



Anaheim Hills Trail

HIKE FOR 9/4/91

@ 0930

Season: All Year

(\$2.00 ENTRY FEE)

Santiago Oaks Regional Park to Robbers Roost

3 1/2 miles round trip; 700-foot elevation gain

"Who determines the names of natural features? Fundamentally, names are a part of language, and the eventual power rests with the people."

George Stewart. *Names on the Land*

Geologists and mapmakers have long referred to the long, low ridge extending west from the Santa Ana Mountains and rising above Santa Ana Canyon as the Peralta Hills, but almost no one uses that name anymore. Today the hills are the known as the Anaheim Hills.

The hills honor, or did honor, Juan Pablo Peralta and his family, original owners of the huge Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana. Peralta is an excellent name, historic and euphonious. It recalls the Latin expression *Per Alta*, "through the high things." Sounds like a university motto, doesn't it?

Anaheim, which German settlers in 1858 named after the river Santa Ana plus the suffix heim (home), already names a city, a boulevard, a bay, a stadium and much more. Perhaps it's time for concerned day hikers and Orange Countians to rally to save the Peralta Hills. (Alas, it is not merely the name of the hills, but the hills themselves that are fast-disappearing beneath the suburban sprawl.)

Other names from the past still remain. Santiago Oaks Regional Park, Santiago Creek and Santiago Canyon are derived from the old Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana. One intriguing name for a rocky knob overlooking the regional park is Robbers Roost. From this lookout, such infamous 19th Century outlaws as Joaquin Murietta and Three-Finger Jack kept watch over rural Orange County.

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Santiago Oaks Regional Park preserves 125 acres of pastoral Orange County woodland that attracts many species of birds. The park's ecosystem with Windes Nature Trail. The Pacific Loop offer a glimpse of the county's coastline. A network of trails, located near the trailhead, is well-worth a visit.

And equestrian trail crisscross the park and Anaheim Hills. While the hills seem destined for suburban development, at least, you can enjoy a ramble up to Robbers Roost and steal a look at fast-vanishing rural Orange County.

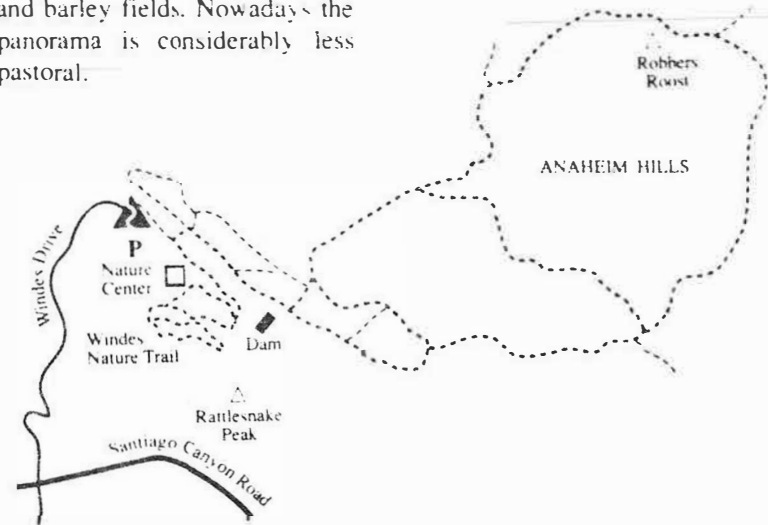
Directions to trailhead: From the Newport Freeway (55) in Orange, exit on Katella. Turn east on Katella, which undergoes a name change in a half-mile to Villa Park Road, then a second name change to Santiago Canyon Road. A bit more than ~~two~~ miles from the freeway, turn left on Windes Drive and drive a mile to Santiago Oaks Regional Park. An "Iron Ranger," a self-service entrance gate, collects your vehicle entry fee.

The Hike: From the end of the parking area, you'll spot Windes Nature Trail on your right, then swing left and cross Santiago Creek on some man-made stepping-stones. You'll pass a number of trails leading left into the woods, but for now stay with the main trail along the creek. Along with the native oaks, you might spot some more uncommon flora, including eucalyptus and pepper trees, and even a small grove of Valencia oranges.

Soon you'll see an old dam. With the aid of Chinese laborers, the Serrano and Carpenter Water Company built a clay dam here in 1879. This dam was destroyed by floods, and replaced in 1892 with a more substantial structure of river rock and cement.

Bear left, uphill, and ascend steeply up a dirt road to the park's north boundary gate. Beyond the gate you'll ascend to an unsigned junction and bear left, then ascend a prickly pear cactus-dotted slope to a junction signed with an equestrian symbol and turn right. After passing under some transmission lines, the equestrian trail reaches Robbers Roost.

From the 1,152-foot peak, you can look over the Peralta Hills and trace the path of Santiago Creek. Not so long ago, the view would have taken in hundreds of cattle, orange groves, and barley fields. Nowadays the panorama is considerably less pastoral.



HIKE