

Mount Lowe Railway Self-Guided Tour—Sunset Ridge via old railway bed to Mount Lowe Campground

22

6 miles round trip; 1100' elevation gain  
 Classification: Easy  
 Season: November-May  
 Topo maps: Pasadena, Mt. Wilson

FEATURES

The Mount Lowe Railway self-guided tour was set up by the Forest Service in 1977. You walk up the old railway bed, now the Sunset Ridge-Mount Lowe fire road, passing 10 numbered "stations" designating historic points of interest. These marked "stations" include the sites of Cape of Good Hope, Grand Circular Bridge, Horseshoe Curve, Granite Gate and Mount Lowe Tavern, the latter now Mount Lowe Trail Camp. The old railway bed is gently graded and the scenery overlooking mountain, canyon and lowland—particularly on a cool winter day—is magnificent. You are certain to enjoy this rendezvous with history.

Be sure to pick up a free brochure before the trip, obtainable at Angeles National Forest headquarters or Oak Grove Ranger Station, both in Pasadena. The 24-page booklet describes each of the 10 historic "stations" and includes old photographs and a map.

DESCRIPTION

From Loma Alta Drive in Altadena, turn north on Chaney Trail Drive and follow it to the junction atop Sunset Ridge; turn right and park outside the locked gate blocking the Sunset Ridge fire road.

Walk past the locked gate, and on up the Sunset Ridge fire road 2 miles to a large clearing. Here, to your left, a sign and map indicate that you are beginning the Mount Lowe Railway Self-Guided Tour. (An attractive alternative is to take the Sunset Ridge Trail, which generally parallels the fire road: take the trail per Trips 19 and 21 into Millard Canyon; just before you reach the canyon bottom, turn right at a trail junction, and follow the path all the way up to the top of Sunset Ridge, 2½ miles, where you rejoin the fire

1 hr 27 min Drivins  
 + 9.2 miles

Elevation gain 1,660'  
 Mica & 6-4

16 start - 4 went back early  
 People

Mica  
 Dave  
 Grant  
 Henry

May 31 #25

road.) As you zigzag up and round the ridge, Echo Mountain and its historic ruins come into view down to your right. In ½ mile you meet the old railway bed coming up from Echo Mountain. Just beyond you pass a metal sign on your left indicating that you have reached Cape of Good Hope, where the old mountain railroad rounded a point above Millard Canyon. (Each of these "stations" is marked with a railroad rail stake, marked with the station number, name of the landmark, and sometimes a photograph.) Over the next mile you pass the landmarks of Dawn Mine Station, Grand Circular Bridge and Horseshoe Curve as the route climbs high along the east wall of Millard Canyon. Finally the old roadbed turns abruptly east, passes through Granite Gate, ascends to near the head of Grand Canyon and reaches Mount Lowe Trail Camp, three miles from the upper Sunset Ridge parking area. The shady trail camp—on the site of old Mount Lowe Tavern—is equipped with tables, stoves, drinking fountain and rest rooms. You may wish to continue up the roadway, then right at a junction out to Inspiration Point, the last of the marked stations, ½ mile from the campground, for an overview of Echo Mountain and the foothills.

Return the same way, or descend via the Castle Canyon or Upper Sam Merrill Trail to Echo Mountain (described in Trip 23), then up the lower portion of the railway bed to Sunset Ridge and down to your car. Either of these alternatives adds 2 miles to the round trip.

Granite Gate, Mt. Lowe Railway

