

Sycamore Canyon - Serrano Valley Loop

Date: Sept 5th

Leader: Shirley Feinblatt

Distance: 8.5 mi. RT

Elevation Gain: 1100 ft.

Directions to Trailhead: Drive 20 miles west of the Malibu Canyon Road on the Pacific Coast Highway to Sycamore Canyon Campground. You can park outside the gate for free. Otherwise there's a parking fee. There are restrooms available in the campground.

The Hike: A mile and a half after leaving the campground you will pass the Serrano Canyon Trail on the right. That will be the trail that you will use to return to the trailhead later. Continue up the gently graded Sycamore Canyon, occasionally crossing the stream. About one hour after leaving the trailhead you will approach the Wood Canyon Trail junction. Several trails branch out from the main trail in this area. The hike will take the trail (not the road) on the right.

The initial view of this trail is shocking after the previous level walking. The trail goes up a steep ridge gaining 800 feet before reaching a level area near Old Boney Road. Once on the ridge separating Sycamore Canyon and Serrano Valley, the payoff is a spectacular view of Sycamore Canyon, the grasslands of Serrano Valley to the south-east, and Boney Mountain with its many peaks jutting out to the east.

Take the road south downhill into Serrano Valley. This road drops 350 ft., then makes a left turn around a shoulder and goes across an intermittent stream coming down from a prominent rock waterfall. After crossing the stream and making a right turn, the road climbs for a few minutes, leveling off on the shoulder of a grassy ridge that slopes to the south. Walk south on the ridge (there may be no trail because the grass grows fast) heading for a prominent Sumac tree. Look for the trail to the right of the tree; just continue south on the highest part of the downhill sloping ridge. When the ridge levels out, the trail angles to the right and meets the trail that goes down Serrano Canyon. An old fence line divides the grassland from the chaparral. It is near the fence line that you can pick up the well-defined trail into the canyon.

The trail goes through some chaparral, and then very quickly enters the steep-walled, solid rock, water formed gorge, connecting the higher Serrano Valley with the Sycamore Canyon downstream. Watch out for Poison Oak. Upon reaching the Big Sycamore Canyon Trail, turn left and return to the trailhead.

A possible choice for a shorter hike is to take the Serrano Canyon Trail into Serrano Canyon and beyond into the valley. Explore the valley's grasslands as long as you wish, and then return to the trailhead the way you came. Refreshments will be in the parking lot.