

## **TRAIL ACCOUNTS BY HIKERS**

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### **Manzanita Trail by Suellen Hall (2003)**

After ten years working with the National Forest Service about the (five mile) Manzanita Trail located in the Valyermo area, we finally have succeeded. Thanks to a government grant, about two and one half miles of the trail is repaired from the South Fork Campground through the 500 foot slide area. Camp Fenner needs to be congratulated for their trail work. This trail is now safe for horses. (The Unsafe for Horses- signs have not yet been removed).

The trail still needs to be cleared from Vincent Gap to where the crew stopped repairing the trail, which is about two miles from the top to the old slide area.

Dick Hall said that the Fenner crew cleared the trail with a trail cat (a trail making machine about four feet across), and secured several large retaining walls along the slide area. Dick stated "They made a super Highway".

### **Griffith Park, Los Angeles by Romelle Kemp**

You probably already know Griffith Park as home to the Los Angeles Zoo, Griffith Observatory, Greek Theatre, Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, merry-go-round, locomotive and pony rides. These attractions merely ring the heart of the park, which is several thousand hilly acres of chaparral, where coyotes, deer, raccoons, opossums, rabbits, skunks, owls and hawks roam free. The park's 53 miles of trails offer a spectacular combination of open space, city views and time to unwind. The panorama from Mount Hollywood, the park's highest point, gives a 360-degree view that allows you to see Pasadena, Glendale, the Valley, Long Beach and Santa Monica from the same spot. City lights spill endlessly to the south. The Valley's suburban grid sprawls to the northwest. The San Gabriels, stoically dark, loom to the northeast.

Part of the Spanish Land Grant, Rancho Los Feliz, the park was named for its former owner, Colonel Griffith J. Griffith. Born in South Wales, Griffith emigrated to the United States in 1865, and made his fortune in gold mine speculation. In 1882, Griffith settled in Los Angeles, and purchased a 4,071 acre portion of Rancho Los Feliz, which stretched northward from the northern boundaries of the Pueblo de Los Angeles. When Colonel J. Griffith donated 3,015 acres of park to the city in 1896, as a Christmas gift to Los Angeles residents, locals weren't

particularly impressed. Undeveloped chaparral-covered hills were hardly scarce in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles. In fact, during the park's early years, trees were often cut up and carted off as fire wood, but times have changed. Undeveloped chaparral-covered hills are scarce in today's Los Angeles. In Colonel Griffith's time, the park's value was tied to its development.

Today, the upper park is a valuable public resource because of its non-development.

But if anything absolutely defines Griffith Park today, it is its equestrian trails. The trails crisscross every section of the park and most of the park's attractions can all be approached on horseback. The trails seem endless. You can go out daily and pick routes always new, some as wide as a two lane road and others resembling goat paths.

Hiking into the rugged hills and sparsely developed areas is perhaps one of the most popular forms of recreation here. Hikers are allowed to use the entire 53-mile network of trails, fire roads and bridle paths. One of the most rewarding hikes in the park is the trail leading from the Observatory parking lot to the summit of Mount Hollywood, the highest peak of the park, which affords spectacular views of the entire Los Angeles Basin.

Riverside Drive is the center of horse activity and it is the main equestrian gateway into the park. The equestrian center is here with boarding stables, lesson stables, horse rental stables, a restaurant and the excellent Dominion Saddlery. Horseback riders have many specially marked trails, plus fire and patrol roads within the park. Riders may walk, trot, or canter horses, but must remain on marked trails at all times.

Griffith Park is open daily from 6:00 A.M to 10:00 P.M. The hiking paths, bridle trails and mountain roads close at dusk. The park lies just west of the Golden State Freeway (I-5). Freeway off-ramps leading to the park from I-5 are Los Feliz Boulevard, Griffith Park (the direct entrance), and Zoo Drive. Approaching the park on the 134 Freeway eastbound, take the Forest Lawn Drive or Victory Boulevard exits. From the 134 westbound, take Zoo Drive or Forest Lawn Drive. After leaving the freeways, follow the signs into the park. Maps of trails and current information on trail closures and special restrictions are available at the Ranger Station (213) 665-5188. Open fires and smoking are not allowed.

### **Last Chance Canyon: The Back Side of Red Rock State Park -- A Pleasant Surprise**

**by Romell Kemp**

You've all stopped at the Red Cliffs while traveling to some destination in Northern California. You've enjoyed the nature walk from the campground. But, how many of you have explored the secrets of eastern half the of Red Rock State Park? On Presidents Day weekend the Kemps and

Macdonalds decided to do just that! We discovered a delightful, yet rugged, adventure for hikers, hardy mountain bikers, and equestrians. An adventure that can be experienced in a single day or savored by campers over a long weekend. Head north on Hwy 14, go through Mojave, past the Cal City turn-off, to the park. If you haven't been out there for a while, stop off at the Visitors Center, it's being refurbished -- very nice, very informative. You might want to pick up a map to help you with your exploring. The one we have is Hileman's Gem, Mineral, & 4-Wheel Drive Map No. 1 of Last Chance Canyon, Mesquite Canyon and Iron Canyon. Now continue past the Visitor Center and drive out of the park for a couple of miles. At Redrock-Inyokern Rd, start taking odometer readings. After 5.2 miles turn off the freeway onto a dirt road (there is a small sign "Burro Schmidt's Tunnel"). Head back toward the park in a south easterly direction on a dirt road that will accommodate most cars and motorhomes. However, 2.6 miles marks the limit for vehicles with average clearance, because the terrain gets rough and starts climbing. There's a nice flat area large enough for group camping, or if you continue on there's plenty of places to camp. The property is owned by the BLM, so it's OK to park your motorhome or camper wherever you wish. We wanted to find a way to Burro Schmidt's Tunnel that was accessible by horseback. It was so easy. Looking south from our campsite, we spied a mine on the mountainside that, according to the map, was likely to be Burro Schmidt's. It looked like a steep climb, but we were determined to find a way, so we set out across country keeping the mine in sight. The climb was much more gradual than we expected (of course, the horses were doing the work) and we reached our destination just an hour and a half! Schmidt, because of his poor health, came to the desert in the 1920's to recuperate. He started tunneling and 30 years later he exited the far side of his mountain after boring through a half mile of solid rock. The place is swarming with friendly, pleasant motorcyclists. Out-buildings, worthy of exploration, litter the area. But most interesting of all, is the elderly caretaker, who willingly supplies historical information about the mine.

The second day's excursion was even more beautiful than the first's. Heading west from our campsite, we rode a couple of miles. A sharp left turn put us into Last Chance Canyon. Impressive! We rode for miles down its sandy wash looking up at its colorful walls -- an artists palette splashed with reds, pinks, yellows and grays. With another left turn, we looped back to our campsite through Pleasant Valley, declaring more than once, that the valley, indeed, lived up to its name. We are looking forward to a return adventure to the Back Side of Redrock. There are many more paths to explore and many more sights to enjoy.

## **Mount Lowe Trail by Romelle Kemp**

In the 1890's, Professor Thaddeus Lowe, a Civil War-era balloonist, built a resort in the small city of Echo Mountain in the San Gabriel Mountains high above Pasadena. The resort complex included two hotels, a casino, observatory, residences, gardens, a small zoo, a power plant, and a railway which provided trolley and cable service for Los Angeles residents. Another hotel complex was built further into the mountains at the Ye Alpine Tavern and was connected to Echo Mountain by a 3.5 mile railway. It was a popular destination until the 1930's; since that time it has fallen into ruin and all that remains of it today are foundations and walls. The railway right-of-way has become part of a road and hiking trail system. A signed, self-guided interpretive trail connects Echo Mountain with the Ye Alpine Tavern site. Brochures describing the points of interest within the Mount Lowe Railway complex are available at the Arroyo Seco District Office and at the Forest Supervisor's Office at Arcadia.

The historical hike visits the ruins of the Echo Mountain Resort area and concludes with fine views of Los Angeles from Inspiration Point. Follow the paved Sunset Ridge Fire Road, which ascends two miles to meet the Echo Mountain Trail. The paved fire road soon becomes dirt, and an interpretive sign at the Cape of Good Hope tells you that you've joined the Mount Lowe Railway Tour. Then you will pass the tourist attractions that impressed earlier generations: Horseshoe Curve, the site of the Great Circular Bridge and, farther on, Granite Gate. Mount Lowe Trail Camp welcomes hikers with its shade, picnic tables and rest rooms. At Inspiration Point, you can look through several telescope like tubes aimed at Santa Monica, Hollywood and the Rose Bowl.

Directions: Exit the Foothill Freeway (210) at Lake Avenue and follow it north all the way to the end. Here, at the intersection of Lake Avenue and Alta Loma Drive, is the Cobb Estate/Sam Merrill Trailhead. For a longer, more challenging hike, park here and proceed east along the Lower Sam Merrill Trail for two miles to the top of Echo Mountain and the beginning of the Mount Lowe Railway interpretive trail (note: the Merrill trail is not recommended for mountain bikes). Another option is to continue driving with a left turn on Loma Alta Drive. Go one mile to Chaney Trail Road and turn right. At the fork in the road, bear to the right until you reach the Sunset Ridge Parking area.

## **Joshua Ranch Trail, City of Palmdale**

Joshua Ranch Trail is generally an east-west trail located on the west side of the City of Palmdale and bounded by Rancho Vista Boulevard to the north, Elizabeth Lake Road to the south, Godde Hill Road to the west and Highland Street (25th St. West) to the east. The east entrance to Joshua Ranch Trail is located approximately ¼-miles west of Highland Street (25th

St. West) along the alignment of Avenue P-12 (south of Highland High School). The trail extends approximately 3.2-miles to the west until it meets with the east boundary of Warnack Nature Park (50th St. West alignment). Warnack Nature Park is an existing 132-acre open space nature park owned by the City of Palmdale.

The middle portion of Joshua Ranch Trail is split into two legs – one climbing the ridge and the other following the valley. Eventually the two legs of the trail meet and continue westerly. The trail is approximately 8 to 12 feet wide. Trail amenities include several footbridges crossing existing drainage channels, some fencing, signage, shade structures and benches. The City of Palmdale constructed the trail with the help of a competitive grant that funded 4,200 hours of labor by 30 local students at Highland High School. The students participated in the design and construction of the trail itself as well as the trail amenities including benches, shelters and signage. The trail was completed in August 1998.

## **TRAILS IN SANTA CLARITA / ACTON / AGUA DULCE AREA**

**BY DIANNE ERSKINE-HELLRIGEL, PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNITY HIKING CLUB .**

### **Placerita Canyon Trail (To Walker Ranch)**

Length: 2.5 miles, 5 miles RT

Difficulty: Easy, with small gain

Description: Partially Shaded, follows a meandering creek with tall granite canyon walls. Habitat is riparian, oak woodland and chaparral. This is a beautiful hike year-round, and perfect for families and picnics. The surrounding area is home to spotted owls, hawks, deer, mountain lion, gray fox, gray squirrels, numerous birds, lizards and snakes. You will also be lucky enough to see a "white oil" seep out of the ground. The Canyon Trail can also be taken to the Waterfall Trail, The Walker Ranch trailhead, the Los Pinetos Trail, and from the Los Pinetos trail to various other trails for longer hikes. For a trail map see:

[http://placerita.org/images/placerita\\_canyon\\_trail\\_map\\_pg1.jpg](http://placerita.org/images/placerita_canyon_trail_map_pg1.jpg).

How to get to the trailhead: Exit Highway 14 at Placerita Canyon Road. If you're coming from the south, turn right. If you're coming from the north, turn left on Placerita Canyon Road. Turn right into Placerita Canyon Natural Area (marked by a wooden sign). Park. Trailhead is to the right of the building.

## **Los Pinetos Trail**

Length: 4 miles uphill (8 miles RT) This trail connects to others if you would like longer hikes

Difficulty: Difficult, due to altitude gain

Description: This is a challenging hike, with a steep and steady incline. This is a great trek for views of the Santa Clarita Valley. This trail leaves from the Walker Ranch area of Placerita Canyon Natural Area. When you get to the top of the ridge at the Santa Clara Divide Road (3N17), go a few hundred more feet to the top of the knoll above the road, and take in the even more spectacular scenery at the top. On a clear day, one can see not only the San Fernando Valley, downtown L.A., and the Palos Verdes peninsula, but also Catalina, Santa Barbara and even Santa Cruz Islands! From this point, you can return on the Los Pinetos trail, or head west on Santa Clara Divide Road for ½ a mile to the Firebreak Trail, which descends back down into Placerita Canyon. You can also choose to go to the left to Camp 9 and Bear Divide, or to the Manzanita Trail on the right or Whitney Canyon and ultimately Wilson Canyon, to the right.

How to get to the trailhead: Exit Highway 14 at Placerita Canyon Road. If you're coming from the south, turn right. If you're coming from the north, turn left on Placerita Canyon Road. Then turn right into a turnout marked with a wooden sign on your right ("Walker Ranch Trailhead"), approximately 3.5 miles from Highway 14. Park and walk down the dirt road to the left, or the Walker Ranch Trail on the right. Both end up in the same location. Look for the Los Pinetos trailhead sign at the bottom, across the creek/across from the picnic area.

## **Placerita Canyon Waterfall Trail**

Length: 1.5 miles from the trailhead - You have to get to the trailhead from the Canyon Trail (longer) or Walker Ranch trailhead (shorter)

Difficulty: Fairly Easy with rocky areas, a few steep, wet sections, and muddy patches. In the winter or after a rain there may be significant water in the stream bed. Be cautious during rainy and wet seasons. Also look for thick patches of poison oak.

Description: The Waterfall Trail is a one-way, dead end trail that begins out of the Lower Walker Ranch section of Placerita Canyon Natural Area, and leads up Los Pinetos Canyon to a vernal waterfall. The dead end of the trail is a 25 foot waterfall that runs from November to June in normal rain years.

The trail is approximately 3/4 of a mile from the Walker Ranch Waterfall trailhead at the eastern end of Placerita Canyon Natural Area. It gains relatively little in elevation (from 1,850 to

2,115), but the canyon bottom on some stretches of the trail can be rocky and slick. In addition, because of its very mesic (moist) and shaded microclimate, poison oak is a very common sight along and around the trail.

At the mid point of the trail, two side canyons branch off the main Los Pinetos Canyon. Just keep to the right each time, and you will find your way to the falls. Once there, you will immediately recognize the waterfall by the large, downed big cone Douglas Fir tree trunk that provides a way for hikers to navigate the stream crossing.

You might also notice big leaf maples, ash, California laurel, black walnut, canyon oak, and other trees more common to wetter climates. The waterfall trail is definitely one of the more moist microclimates found in the Santa Clarita Valley. This is also a known nesting area for spotted owls.

How to get to the trailhead: Exit SR 14 at Placerita Canyon Road. If you're coming from the south, turn right. If you're coming from the north, turn left on to Placerita Canyon Road. Then, turn right into a turnout marked with a wooden sign ("Walker Ranch Trailhead") on your right, approximately 3.5 miles from Highway 14. If you'd like a longer hike, turn into the Placerita Nature Center Natural Area, park, and take the Canyon Trail all the way to Walker Ranch, where you will find the trailhead to the waterfall.

### **Manzanita Mountain Trail**

Length: 2 miles one way, 4 miles RT

Difficulty: Extremely difficult

Description: This trailhead goes straight up the mountain, past a water tower, and continues to ascend to the ridgeline, where it intersects with the firebreak on the ridge. From this intersection you can go to the right to Whitney Canyon, go to the left to Walker Ranch or Camp 9 or Bear Divide, or make a loop by going down the Los Pinetos trail to Walker Ranch and back to Placerita Nature Center via the Canyon Trail. If you choose any of these options be sure to be prepared with lots of water, lunch, snacks, first aid, and a car at the other end to bring you back (unless you're doing the loop option).

For Trail map see: [http://placerita.org/images/placerita\\_canyon\\_trail\\_map\\_pg1.jpg](http://placerita.org/images/placerita_canyon_trail_map_pg1.jpg)

How to get to the trailhead: Exit Highway 14 at Placerita Canyon Road. If you're coming from the south, turn right. If you're coming from the north, turn left on Placerita Canyon Road. Turn right into Placerita Canyon Natural Area (marked by a wooden sign). Park. Trailhead is to the

right of the building. Look for the water tower on the hill, and head towards that, then continue up the trail on the right.

### **Bear Divide Trail**

Length: 2.2 miles or 4.4 miles roundtrip

Difficulty: Easy if only going one way (downhill) - difficult if making it a round trip. Uphill is steep.

Description: This trail is very easy to follow, with no trails intersecting it. However, it is a steep incline/decline, so going up or down, watch your footing. The Bear Divide Trail begins in upper Sand Canyon at the Bear Divide U.S. Forest Service Fire Station, and climbs the north face of the San Gabriels to the Los Angeles County Fire Camp 9 at May Canyon Saddle. The trail runs 2.2 miles one way, and provides some of the best landscape views of the Santa Clarita and San Fernando Valleys.

The lower portion of the trail switchbacks through the chaparral as it ascends out of the Sand Canyon/Little Pacoima Canyon drainage. From this vantage point, the Topatopa Mountains can be seen off to the west; to the east lies the Magic Mountain wilderness and the front range of the San Gabriels. The trail ascends quickly up the mountain, and in no time the dry chaparral begins to transition into oak woodland.

As you reach the top of the ridge, the big cone Douglas fir and canyon oak forest becomes very dense and provides a wonderful shady understory for the hiker. For this reason, the trail (especially when begun from the top) is one of the best summer hiking trails.

Once at the top, the spectacular view (on a clear day) can be taken in on all sides. Toward the south you can see the San Fernando Valley clear to Santa Catalina Island, and toward the north you can see the Santa Clarita Valley, the Ojai Range, and to the Antelope Valley. In the last few years, the endangered California Condor has been seen riding thermals above the higher peaks, so keep an eye to the sky for largest bird in North America. For a one-way trip, it is advisable for a pair of hikers to leave vehicles at either end of the trail.

How to get to the trailhead: From SR 14, exit on Sand Canyon and head south. Sand Canyon will wind its way up the mountains to Bear Divide. At Bear Divide, turn right and head ¼ mile to the turnout on the right. The trail starts at the turnout. To hike down the trail, continue up the fire road to Camp 9 fire station. There is a dirt parking area to the right of the entrance. The trail head is also on the right.