

Temescal Ridge Trail Topanga State Park



Date: Wednesday, August 7, 1996

Time: 9:30 am

Distance: 5.5 miles round trip, more for those bagging
Temescal Peak(2,126 feet)

Elevation gain: 500 to 600 feet for the main hike

Features: a new starting off point(most of the elevation gain is accomplished in your car), a gated parking lot, and flush toilets!

Directions:

Take the Christopher Columbus Transcontinental Highway(I-10 on most maps) through the majestic¹ McClure Tunnel to the ocean, then follow Pacific Coast Highway to Sunset Blvd. Turn right(inland)². Proceed 0.5 miles to Palisades Drive(second light). Turn left on Palisades Drive and drive 4.0 miles, mostly uphill. Palisades Drive mysteriously turns into Chastain Parkway somewhere along the way. Turn right on Calle Deborah and go two blocks to a gated, signed parking lot on the left.

The access trail starts as a concrete path across the road from the parking lot.

Temescal Canyon, "cradle of the Palisades" and gateway to many miles of Santa Monica Mountain trails, is a tranquil retreat within the city limits of Los Angeles. During the 1920s the canyon was the site of yearly Chautauquas -- a mixed bag of lectures, sermons, recreational and cultural events -- sponsored by the Methodist founders of Pacific Palisades. We'll ignore the canyon this trip and travel the ridge instead. From the overlooks you can see Santa Ynez, Temescal and Rustic canyons as well as the Los Angeles Basin and the great blue Pacific.³

The hike:

It's a short uphill climb to Temescal Ridge Trail, where you can see views of Santa Monica Bay, the mountains, some power lines, many big new houses, and possibly even Catalina, if it's not too hazy. You could turn right here and walk 2.7 miles to Sunset Blvd., but we just drove up the hill from there, so what's the point? We'll turn left and proceed 1.1 miles to Trailer Canyon Trail. There's a microwave tower atop what locals have dubbed "Radio Peak."

Another 1.5 miles of walking takes you to Rogers Road. Near that intersection is Temescal Peak, the highest spot in Topanga State Park. Energetic hikers can scramble up a short and steep fire break to the top for a fine view.⁴

Rogers Road, a segment of the Backbone Trail, leads six miles rightward to Will Rogers State Historic Park and leftward to intersections with both loops of the Eagle Spring Trail, which in turn leads to Topanga State Park headquarters. These extensions suggest a car shuttle or a very long day of hiking. Instead, we'll return the way we came. Be sure to look for the small trail sign for the turnoff down the hill to our parking lot on the way back.⁵

¹ Majestic? Surely you jest.

² If you turn towards the ocean, you'll end up \$5 poorer and stuck in a beach parking lot.

³ Great? Yes. Blue? Maybe.

⁴ or so I'm told!

⁵ This is the last footnote!