

NOTE: HIKE FOR 10 OCT!



CARLIN = TRAILMASTER

Brand Trail

Hike #44

Brand Park to Verdugo Overlook

6 1/2 miles round trip; 1,300-foot elevation gain

“Have you been to Glendale?”

This was the question posed in full-page advertisements that ran every Sunday in Los Angeles newspapers during the early years of this century. The man placing these ads was civic booster/real estate tycoon Leslie C. Brand, often referred to as “The Father of Glendale.”

Born in St. Louis, Brand moved to the Southland in 1898 and did quite well in the insurance business, becoming president of Guarantee Title and Trust Company of Los Angeles. By 1902, he owned one thousand acres in the Verdugo Mountains.

At the base of the mountains Brand built El Miradero, a 5,000-square-foot mansion. Brand had visited the East Indian Pavillion built for the 1893 Columbia World Exposition in Chicago and was so impressed by the architecture that he decided to have something similar designed for himself. El Miradero, with its elegant white exterior, horseshoe arches and bulbous domes is a unique example of Saracenic architecture—a mixture of Spanish, Moorish and Indian styles.

Brand died in 1925, his widow in 1945, after which, by the terms of his will, Brand’s property was deeded to the city of Glendale for use as a park. El Mirador is now Brand Library.

Brand Park, shaped a little bit like Italy, preserves a portion of the surprisingly rugged Verdugo Mountains, which rise above the southeast end of the San Fernando Valley. Although the 13-mile-long range is surrounded by millions of people, the cities of Burbank, Glendale, La Canada-Flintridge, Los Angeles, Pasadena and four freeways, few hikers have discovered it.

The Verdugo range, which extends northwest to southeast, is one of the mountain barriers separating the San Fernando Valley from the Los Angeles Basin. Glendale, located at the base of the mountains, usually doesn’t consider itself part of the San Fernando Valley, but its geographical position in the southeast end of the valley is easily apparent when looking down upon it from the crest of the Verdugos.

Brand Trail is a fire road that offers a moderately steep ascent from El Miradero, through Brand Park to the ridgeline of the Verdugos. Fine valley views are yours from an overlook, where a strategically placed bench offers a rest for tired hikers. From Verdugo Overlook, intrepid walkers can

easily extend their hike by joining one of several fire roads that travel the rooftop of the Verdugos.

Directions to trailhead: From the Golden State Freeway (I-5) in Glendale, exit on Western Avenue and head northeast on the palm-lined avenue 1 1/2 miles to Brand Library.

The Hike: Near the parking area is an ivy-covered slope where abandoned Brand Nature Trail awaits rejuvenation. You’ll take the asphalt road to the left of the library that leads past the “Doctors’ House,” an 1880s Victorian home in the Queen Anne style that was occupied by a series of four doctors. Citizens saved this historical treasure from the wrecking ball and moved it to its present site.

A bit past a pipe gate that closes the road to vehicle traffic you’ll encounter Canary Island pines, palm trees and other tropical vegetation gone wild. These trees and various tropical shrubs are what’s left of Brand’s estate grounds, once a fairyland of waterfalls, fountains and exotic flora.

A half-dozen roads crisscross this area. Stay on the main, widest one. A mile from the trailhead you’ll pass a less attractive scene—a small sanitary landfill. Watch for rumbling trucks on the road on the weekdays.

Beyond the landfill, the road, now dirt, returns to a more natural setting. You pass a sycamore-lined canyon and reach a signed junction. Keep left on “Brand” and don’t stray onto “Brand Lat.”

Those parts of the hills where tilted rock outcroppings don’t predominate are covered with the chaparral and coastal sage communities. Lemonade berry, toyon, ceanothus, sage, buckwheat, manzanita and tree tobacco are among the more common flora.

Two miles of ascent brings you to an oak tree, which offers the only shade en route. Keep climbing another long mile to the overlook.

A clear-day view takes in much of the San Fernando Valley and part of the Los Angeles Basin, including downtown. You can see the southeast end of the Santa Monica Mountains, the Hollywood

