

0930 WED 1-17-90

Hike #5

Season: All year
Topo: Burbank, Hollywood



Mount Hollywood Trail

Merry-go-round to Mt. Hollywood

6 miles RT; 800' gain

Merry-go-round to Planetarium

9 miles RT; 800' gain

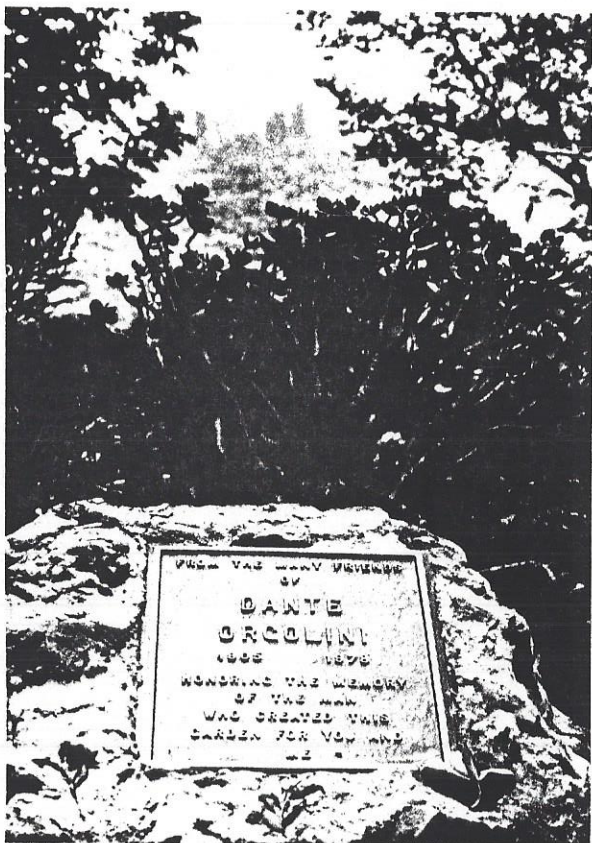
There are really two Griffith Parks. One is the familiar urban park with its landscaped shrubbery, rolling manicured lawns, observatory and zoo. The other is a wild park; this area forms the eastern terminus of the Santa Monica Mountains and offers the hiker a taste of the range's cliffs and crags.

You would expect *everyone* to climb the ridges on a clear day, but that's not the case; most visitors are content to remain with their barbecues and softball games in the flatlands below. Two-thirds of 4,107-acre Griffith Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the world, is mountain country. Fifty-three miles of trail give hikers access to the call of the mourning dove, the joys of our native chaparral and sycamore communities and a host of exotic plants imported from faraway lands. The route to Mt. Hollywood, highest peak in the park, offers delightful clear-day views of the Big Basin.

This is a nice outing in winter, when the rich green crown of the toyon bush is aglow with a mass of red berries. At a time when most members of the chaparral community have donned their gray apparel, the toyon—also known variously as Christmas berry or California holly—is the most festive of flora. It's believed that masses of this California native shrub growing on the hills above Hollywood gave the community its name. The Christmas berry bushes alongside the trail to Mount Hollywood frame fine city views.

Directions to trailhead: Griffith Park, with its central location, is accessible by numerous freeways and surface streets. The trailhead to Mount Hollywood is best reached from the Los Feliz Boulevard entrance, turning onto Griffith Park Drive. Follow the signs to the merry-go-round and park in the lot off Griffith Park Drive. The trail begins across the Drive from the parking lot.

You can pick up a trail map at the Ranger Station in the park center, located on Griffith Park Drive. The park is open daily from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M..



Dante's View

The Hike: Three trails embark from the road opposite the parking lot. The lowermost trail leaves for Five Points, the hike's first destination, the middle path is the Fern Canyon Nature Trail, a pleasant and educational experience, but the uppermost trail, marked "Bridle Trail," is our departure point today for Mt. Hollywood. This trail almost immediately forks, and you'll veer left. The trail climbs high above lush Fern Canyon and offers fine views into the San Fernando Valley. Soon you'll arrive at Five Points, a place where five trails converge.

From Five Points, take the trail to your right (southwest). You'll cross Vista Del Valle Drive, continuing your ascent as the sparkling observatory comes into view. The trail grows more rugged as it nears Dante's View.

How did Dante's View get its name? Some hikers, climbing to Dante's during a Smog Alert, look out over a smokey metropolis, and conclude that the viewpoint must have been named for the fourteenth-century

Florentine Dante Alighieri and his vision of *The Inferno*. The more romantic, no doubt inspired by a clearer day, hypothesize that some jilted young man wandered about these hills to this promontory in a search similar to Dante's quest for his fair, lost Beatrice. Actually, Dante's View was named for twentieth-century artist-writer Dante Orgolini. Orgolini, an immigrant of Italian descent was a mural painter during the Depression. In his later years, after suffering the heartbreak of a divorce, he put his artistic energies into planting a two-acre retreat of pine, palm and pepper trees high on the south-facing slope of Mount Hollywood. A water fountain and picnic tables welcome the hiker.

From Dante's, continue the short distance to the top of Mount Hollywood. By now you've figured out that Mount Hollywood is *not* the mountain crowned by the historic Hollywood sign, where disappointed screen actresses leap to their deaths. You can, however, see the sign quite well as you near the summit of Mount Hollywood (elevation 1,625'). Wonderful sunsets can be observed from the peak and on clear days the entire basin is spread out before you from the San Gabriel Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. Sometimes Mounts San Gorgonio, Baldy and San Jacinto can be seen.

Option: Mt. Hollywood to Planetarium. This stretch is the most popular hike in the park and you have several routes to choose from. One way is to retrace your steps to Dante's View and continue along this path to the Observatory parking lot. Several other trails branch off from this one and also lead to the Observatory. One of them on the east slope descends steeply to the Bird Sanctuary. After visiting the birds, you may hike ½ mile up Vermont Canyon Road to the Observatory.

