephone 234-4884). The *SS Red Oak Victory* -- the only surviving ship built in Richmond during WWII -- offers tours Tuesday through Sunday from 11 AM to 4 PM. On some Sunday mornings, you may board this ship to fuel up with a pancake breakfast before your hike (check <http://www.redoakvictory.org/> or phone 237-2933).

8. Trail Overview: This hike begins in the first parking lot located on the right side of Dornan Drive after exiting the tunnel. Pick up a park brochure with map at the sign board between the parking lot and restrooms. (Drive to one of the other parking areas and pick one up if there are no brochures here.)

Parking lot to West Ridge Point - 0.6 mile: Cross Dornan Drive and look for the trailhead between the yellow Rambler's clubhouse and the Golden State Model Railroad Museum. Follow the boardwalk across the seasonal wetland and climb five minutes through live oak trees, toyon, trillium, poison oak and coyote bush to the top of stairs where you turn right on Old Country Road trail. When you reach a

fence on the edge of a steep bluff, look right at the railway corridor leading out the Ferry Point. The entire lagoon picnic area below was a cove of San Francisco Bay before it was isolated by the railway causeway and filled in by quarrying the rocky hillsides above and below the trail. Continue along the trail, passing a spur on your right. When you reach a four-way intersection, climb up the steep, rocky unimproved trail on your right to top out on West Ridge Point. Savor the views overlooking Ferry Point and San Francisco Bay, Angel Island and Mt. Tamalpais, as well as the Brickyard Cove residential area and Richmond Yacht Club to your left.

West Ridge Point to East Vista Point - 1.0 mile: Continue south over West Ridge Point and follow the trail right around the hill back to the four-way intersection. The next two miles of trail pass through coastal terrace habitat containing native bunch grasses and wildflowers. Climb steeply up West Ridge Trail for 10-12 minutes to a bench at the False Gun vista where a fake antiaircraft gun “defended” Kaiser Shipyard 3 during WWII. Turn right on the Crest Trail paved road passing a real antiaircraft gun pad on your right. Before the road starts downhill, turn right on a foot trail. Follow this spur trail for about five minutes to reach a viewing bench overlooking Point Potrero and Shipyard 3. The large buildings and the dry dock basins will be featured in the new Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park. Across the shipping channel, note the yellow brick Ford Assembly Building which began assembling Model A automobiles in 1931 and was converted during WWII to prepare jeeps, tanks and other combat vehicles for shipment overseas. The Marina Bay area to the east contained Richmond’s other three WWII shipyards but is now the site of shoreline parks linked together by the Bay Trail. Note Brooks Island Regional Preserve of East Bay Regional Park District.

East Vista Point to Nicholl Knob - 0.8 mile: Retrace your steps on Crest Trail back to False Gun vista point, watching for red tail hawks, turkey vultures and kestrels (sparrow hawks). Note the busy harbor to your right. The pile of white material is gypsum which is used to manufacture “sheet rock” on site. The automobiles parked below were built in the U.S.A. and brought in by rail for delivery to local dealers. From False Gun vista, continue on the Crest Trail and go steeply downhill to a gap in the Potrero Hills. From the gap, proceed up steep stairs, level out and climb once again to reach 370’ elevation Nicholl Knob where a picnic table and three benches await you. Sit on each bench in turn to see:

North bench - Point Richmond Historic District. ChevronTexaco oil refinery with roots in 1901 as John D. Rockefeller’s first Standard Oil refinery on the West Coast. Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail yards. Looking across San Pablo Bay, Point Pinole Regional Shoreline to the right and, in the distance, flat-topped Mt. St. Helena.

East bench - Oakland and Berkeley Hills with Mt. Diablo looming in the background. Prior to 1900 when the Santa Fe railway was built, the area inland of the Potrero Hills was tidal marsh traversed by scows laden with grain and other freight sailing at high tide between San Francisco and San Pablo Bays.

South bench - Ferry Point, San Francisco, Bay Bridge and one tower of the Golden

Gate Bridge rising behind Angel Island.

Nicholl Knob to Keller Beach - 0.5 mile: Follow the paved road down from Nicholl Knob. When the road levels out before a locked gate, turn sharply left down a foot path. Follow this trail bearing right at each intersection to reach the paved end of Belvedere Avenue. Turn left and follow the paved road a few yards to its end. Turn right and go down a short, rough path through eucalyptus trees to Western Drive. Turn left to the stop sign where Western Drive meets Dornan Drive and follow the paved park road down to Keller Beach with its picnic tables, restrooms and water fountain. You may swim or wade in the Bay where until the early 1960s the Keller family operated a dock offering fishing boat rentals.

Keller Beach to Ferry Point - 1.0 mile: Walk left on Keller Beach and follow the shoreline trail heading out to Ferry Point along the rail corridor. After a few minutes, go around the short cyclone fence crossing the rail tracks, turn left and walk to the paved Bay Trail along the landscaped lagoon. Turn right on the Bay Trail and watch for egrets, herons, geese, ducks, shore birds and cormorants. At the end of the lagoon, turn right to follow the paved Bay Trail to the shoreline. After passing the point where the railroad tracks have been removed, go right and walk the gravel area along the shoreline until you reach a short cyclone fence blocking your way and go left through an open gate. Continue out to the Ferry Point pier, read the interpretive sign about Ferry Point history, observe what fishermen are catching and savor the views across the Bay to San Francisco and Oakland.

Ferry Point to Parking Lot - 1.2 mile: Returning from Ferry Point pier, turn right on the paved Bay Trail toward the *Red Oak Victory*. On right, notice the sandy pocket beach which is a popular kayak launch site. (At this point you may detour to visit the *Red Oak Victory* if you didn't start with a Sunday pancake breakfast aboard the ship.) Follow the trail left around the restrooms back to the lagoon. Turn right and walk around the lagoon to the parking lot where you started.

9. Directions to Trailhead: Park is open from 8 AM to sunset.. By car, take I-580 toward the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge, exit at Canal Blvd., go south one block to Cutting Blvd. and turn right at the Chevron gas station. Go one block on Cutting and turn left on Garrard Blvd. to drive through the Ferry Point tunnel to Dornan Drive. Enter the first parking lot on your right after exiting the tunnel. The trailhead also may be reached by bicycling the Bay Trail from any point between Emeryville and Richmond. Bay Trail maps are available at www.baytrail.org/ and at www.ci.richmond.ca.us/trac/ for Richmond's portion of the Bay Trail.

10. Background: Prepared by Bruce and Sandra Beyaert, who live near Miller/Knox Regional Shoreline. Bruce is a member of EBRPD's Park Advisory Committee and Chair of TRAC, the Trails for Richmond Action Committee.

11/30/03