

Temescal Canyon to Skull Rock and beyond Santa Monica Mountains

Leader: Anneliese Grohs

Date/Start time: March 6, 2013/9:30 am

Distance: 4.4 (loop) or 5.4 (to skull rock) or 7 miles

Elevation: about 1100'

Terrain: Oak- and Sycamore-shaded canyon, chaparral, rocky and steep trail in parts.

View: excellent view of the coast and city on a clear day.

Direction to trail head:

From the Los Angeles head west on the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10) to its end and continue north on Pacific Coast Highway. Turn north (right) on Temescal Canyon Road and drive 1.1 miles, cross Sunset Blvd. and into Temescal Gateway Park.

From 405 Freeway. go west on Sunset Blvd. to Pacific Palisades and turn right into Temescal Gateway Park.

The parking fee is **now \$7**. Because the Temescal Gateway Park belongs to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy the State Park coupons are not accepted.

Street parking along Temescal Canyon Rd. is a possibility if you don't mind walking a few hundred yards up and across Sunset Blvd. Parking on Sunset is limited to two hours.

And please **be aware of the stop signs** around the parking area; they have cameras, so **come to a full stop**. (the fine is \$175)

Restrooms are in two locations: the lower parking lot and near the campus store.

The hike:

Walk up the canyon on the landscaped path through the retreat facility. The footpath soon crosses a branch of Temescal Creek. Continue through the canyon. The path ascends moderately to another footbridge and a close-up view of a small waterfall. The path steepens and climbs westward up Temescal Ridge to a signed junction with Temescal Ridge Trail. For those who want a short hike you can return to the trailhead via Bienvenido Trail or Viewpoint Trail. The others continue uphill a half-mile to Skull Rock. The rock is a great place for our cookie break, to rest, admire the view and cool off.

Some might want to turn around here, the others can continue for a mile or two, have lunch at the radio towers and then return via the Ridge Trail/Viewpoint Trail to the parking lot.

For a new adventure another hike option is the Rivas Canyon Trail to Will Rogers State Park and back: round-trip: 4.2 miles, elevation gain/loss: 910' – maps are available near the upper parking lot.

There is quite a bit of history in this canyon:

Stewart Hall located deeper in the canyon, was built as a chapel in the **early 1900s**. It is an exquisite space with a 30-foot high pitched wood ceiling, a carpeted floor, and a stage with an electronic screen. The two main walls of glass windows open out onto a garden of sycamore trees and flowers, bringing nature into the room.

Follow the path up the canyon to encounter another beautiful spot, a vast, grassy meadow shaded by native sycamores. In the early 1900s, this area served as an outdoor auditorium for the **Chautauqua Movement**. Sycamore Valley is ideal for those who want a ceremony in totally natural surroundings with a scenic view of the mountains.