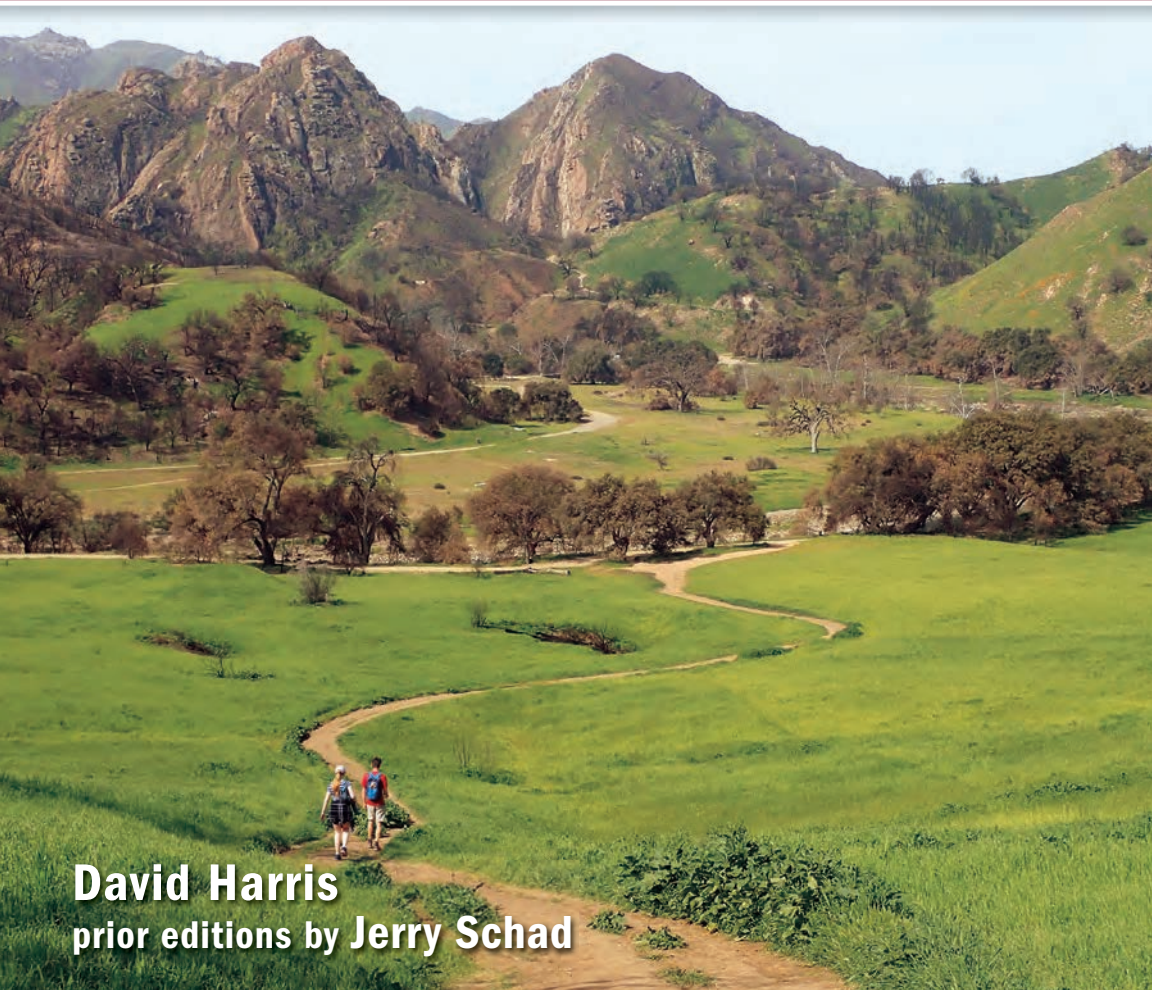


4th Edition

101 HIKES in Southern California

Exploring Mountains, Seashore, and Desert



David Harris
prior editions by **Jerry Schad**

WILDERNESS PRESS



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OVERVIEW OF HIKES								
NO.	HIKE	DISTANCE (in miles)	ELEVATION GAIN (in feet)	TRAIL TYPE	DOGS ALLOWED	GOOD FOR KIDS	MTN. BIKING	BACKPACKING
1	Paradise Falls	2.7	400					
2	La Jolla Valley Loop*	11	1,950					
3	Sandstone Peak	6	1,400					
4	The Grotto	2.8	650					
5	Zuma Canyon	9	1,700					
6	Point Dume to Paradise Cove	2.1	200					
7	Solstice Canyon Park	2.4	350					
8	Malibu Creek State Park	5	300					
9	Topanga Overlook	7	1,700					
10	Temescal Canyon	2.8	850					
11	Will Rogers Park	2.0	350					
12	Malaga Cove to Bluff Cove	2.0	200					
13	Cheeseboro and Palo Comado Canyons	10	1,200					
14	Placerita Canyon*	5	700					
15	HOLLYWOOD Sign via Cahuenga Peak	2.8	1,000					
16	Mount Hollywood Loop	5	1,000					
17	Verdugo Mountains: South End Loop	6	1,500					
18	Mount Lukens: Grizzly Flat Loop	13	3,400					
19	Mount Wilson	15	4,800					
20	Down the Arroyo Seco	10	-2,600					
21	Mount Lowe	3.2	500					
22	Mount Lowe Railway	11	2,800					
23	Eaton Canyon Falls	3.4	400					
24	Santa Anita Canyon Loop	9	2,300					
25	Strawberry Peak	7	2,700					
26	Cooper Canyon Falls	3.2	800					

*All or part of trail was closed at press time. See hike profile for details.

Southern California's Wilderness Rim

Southern California sits astride one of the earth's most significant structural features—the San Andreas Fault. For more than 10 million years, earth movements along the San Andreas and neighboring faults have shaped the dramatic topography evident throughout the region today. The very complexity of the shape of the land has spawned a variety of localized climates. In turn, the varied climates, along with the diverse topography and geology, have resulted in a remarkably plentiful and diverse array of plant and animal life.

Living on the active edge of a continent has advantages and disadvantages that cannot be untangled. Like the proverbial silver lining of a

dark cloud, the rumpled beauty of our youthful, ever-changing coastline, mountains, and desert redresses the ever-present threat of earthquakes, fires, and floods. Because much of Southern California is physically rugged, not all of it has succumbed to the plow or the bulldozer. When you've had the pleasure of hiking beside a crystal-clear mountain stream minutes from downtown LA or cooling off in the spray of a cottonwood-fringed waterfall just beyond suburban San Diego, you'll realize that not many regions in the world offer so great a variety of natural pleasures to a population of many millions.

Let us, in the next couple of pages, briefly explore the principal wild and semiwild natural

Griffith Observatory and downtown Los Angeles (see Hike 16, page 50)





The Silver Moccasin Trail runs the length of the San Gabriel Mountains (see Hike 31, page 87).

to mechanized travel: Cucamonga Wilderness, San Gabriel Wilderness, Sheep Mountain Wilderness, Pleasant View Wilderness, and Magic Mountain Wilderness.

The 2009 Station Fire devastated the western portion of the San Gabriel Mountains, charring more than 160,000 acres. Some trails took nearly a decade to reopen, and others have been abandoned. Some forested areas may have permanently been succeeded by chaparral due

to the fire and climate change. The 2020 Bobcat Fire burned 115,000 acres in the central portion of the range, impacting many trails.

The San Bernardino Mountains

FARTHER EAST, ACROSS the low gap of Cajon Pass, the Transverse Ranges soar again as the San Bernardino Mountains. With Lake Arrowhead, Big Bear Lake, and winter ski areas, the

Wading up the East Fork Narrows (see Hike 33, page 94)



Health, Safety, and Courtesy

Good preparation is always important for any kind of recreational pursuit. Hiking the Southern California backcountry is no exception. Although most of the Southland's natural environments are seldom hostile or dangerous to life and limb, there are some pitfalls to be aware of.

Preparation and Equipment

AN OBVIOUS SAFETY requirement is being in good health. Some degree of physical conditioning is always desirable, even for the trips in this book designated as easy or moderate. The more challenging trips require increasing amounts of stamina and technical expertise. Running, bicycling, swimming, aerobics, or any similar exercise that develops both your leg muscles and the aerobic capacity of your whole body are recommended as preparatory exercise.

For the longest hikes in this book, there is no really adequate way to prepare other than hiking itself. Start with easy- or moderate-length trips, and then work gradually toward extending both distance and time.

Several of the hiking trips in this book reach elevations of 7,000 feet or more—altitudes at which sea-level folks may notice a big difference in their stamina and rate of breathing. A few hours or a day spent at altitude before exercising will help almost anyone acclimate, but that's often impractical for day trips. Still, you might consider spending a night or two at a campground with some altitude before tackling the likes of 11,500-foot San Gorgonio Mountain. Altitude sickness strikes some victims at elevations as low as 8,000 feet. If you become dizzy or nauseated, or suffer from congested lungs or a severe headache, the antidote may be as simple as descending 1,000–2,000 feet.

Your choice of equipment and supplies on the longer hikes in this book can be critically important. The essentials you should carry with you at all times in the remote backcountry are the things that would allow you to survive, in a reasonably comfortable manner, for one or two unscheduled nights out. It's important to note that no one ever plans these nights! No one plans to get lost, injured, stuck, or pinned down by the weather. Always do a “what if” analysis for a worst-case scenario, and plan accordingly. These essential items are your safety net; keep them with you on day hikes, and take them with you in a small day pack if you leave your backpack and camping equipment behind at a campsite.

Chief among the essential items is *warm clothing*. Inland Southern California is characterized by wide swings in day and night temperatures. In mountain valleys susceptible to cold-air drainage, for example, a midday temperature in the 70s or 80s is often followed by a subfreezing night. Carry light, inner layers of clothing consisting of polypropylene or wool (best for cool or cold weather) or cotton (adequate for warm or hot weather but very poor for cold and damp weather). Include a thicker insulating layer of synthetic fill, wool, or down to put on whenever you need it, especially when you are not moving around and generating heat. Add to these items a cap, gloves, and a waterproof or water-resistant shell (a large trash bag will do in a pinch)—and you'll be quite prepared for all but the most severe weather. In hot, sunny weather, sun-shielding clothing, including a sun hat and a light-colored, long-sleeve top, may also be essential.

Water and *food* are next in importance. Most streams and even some springs in the mountains have been shown to contain high levels of bacteria or other contaminants. Even though most

Using This Book

There are three principal ways to find hiking trips in this book that are suitable for you: You can check the overview map for all 101 hikes (pages x–xi) and focus your search on a specific geographic area; you can scan the hike overview table (pages xii–iv); or you can just leaf through the book, browsing hike summaries, route descriptions, and photos.

To get the most out of this guide, please take the time to read, below, about the key information that appears before each hike description.

Maps are provided for each hike. The hiker symbol on each map denotes the start point of the hike. The GPS coordinates for the trailhead are shown in decimal degrees. One-way (point-to-point) hikes have two hiker symbols—one at the beginning of the hike and one at the end. For nearly all of the hikes described in this book, the map we provide is adequate for basic navigation. For a few hikes, we recommend a specific detailed topographic map.

Key Information

EACH HIKE BEGINS with a summary that details its location, highlights, distance, elevation gain and loss, time required, optional or recommended maps, best times to go, managing agency, difficulty rating, and trail uses.

Location: This field states the general location of the hike: a well-known park, mountain range, or nearby city or town.

Highlights: One or two engaging features of the hike are mentioned here.

Distance & Configuration: The total distance is given. For hikes shorter than 6 miles, the distance is given to the nearest tenth of a mile. For hikes 6 miles and longer, the distance is rounded

to the nearest whole number. Out-and-back trips show the round-trip distance. This section also indicates what type of trip it is: out-and-back, point-to-point (one-way), or loop.

Elevation Gain: These are estimates of the sum of all the vertical gain segments along the total length of the route (both ways for out-and-back trips). This is often considerably more than the net difference in elevation between the high and low points of the hike. If the starting and ending elevations are substantially different, the trip may also list Elevation Loss.

Hiking Time: This figure states the time spent in motion for the average hiker. It *does not* include time for rest stops, lunch, and so on. Fast walkers could complete the routes in 30% less time, and slower hikers may take 50% longer. We assume the hiker is traveling with a light day pack. Hikers carrying heavy packs could easily take nearly twice as long, especially if traveling under adverse weather conditions. Remember, too, that the progress made by a group as a whole is limited by the pace of its slowest member.

Optional or Recommended Map(s): This section lists maps to use if you want a broader view than the one presented in this book. Tom Harrison publishes the best maps for Southern California's most popular hiking areas, including the Santa Monica, San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and San Jacinto Mountains and Joshua Tree National Park. Trails Illustrated maps are missing odd things, such as the most popular trails on Mount Baldy and Mount Waterman, but are often good enough and can be more economical because they cover larger areas. Both of these brands are available at ranger stations, at hiking stores such as REI, or from online retailers. Many county and city

HIKE 6 Point Dume to Paradise Cove

Location	Malibu coast
Highlights	Panoramic ocean vistas and superb intertidal exploration
Distance & Configuration	2.1-mile point-to-point
Elevation Gain	200'
Hiking Time	1.5 hours
Optional Maps	Tom Harrison <i>Zuma-Trancas Canyons</i> or Trails Illustrated <i>Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area</i>
Best Times	All year (passable during low tide)
Agency	Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail Use	Good for kids
Permit	None required
Google Maps	Westward Beach

Like the armored bow of an icebreaker, flat-topped Point Dume juts into the Pacific about 20 miles west of Santa Monica. Just east of the point itself, an unbroken cliff wall shelters a secluded beach from the sights and sounds of the civilized world. Below the sometimes-narrow stretch of sand east of the point, a strip of rocky coastline harbors tidepools and a mind-boggling array of plant and animal life.

A pleasant walk anytime the tide is low, this trip is doubly rewarding when the tide dips as low as negative 2 feet. Some of the tidepool inhabitants include limpets, periwinkles, chitons, tube snails, sandcastle worms, sculpins, mussels, shore and hermit crabs, green and aggregating anemones, three kinds of barnacles, and two kinds of sea stars. Extremely low tides occur during the afternoon two or

Sea lions sunbathe on the rocks beneath Point Dume.



Point Dume to Paradise Cove



three times each month from October through March. During the summer, you'll have to get up early to catch the rare negative tides. Consult tide tables to find out exactly when.

To Reach the Trailhead: From the Pacific Coast Highway (Highway 1) on Malibu's west side, 0.4 mile west of mile marker 001 LA 54.5, turn south onto Westward Beach Road. Drive down Westward Beach Road to the road's end at Westward Beach (which is open daylight hours and charges a parking fee). Alternatively, you may park for free along the roadside before reaching the pay station and then stroll 0.7 mile southeast along the beach to Point Dume.

Description: Starting out at Westward Beach, you have a choice between two routes: over the top of the point or around the end of the point at sea level. The shorter, much easier route (and the only practical alternative during

all but extremely low tides) is the first one, the trail slanting left up the cliff. On top is an area popular for sighting gray whales during their southward migration in winter and a state historic monument. Point Dume, you'll learn, was named by Royal Navy officer and explorer George Vancouver in 1793 in honor of Padre Francisco Dumetz of Mission San Buenaventura (the name was misspelled on Vancouver's map).

As you stand on Point Dume's apex, note the marked contrast between the lighter sedimentary rock exposed on cliff faces to the east and west and the darker volcanic rock just below. This unusually tough mass of volcanic rock has thus far resisted the onslaught of the ocean swells. After you descend from the apex, some metal stairs will take you down to crescent-shaped Dume Cove.

The alternate route is for skilled climbers only (and definitely inappropriate for small children). During the very lowest tides, you

round the point itself, making your way by hand-and-toe climbing in a couple of spots over huge, angular shards of volcanic rock along the base of the cliffs. The tidepools here and to the east along Dume Cove's shoreline have some of the best displays of intertidal marine life in Southern California. This visual feast will remain for others to enjoy if you refrain from taking or disturbing in any way the organisms that live there. (*Warning:* Exploring the lower intertidal zones can be hazardous. Be very cautious when traveling over slippery rocks, and always be aware of the incoming swells. Don't let a rogue wave catch you by surprise.)

The going is easy once you're on Dume Cove's ribbon of sand. Signs posted here warn

against nude bathing and sunning. This was once a popular nude beach, much to the chagrin of some of those living in the cliffside mansions overlooking the area.

When you reach the northeast end of Dume Cove, swing left around a lesser point, and continue another mile over a somewhat wider beach to Paradise Cove, site of an elegant beachside restaurant, private pier, and parking lot (the public is welcome for a hefty parking fee unless they spend at least \$20 at the restaurant). If you've parked a bicycle or second car here, then your hike ends here. Otherwise, you can return the way you came or wend your way along the residential streets of Point Dume to return to Westward Beach.

HIKE 7 Solstice Canyon Park

Location Santa Monica Mountains (Malibu)

Highlights Superb oak woodland and lessons in fire ecology

Distance & Configuration 2.4-mile out-and-back

Elevation Gain 350'

Hiking Time 1.5 hours

Optional Maps Tom Harrison *Malibu Creek State Park* or *Trails Illustrated Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area*

Best Times All year

Agency Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Difficulty Easy

Trail Use Dogs allowed, good for kids

Permit None required

Google Maps Solstice Canyon

The easygoing but scenic Solstice Canyon Trail takes you through the grounds of the former Robert's Ranch—now Solstice Canyon Park, a site administered by the National Park Service. The canyon once hosted a private zoo where giraffes, camels, deer, and exotic birds roamed. At trail's end you come to Tropical Terrace, the site of an architecturally notable grand home that burned in a 1982 wildfire.

To Reach the Trailhead: From Highway 1 in Malibu, 0.3 mile west of mile marker 001 LA 50.0, turn north onto Corral Canyon Road. In 0.2 mile turn left into the park. There's overflow parking for several cars at the entrance,

and a more spacious lot 0.3 mile farther inside at the main trailhead. Parking is free. Carpooling is encouraged since parking space is limited. Posted park hours are 8 a.m.–sunset. The trail description begins from the inside parking lot.

Description: Starting at the main trailhead, pass through a gate and continue upstream alongside the canyon's melodious creek. The path is paved for much of the way. You travel through a fantastic woodland of alder, sycamore, bay, and live oak—the latter with trunks up to 18 feet in circumference. In 0.7 mile, you pass an 1865 stone cottage on the right that is thought to be the oldest existing stone building in Malibu.

HIKE 11 Will Rogers Park

Location	Santa Monica Mountains (Pacific Palisades)
Highlights	City, ocean, and mountain views from a single stance
Distance & Configuration	2.0-mile loop
Elevation Gain	350'
Hiking Time	1 hour
Optional Maps	Tom Harrison <i>Topanga State Park</i> or Trails Illustrated <i>Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area</i>
Best Times	All year, especially on weekdays or early on weekend mornings
Agency	Will Rogers State Historic Park
Difficulty	Easy
Trail Use	Suitable for mountain biking, dogs allowed, good for kids
Permit	Parking fee
Google Maps	Will Rogers State Historic Park

Drive up a short mile from the speedway known as Sunset Boulevard toward Will Rogers State Historic Park, and you'll instantly leave the rat race behind. This quiet spot is perfect for getting some exercise and taking advantage of multimillion-dollar views of Santa Monica, West LA, and downtown LA.

Newspaperman, radio commentator, movie star, and pop philosopher Will Rogers purchased this 182-acre property in 1922 and lived here with his family from 1928 until his death in 1935. Historic only by Southern California standards, his 31-room mansion is nevertheless interesting to tour. Your main goal, however, is

Santa Monica Bay



Will Rogers Park



to reach Inspiration Point, a flat-topped bump on a ridge overlooking the entire spread.

To Reach the Trailhead: Drive 1.5 miles east on Sunset Boulevard from the commercial district of Pacific Palisades (Sunset Boulevard and Temescal Canyon Road) to reach the Will Rogers Park entrance road. Or take Sunset Boulevard 4 miles west from I-405 to reach the same entrance. The park is open daily (except certain holidays), 8 a.m.–sunset, and charges a parking fee.

Description: You may want to obtain a copy of the detailed hikers' map, available at the gift shop in a wing of the home. Printed on the map is one of Rogers's memorable (if not apropos) aphorisms: "If your time is worth anything, travel by air. If not, you might just as well walk." To reach Inspiration Point, follow the main,

wide riding and hiking trail that makes a 2-mile loop, starting at the north end of the big lawn adjoining the Rogers home. Or use any of several shorter, more direct paths (mountain bikes and leashed pets are allowed only on the main, looping trail).

Relaxing on the benches at the top on a clear day, you can admire true-as-advertised, inspiring vistas stretching east to the front range of the San Gabriel Mountains and southeast to the Santa Ana Mountains. South past the swelling Palos Verdes Peninsula you can sometimes spot Santa Catalina Island rising in ethereal majesty from the shining surface of the sea.

Will Rogers Park serves as the east terminus of the Backbone Trail, which skims some 65 miles along the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains. Its west end lies in Point Mugu State Park (described in Hike 2).

HIKE 24 Santa Anita Canyon Loop

Location	San Gabriel Mountains above Arcadia
Highlights	Sparkling streams, botanical and historical interest
Distance & Configuration	9-mile loop
Elevation Gain	2,300'
Hiking Time	5 hours
Optional Maps	Tom Harrison <i>Angeles Front Country</i> or Trails Illustrated <i>Angeles National Forest</i>
Best Times	October–June
Agency	Angeles National Forest/Los Angeles Gateway Ranger District
Difficulty	Moderately strenuous
Trail Use	Suitable for backpacking, dogs allowed
Permit	National Forest Adventure Pass required at Chantry Flat lot (but not along roadside)
Google Maps	Chantry Flat

Note: This area was within the 2020 Bobcat Fire burn zone.

In the lush, shady recesses of Santa Anita Canyon and its tributary, Winter Creek, you can easily lose all sight and sense of the hundreds of square miles of dense metropolis and the millions of people that lie just over the ridge to the south. With easy access from the San Gabriel Valley by city street and mountain road, you can be strolling along a fern-lined path less than half an hour after leaving the freeway traffic behind.

To Reach the Trailhead: From I-210 in Arcadia, follow Santa Anita Avenue north. Continue to the edge of the city, pass a sturdy gate (open 6 a.m.–8 p.m.), and ascend along a curling and precipitous ribbon of asphalt to your destination at the end of the road: Chantry Flat. Here you'll find spacious but often inadequate parking lots (Adventure Pass required), a picnic ground, and a mom-and-pop concession stand. If you don't arrive early, expect to back-track in search of roadside parking.

Chantry Flat also features an old-fashioned freight business—the last pack station operating year-round in California. Almost every day, horses, mules, and burros carry supplies and building materials from the Adams Pack Station down into the canyon bottom, where an anachronistic cabin community has survived since the early 1900s.

Backpackers can stay at the free first-come, first-served Hoegee's or Spruce Grove Trail Camp. With reservations, you can stay in a historic cabin at Sturtevant Camp (sturtevantcamp.com) and even have a pack train carry in your gear.

Sturtevant Falls

Kiby McDaniel



Santa Anita Canyon Loop



Description: In this scenic loop trip from Chantry Flat, you'll climb by way of the Gabrielino Trail to historic Sturtevant Camp and return by way of the Mount Zion and Upper Winter Creek Trails. Do it in a day, or take your time on an overnight backpacking trip, with a stay at Spruce Grove Trail Camp. The camp is popular, so plan to get there early to secure a

spot on the weekend, or go on a weekday. Be sure you can recognize poison oak because it grows beside many parts of the trail.

From the south edge of the lower parking lot at Chantry Flat, hike the first, paved segment of the Gabrielino Trail down to the confluence of Winter Creek and Santa Anita Canyon at 0.6 mile. The pavement ends at a metal bridge

spanning Winter Creek. Pass the restrooms and continue up alder-lined Santa Anita Canyon on a wide roadbed following the left bank. Edging alongside a number of small cabins, the deteriorating road soon assumes the proportions of a foot trail. Seventeen of the 80 historic cabins in the canyon burned in the 2020 Bobcat Fire.

At 1.4 miles, amid a beautiful oak woodland, you come to a four-way junction of trails. The right branch goes upcanyon to the base of 50-foot-high Sturtevant Falls, a worthy 0.6-mile round-trip detour during the wet season. The middle and left branches join again a mile upstream. The left, upper trail is recommended for horses. Take the middle (lower) trail—the more scenic and exciting alternative—unless you dislike heights. The lower trail slices across a sheer wall above the falls and continues through a veritable fairyland of miniature cascades and crystalline pools with giant chain ferns.

A half mile past the reconvergence of the upper and lower trails and at 2.8 miles from the trailhead, you come upon Cascade Picnic Area, which has tables and restrooms and is named for a smooth chute in the stream bottom just below. Press on past a hulking crib dam (flood-check dam) to reach Spruce Grove Trail Camp at 3.5 miles; it's named for the big-cone Douglas-fir (big-cone spruce) trees that attain truly inspiring proportions on the surrounding hillsides.

Reach a junction at 3.7 miles, and turn left onto the signed Sturtevant Trail. After only 0.1 mile, Sturtevant Camp comes into view. This is both the oldest (1893) and the only remaining

resort in the Santa Anita drainage, accessible only by foot trail. All supplies are packed in from Chantry Flat on the backs of pack animals, not unlike a century ago.

At the camp, cross to the opposite side of the creek, and pick up the Mount Zion Trail on the left at 3.9 miles. This restored version of the original trail to Sturtevant Camp (reconstructed in the late 1970s and early '80s) winds delightfully upward across a ravine and then along timber-shaded, north-facing slopes.

When the trail crests at a notch just northwest of Mount Zion, take the short side path up through manzanita and scrub oak to the summit (5.0 miles), which has a broad, if somewhat unremarkable, view of surrounding ridges and a small slice of the San Gabriel Valley. You can see the telescope on Mount Wilson to the northwest.

Return to the main trail, and begin a long, switchbacking descent down the dry north canyon wall of Winter Creek—a sweaty affair if the day is sunny and warm. At the foot of this stretch you reach the cool canyon bottom and a T-intersection with the Winter Creek Trail at 6.4 miles, just above Hoegee's Trail Camp. Turn right, going upstream momentarily; follow the trail across the creek; and climb to the next trail junction at 6.6 miles. Bear left on the Upper Winter Creek Trail, which briefly climbs and then gradually descends through the cool woods overlooking Winter Creek. Upon reaching the paved service road at 8.9 miles, follow it down 0.3 mile past a water tank and the picnic grounds to reach the signed Winter Creek Trailhead at the upper Chantry Flat parking area.

HIKE 25 Strawberry Peak

Location Central San Gabriel Mountains

Highlight Rock scrambling on dramatic peak

Distance & Configuration 7-mile out-and-back

Elevation Gain 2,700'

Hiking Time 6 hours

Optional Maps Tom Harrison *Angeles Front Country* or
Trails Illustrated *Angeles National Forest*

Best Times October–June

Agency Angeles National Forest/San Gabriel Mountains
National Monument

Difficulty Strenuous

Permit None required

Google Maps Colby Canyon Trail

A well-worn trail followed the crest of one of the several ridges that radiate from the peak, and brought me to the base of an apparently perpendicular cliff a couple of hundred feet high and forming the last stage to the summit. A close scanning of the cliff's broken face showed plainly that the only way up was to scale it as best I could; so, holding on by fingers and toes, and carefully testing the stability of the jutting rocks, root-ends, and clinging bushes which served me as pegs to climb by, I got on pretty well.

—Charles Francis Saunders,

The Southern Sierras of California, 1923

Strawberry Peak's 6,164-foot summit beats by a smidgen 6,161-foot San Gabriel Peak, thus claiming the honor of being the highest peak in the Front Range, as well as the most fun. Although its profile appears rounded as seen from most places, in reality its flanks fall away sharply on three sides, leaving only one relatively easy route to the top. The peak was named by guests at Switzer's Camp, who felt its profile resembled a strawberry. Switzer himself would lead his guests on a favorite hike up Strawberry by way of the airy ridge in the 1880s. He carried a Winchester rifle on his saddle to defend against grizzly bears.

In March 1909, Strawberry Peak garnered national attention when a gas balloon and gondola carrying six passengers over Tournament Park in Pasadena was swept by violent gusts into storm clouds over the San Gabriel Mountains. After being tossed to as high as 14,000 feet, the balloon descended in whiteout conditions and crash-landed just below Strawberry's snow-covered summit—its gondola coming to rest just 10 feet from a vertical precipice. Nearly three days later, a telephone call from Switzer's Camp brought news to the world below that the riders had survived.

This hike takes the most fun route to the summit by way of Colby Canyon and the steep west ridge. It is not the easiest route (see the variation below) and is not recommended for hikers who are uncomfortable with heights

or scrambling. Long pants are recommended because of the sharp vegetation. You'll be traveling mostly along hot, south-facing slopes and open ridges exposed to the sun, so an early-morning start is best in the warmer months.

To Reach the Trailhead: Exit the 210 Freeway at Angeles Crest Highway (Highway 2) in La Cañada-Flintridge. Drive 10.2 miles north to the Colby Canyon Trailhead, at an unpaved turnout on the left at mile marker 34.55.

Description: The lower Colby Canyon Trail is masterfully designed, leading through a gorgeous canyon with year-round water, then along narrow ridges and across a cliff face. This scenic stretch eventually gives way to switchbacks climbing through the chaparral to reach Josephine Saddle at 2.1 miles.

From the saddle, trails depart west toward Josephine Peak and north toward Strawberry Potrero. Head north about 20 yards, then look for a prominent climbers' trail on the right that follows a ridge directly to Strawberry Peak. Take this route, which is generally in good condition because of heavy use. At 2.3 miles, reach the first obstacle: a steep step of decomposing granite. The trail may be vague here, but it's worth finding because getting off route takes you across dangerous crumbling rock. Beyond this step, dodge prickly Whipple

Strawberry Peak



yuccas (also known as chaparral yuccas) on an easy ridge, then pick a path across a talus field to the steep ridge at 3.0 miles, where the climbing gets fun.

Start just right of the crest and look for faded painted arrows or flagging marking the route. The climbing is Class 2–3—fun but nowhere near as difficult as Saunders described—so long as you stay on the easiest route. However, straying from the route quickly leads you to sheer cliffs, and deaths and rescues have occurred here. Pay close attention so you can retrace your route on the descent.

Near the summit, scattered Coulter pines and big-cone Douglas-firs struggle for existence, their windblown limbs swept back in gestures that seem defiant. The view from the top is panoramic, but not as exciting as that from peaks such as Mount Lowe or Mount Lukens. On the other hand, Strawberry often basks in clean air, while the basin-bordering ramparts are wreathed in smog.

VARIATIONS

One could avoid descending the steep rocks and could make a loop around the mountain by descending the trail on the east side to the saddle between Lawlor and Strawberry, then turning north and circling back to Josephine Saddle. A flat beneath the north face has great views and camping beneath a surviving stand of Coulter pines. This loop is 12 miles with 3,500 feet of elevation gain.

Enthusiastic hikers can make a side trip to Josephine Peak from Josephine Saddle. This adds 4 miles out-and-back.

Strawberry Peak can also be climbed from Red Box Gap by way of the saddle between Lawlor and Strawberry. This trail is in good condition all the way and is substantially easier but not nearly as fun. The out-and-back trip is 7 miles with 1,700 feet of elevation gain.

HIKE 40 Cougar Crest Trail

Location	Big Bear Lake, San Bernardino Mountains
Highlights	Pinyon–juniper forest, lake and mountain views
Distance & Configuration	5 miles to PCT or 7 miles to Bertha Peak (out-and-back)
Total Elevation Gain	800' or 1,450'
Hiking Time	2.5 hours or 3.5 hours
Optional Map	USGS 7.5-minute <i>Fawnskin</i>
Best Times	April–November
Agency	San Bernardino National Forest/Mountaintop Ranger District
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail Use	Dogs allowed, good for kids (to Cougar Crest)
Permit	National Forest Adventure Pass
Google Maps	Cougar Crest Trailhead

Big Bear Lake, with the sloping mountain rim that rises above the serene and mostly undeveloped north shore, offers excellent hiking through a splendid juniper forest. Here, the Cougar Crest Trail ascends to a junction with the 2,600-mile-long Pacific Crest Trail (PCT)—the world's longest maintained footpath.

To Reach the Trailhead: From the 210 freeway in northeast San Bernardino, take Exit 81 for Highway 330, which becomes Highway 18 in Running Springs. As soon as you reach Big Bear Lake, about 27.5 miles from the 210 freeway, turn left on Highway 38. Drive along the north shore for 5 miles to the large Cougar Crest Trailhead on the left (north) side of the road near mile marker 038 SBD 53.50. Be sure to display your Adventure Pass in your car, or park on the shoulder of the highway, where no pass is required.

Description: From the trailhead kiosk, head up the paved Cougar Crest Trail. In 0.1 mile, the paved path veers right to the Big Bear Discovery Center, but you stay straight on the broad Cougar Crest Trail. Traces of mining activity are evident as you climb along a shallow draw filled with a delightful mix of outsize pinyon pines and western junipers and occasional straight and tall Jeffrey pines. The sweet and pungent scents exuded by the wood and needles of these trees mingle intoxicatingly on a warm day.

After a long mile, the old road becomes a narrow trail and begins to curl and switchback along higher and sunnier slopes. Big Bear Lake comes into view occasionally, its surface azure in the slanting illumination of a spring or summer morning or dotted with silvery pinpoints of light on a late-fall day.

The trail reaches a divide, bends right, and for a short distance traverses a cool (or

San Geronio peers over the ridge beyond Big Bear Lake.



Cougar Crest Trail



sometimes cold and icy) north-facing slope. At 2.5 miles and 800 feet of climbing, the Cougar Crest Trail joins the Pacific Crest Trail, the latter reserved for hikers and horses (mountain bikes and other mechanical conveyances are prohibited on the entire PCT between the Mexican and Canadian borders). Most hikers enjoy a snack

on a bench beneath a magnificent western juniper and then turn around here.

VARIATION

If you want a longer hike, bear right and start contouring east, high on the sunny, south-facing slope. Spread before you now is the lake

(technically a shallow reservoir), which half-fills a 10-mile-long trough in the mountains, and various resort and residential communities spread along the shore and beyond. Behind the lake and about 12 miles distant, the rounded, often-snow-mantled ramparts of San Gorgonio Wilderness gleam.

The southern view does not significantly improve as you press on, though the high point ahead—Bertha Peak—will furnish a

better view in other directions. When the PCT crosses a rock-strewn service road (2.9 miles from the start), leave the nicely graded trail and start climbing east on the road. A sweaty, 0.7-mile ascent takes you to a small micro-wave relay station atop Bertha Peak. Outside the relay station's perimeter fence, you'll find a peak baggers' register, plus fine views over the treetops into Holcomb Valley and the Mojave Desert to the north.

HIKE 41 **Grand View Point**

Location Big Bear Lake, San Bernardino Mountains

Highlights Forested trail with lake and mountain views

Distance & Configuration 7-mile out-and-back

Total Elevation Gain 1,100'

Hiking Time 4 hours

Optional Map USGS 7.5-minute *Big Bear Lake*

Best Times April–November

Agency San Bernardino National Forest/Mountaintop Ranger District

Difficulty Moderate

Trail Use Dogs allowed, good for kids, suitable for mountain biking

Permit National Forest Adventure Pass

Google Maps Aspen Glen Picnic Area

Grand View Point, high on the ridge above Big Bear Lake, offers a memorable view across the Santa Ana River Canyon to the tall summits of the San Gorgonio Wilderness. A network of trails leads up from the Aspen Glen Picnic Area to the point. Take this popular hike on a clear day when you can fully appreciate the vistas. This whole ridge south of Big Bear is laced with fire roads and singletrack trails that draw mountain bikers from across Southern California. This trail is also enjoyable in the snow, and you are likely to have good tracks to follow.

To Reach the Trailhead: From the 210 Freeway in San Bernardino, take Exit 81 for Highway 330, which becomes Highway 18 in Running Springs. About 31 miles from the 210, in Big Bear Lake Village at mile marker 018 SBD 47.43, where a sign points to Mill

Creek Road and picnic grounds, turn right (south) onto Tulip Lane. Proceed 0.5 mile to the Aspen Glen Picnic Area, on your right.

Description: Follow the Pineknott Trail (1E01) from the trailhead sign at the south end of the picnic area. The trail climbs through a forest of black oak, white fir, and Jeffrey pine, with an understory of boulders, buckthorn, and wildflowers. This area is particularly appealing in the late spring when the flowers are in bloom and in October when the oak leaves turn golden.

In a quarter mile, come to a junction with the Cabin Trail (1E24). Both trails rejoin ahead, but the Pineknott Trail has better views and is more popular, while the Cabin Trail draws mountain bikers seeking a loop ride.

The Pineknott Trail climbs, crosses a ridge, and then drops to cross the creek in Red Ant

HIKE 49 **Wonderland of Rocks Traverse**

Location	Joshua Tree National Park
Highlight	Scrambling amid gigantic boulders
Distance & Configuration	6-mile point-to-point
Elevation Gain/Loss	200'/1,200'
Hiking Time	6 hours
Recommended Map	Tom Harrison <i>Joshua Tree National Park</i> or Trails Illustrated <i>Joshua Tree</i>
Best Times	October–April
Agency	Joshua Tree National Park
Difficulty	Strenuous
Permit	National park entry fee
Google Maps	Keys West Backcountry Registration Board (start); Rattlesnake Canyon Picnic Area (end)

More than 100 million years ago, a molten mass of rock lay several miles underground, cooling and crystallizing by agonizingly slow degrees. As the mass solidified, it contracted slightly, and fractures developed within it. Over geologic time, this mass moved upward, while

older, overlying layers of rock were eroded away. As the younger rock neared the surface, groundwater seeping into the fractures chemically transformed some of the rock crystals into clay. Large, more-or-less rectangular blocks of rock with rounded corners became isolated from each other in a matrix of loose clay. Once exposed above the surface, the clay quickly washed away, leaving open crevices between the blocks. Various mechanical forces and chemical weathering further chipped away at the boulders and rounded them even more.

The products of all this uplift and shaping are the monzogranite boulders we see today spectacularly exhibited in the Wonderland of Rocks section of Joshua Tree National Park. Everywhere you look, your mind is dazzled by huge, pancake- or loaflike stacks of rocks (where horizontal fractures predominate), by rocks in columns or spires (where vertical fractures predominate), and by huge domes. Each unique structure has been fashioned by a particular set of events occurring over millions of years.

The one-way traverse across the Wonderland of Rocks described here is known by some as the Wonderland Connection. Make no mistake: this is no easy stroll. Its “strenuous” rating is solely because of the fiercely jumbled landscape you must cross during the latter part of the trip; you should be adept at both boulder-hopping and scrambling across tilted rock surfaces. Much of the travel involves meticulously lowering

Wonderland Ravine is full of enormous boulders.



Wonderland of Rocks Traverse



yourself downward over angular boulders—not recommended for the faint of heart. Camping is prohibited in the Wonderland area; you must plan your visit as a day trip.

To Reach the Trailheads: Arrange one vehicle at the Rattlesnake Canyon Picnic Area in Indian Cove and a second one at the Keys West backcountry board (Boy Scout Trailhead) in the main park. The shuttle involves a half-hour drive, even though the two trailheads are only a few miles apart as the crow flies over the Wonderland of Rocks. To reach Indian Cove from Highway 62, drive 8.8 miles east from Park Boulevard in the town of Joshua Tree; then turn south onto Indian Cove Road, 0.4 mile east of mile marker 062 SBD 27.00. Pass the entrance station in 1.1 miles and the backcountry board in another 0.5 mile; then continue 1.4 miles to the campground. Turn left (east) and pass through the campsites to reach the picnic area at Rattlesnake Canyon in another 1.3 miles. To reach the Boy Scout Trailhead, return to Park Boulevard in Joshua Tree and turn left (south). Pass the West Entrance Station and reset your odometer. In 6.4 miles, reach the large paved parking area for the Keys West backcountry board on the north side of the road, 0.8 mile east of mile marker 20.

Description: From the Keys West backcountry board, follow the Boy Scout Trail (formerly a dirt road) 1.2 miles north across sandy flats dotted with Joshua trees to the Willow Hole Trail, intersecting it on the right. Follow the Willow Hole Trail northeast to where it enters a dry wash, and then continue downhill in the wash. The wash soon becomes a canyon bottom flanked by stacks of boulders. At 3.5 miles you arrive at Willow Hole—large pools flanked by a screen of willows.

Following a beaten-down path, you then work your way through the willows on the right, over a low ridge and across a hard-to-identify gap between two rock piles. If you find yourself scrambling on difficult boulders, you're on the wrong path. Follow the narrow canyon bottom below, which carries water

draining from the pools at Willow Hole during the wetter parts of the year. Your remaining route is entirely downhill, but negotiating a canyon section clogged with boulders impedes your progress.

At 0.7 mile beyond Willow Hole, the wash opens up in a broad clearing. Just north of this clearing, accessed by an obscure trail, is Oh-Bay-Yo-Yo, a cavelike shelter beneath a huge boulder. Take care of this special spot and leave no trace. This trip continues along the wash to a confluence with a second wash on the right.

Stay in the main canyon as it veers north and descends sharply for 0.3 mile to join Rattlesnake Canyon. Exercise care while descending this hazardous stretch. You can find fascinating caves under the gigantic talus blocks. (It was here, during a prearranged rendezvous and car-key exchange between original author Jerry Schad's party and a party traveling in the opposite direction, that one set of keys was dropped into the boulder maze and almost irretrievably lost. The lesson: always have an extra key in a magnetic box on the car frame or hidden nearby.)

Once you reach Rattlesnake Canyon, only a bit more than a mile of hiking remains. The going is easy for a while as you follow the sandy wash downhill (northeast). Some cottonwood trees brighten the otherwise desolate scene of sand and soaring stone walls. As the canyon bends left for a final descent to the flats of Indian Cove below, you face more episodes of serious scrambling. Keeping to the left canyon wall past some interior live oak trees, work your way around a slotlike canyon worn in the granitic rock. Down in the bottom of the slot are potholes worn by the abrasive action of flash flooding. A little more scrambling and a short walk down the canyon's sandy wash takes you to the end of the hike, the picnic area at Indian Cove.

VARIATION

If you can't arrange a vehicle shuttle, you can also return by way of the Boy Scout Trail that starts near the north end of Indian Cove. This option is 14 miles and takes about 10 hours of walking.



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