

OTP Hike #295

JACK SMITH TRAIL UP MT. WASHINGTON  
 Wednesday, 20 September 1995  
 Time: 9:30 AM

This may seem to be a more relaxed hike for a Carlin Hike, but it will be hot, the hill is steep, so relish the choice! Be prepared to visit the museum at the end of the hike.

Sometimes called "the poor man's Bel Air," Mt. Washington manages to be both in the city and off the beaten track at the same time. Most motorists speeding north on the Pasadena Freeway have no clue to the charms of the hill to the left of the freeway, or to the northeast of Dodger Stadium.

With the help of city and county government, as well as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, residents recently united to preserve Rainbow Canyon, a ravine filled with native California walnut trees.

Also located on Mt. Washington is the Southwest Museum, one of the most complete collections of native California artifacts, including basketry, tools and other evidence of cultures that once flourished in the Southland and throughout the Southwest.

A walk up Mt. Washington is a hike into the city's history, as well as a close-up look at one of the city's newest nature preserves. The mountain offers great clear-day views of the city.

This jaunt is named for Los Angeles Times columnist Jack Smith who has long written about the peculiarities of the mountain he calls home.

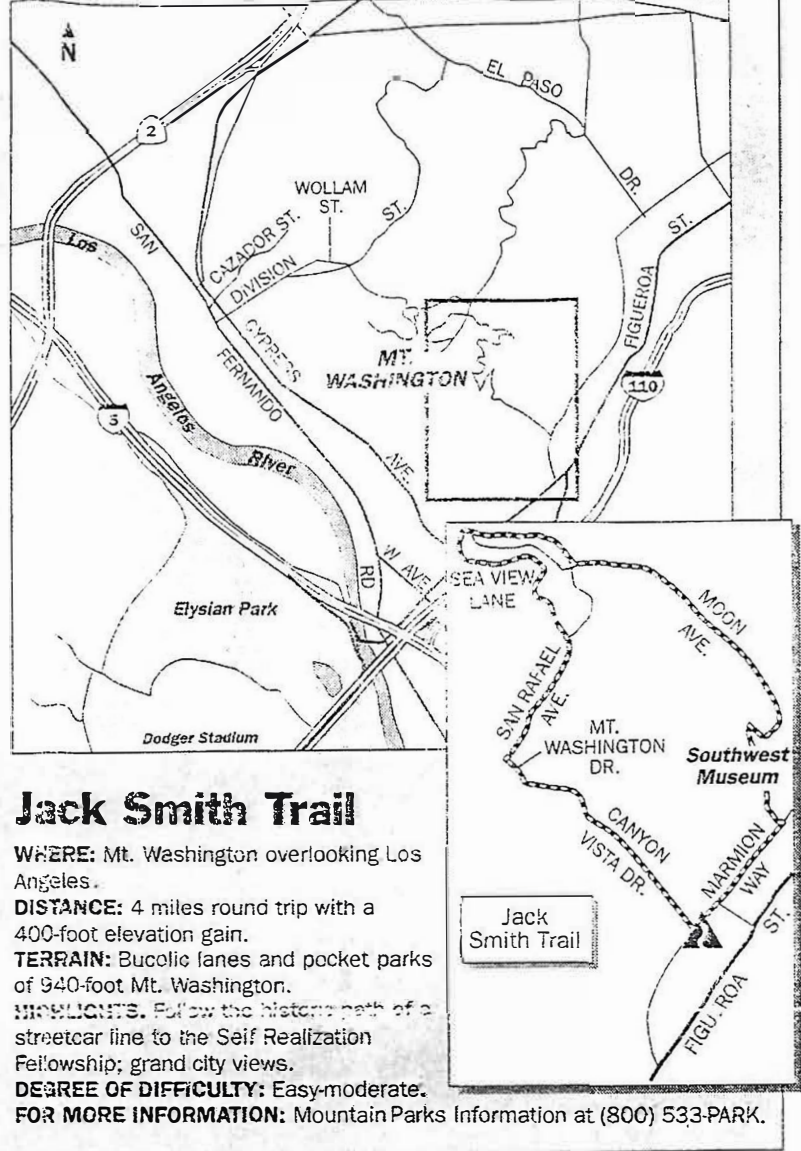
Mt. Washington was subdivided by realtor Robert Marsh and electrical products manufacturer Arthur St. Claire Perry, who built a two-car incline railway to carry passengers up the mountain. The developers hoped that people riding the railway would be inspired to buy lots and homes on the hill.

The ploy worked. As the March 7, 1909, Times enthused about Mt. Washington: "Now right here in our own Los Angeles, the man of even moderate wealth may build his home on a charming, sun-kissed eminence that commands a vista of snow-capped mountains, several cities and the blue ocean—not surpassed on either hemisphere."

Located at the top of the railway was the Mt. Washington Hotel, completed in 1908. Visiting socialites, as well as sports and entertainment celebrities, were attracted to the hotel.

In 1925, Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, acquired the hotel and converted it into the SRF's international headquarters. The handsomely landscaped grounds have long been a quiet place to meditate for both members and visitors.

**Directions to trail head:** Exit the Interstate 110 (Pasadena Freeway) on Avenue 43, head west to Figueroa Boulevard and turn right. Turn left onto Avenue 45, then



**Jack Smith Trail**

**WHERE:** Mt. Washington overlooking Los Angeles.

**DISTANCE:** 4 miles round trip with a 400-foot elevation gain.

**TERRAIN:** Bucolic lanes and pocket parks of 940-foot Mt. Washington.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Follow the historic path of a streetcar line to the Self Realization Fellowship; grand city views.

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** Easy-moderate.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Mountain Parks Information at (800) 533-PARK.

HELENE WEBB Los Angeles Times

make another left onto Marmion Way and park. Begin this walk at the flight of stairs that ascends west from the west side of Marmion Way, just north of Avenue 43.

**The hike:** From Marmion Way, march up the stairs to Canyon Vista Drive. You'll be walking in the tracks (torn up in 1919) of the Mt. Washington railway. Two cars were pulled by a cable running under wood planking.

After a stiff, half-mile climb, Canyon Vista merges with Mt. Washington Drive. You bear right, continuing your ascent via a white fence-lined walkway on the left side of the road. After a couple of curves along Mt. Washington's namesake drive, you'll reach San Rafael Avenue and turn right.

You're now walking close to the crest of Mt. Washington, elevation 940 feet. Almost immediately you'll see the huge iron gates of the Self Realization Fellowship on your right. Stroll the serene grounds and contemplate the city.

Meditations completed, continue

along San Rafael Avenue past the Mt. Washington School and turn left onto Sea View Lane. Until the 1930s, the lane was a dirt road known as Central Terrace; after winter rains, its adobe surface was infamous for trapping autos.

After a quarter mile, you'll reach pavement's end and begin a U-shaped traverse around one of Mt. Washington's more rustic knolls. On clear day, the dirt portion of Sea View Lane lives up to its name, offering vistas of Santa Monica Bay, the Palos Verdes Peninsula and Catalina Island.

After a quarter-mile, Sea View Lane resumes as a paved road and returns you to San Rafael. Bear left, then right onto Moon Avenue. Now you begin your descent along roads that wander. Moon leads to Crane Drive, which descends to Museum Drive.

Bear left and descend another half-mile to the entrance to the Southwest Museum. After touring Casa de Adobe, go on Museum Drive to junction with Marmion.