

(A LECHO HIKE WE MISSED)
ONE JULY DAY

UTTER/BROWN

4-28-93

9:30AM

OTP Hike #0174

54

TRAILS OF THE ANGELES

15 Altadena to Oakwilde via Arroyo Seco

9 miles round trip; 900' elevation gain

Classification: Moderate

Season: November-May

Topo map: Pasadena

FEATURES

The Arroyo Seco today is largely bypassed and forgotten. Fifty years ago it was one of the most popular vacation spots in the range. Under its luxuriant cover of willow, sycamore, alder and bay, the canyon reverberated with the lusty shouts and merry songs of hikers and campers. The lower reaches were dotted with rustic cabins and well-used picnic spots. This was before the Angeles Crest Highway provided ready access into the mountains, climbing high on the west slope of the canyon. Now nature's stillness reigns supreme in the canyon, broken only by the gentle murmur of stream, the soft rustle of sycamore leaves, and—as a reminder of civilization's nearness—the occasional muffled roar of an automobile rounding a curve far above.

About halfway up this great gorge, on a forested streamside bench, is Oakwilde Picnic Area—tables and stoves. Here, in 1911, J. R. Phillips fashioned a tourist resort—old Camp Oak Wilde. For almost three decades, until it was nearly obliterated in the 1938 flood, this was a favorite spot of vacationing Southlanders. In the 1920s a road was built up the lower Arroyo Seco to the camp; it too was severely damaged in the greatest torrent known to man in the San Gabriels. Today, only remnants of the road remain, and a few stone foundations at Oakwilde are the only signs of what once went on here.

Time and nature's gradual healing process have restored much of the beauty of the lower Arroyo Seco, although parts of it have been permanently marred by man's work—most notably the Brown Canyon Debris Dam. Still, there is much to be seen and enjoyed in this great canyon; this trail trip gives you a fair sampling.

One Hundred Hikes

DESCRIPTION

From 210 Freeway, take the Arroyo Blvd. offramp and drive north on Arroyo, which promptly becomes Windsor Avenue. Continue north $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the intersection with Ventura Street.

You will notice two roads—both with gates usually locked—leading north down toward the canyon entrance. Take the right (eastern) of the two; the left road goes to the JPL parking lot. Proceed on foot down the road, which gains the Arroyo Seco entrance in $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. You pass the assorted markings of the Pasadena Water Department—fences, retaining walls, gaging stations, and a host of warning signs—and reach Forest Service residences in another $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Go left at a road fork, as indicated by the GABRIELINO TRAIL sign. Now the canyon closes in and the scenery becomes more woodsy—giant canyon oaks, alders, willows, sycamores, even a few eucalyptus trees from resort days. This is both a hiking and an equestrian route, so you'll most likely pass horseback riders. The trail alternates between following the old road and stream-hopping where roadbed and bridges have washed out.

A half mile above the Forest Service residences is Teddy's Outpost Picnic Area—named for a small roadside resort operated by Theodore "Teddy" Syvertson from 1914 to 1915. In another $\frac{1}{2}$ mile you reach the Gould Mesa Campground, honoring Will Gould, who homesteaded here in the '90s, and just beyond, a sideroad leading up to Gould Mesa and the Angeles Crest Highway. Nino Picnic Area is $\frac{1}{3}$ mile farther. Above Nino the canyon narrows, twists and turns, and remnants of the old road become less evident. In another $\frac{3}{4}$ mile you reach Paul Little Memorial Picnic Area, 100 feet to your left. Going right, the trail climbs up the steep east slope of the canyon to get around Brown Canyon Debris Dam, then drops back into the gorge and rounds two sharp bends before reaching Oakwilde, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the start. Here, amid the crumbling foundations of the old road's-end resort, under live oaks and alders, the Forest Service has built Oakwilde Trail Camp, with tables and stoves.

Return the way you came.