

84 East Fork, San Gabriel River: Ranger Station to The Narrows

9 miles round trip; 1000' elevation gain

Classification: Moderate

Season: November-June

Topo maps: Glendora, Crystal Lake, Mount San Antonio

FEATURES

The saga of the East Fork of the San Gabriel can just about be summed up in one word—gold! The precious metal was discovered in the canyon gravels in 1854, and almost overnight the East Fork became a scene of frenzied activity. The only real gold-rush town in the San Gabriels—Eldoradoville—sprang up where the East Fork elbows north. It boasted three hotels and a half dozen saloons. Not much more is known about Eldoradoville, for the rustic boom town was washed away lock, stock, and barrel in the great flood of 1862. Placer gold was exhausted soon thereafter, and prospectors began searching nearby draws and hillsides for promising quartz veins. Their efforts were rewarded, and for the next half century lode gold was recovered from tunnels and shafts along canyonsides and well up on higher slopes. Place names in the area today commemorate the miners of yesteryear—Heaton Flat, Trogden's, Allison Gulch, Shoemaker Canyon, to name a few.

The East Fork is quiet now, save for the rush of the stream and the rustling of oak and spruce leaves. Prospectors no longer burrow for hidden treasures. But the scars of the gold-mining efforts can be seen almost the length of the chasm. You must look up along canyon slopes to see these aged marks; all evidences of streamside mining activities have long since been erased by the torrential floods that periodically scour the streambed.

This is an interesting trip for more than historical reasons. The scenery here is monumental, on a scale seen nowhere else in the San Gabriels. The gorge of the East Fork cuts deep into the eastern high country, separating such giants of the range as Mt. Baden-Powell and Old

Baldy. The rise from the floor of The Narrows (2800') to the top of Iron Mountain (8007') is 5200' in 1¼ horizontal miles! This is nature in its grandest proportions (at least by Southern California standards). And there is good trout fishing in the broad stream.

A word of warning: do not attempt this trip after heavy rains. There are numerous stream crossings enroute, and storms turn this usually hubbling creek into a raging torrent, dangerous if not impossible to ford.

DESCRIPTION

From Azusa drive up the San Gabriel Canyon Road 10 miles, then turn east on the East Fork Road and continue 8 more miles to the East Fork Ranger Station. Park just below the station.

Walk north along the roadbed that follows the high bench east of the river for ½ mile before dropping to the canyon floor. Your trail now follows the river, fording its shallow but rushing waters four times. You pass remnants of the old East Fork Road, a paved highway to The Narrows that was destroyed in the great flood of March 1938. In 2 miles you pass under Swan Rock, a towering wall west of the river with the outline of a giant swan etched in gray. When the canyon broadens and curves northwest, climb to your right and follow the old roadbed high above the river. In another ½ mile you turn north again, descend 100 feet and reach a highway bridge seemingly out of place. This is the famous "Bridge to Nowhere," the most imposing remnant of the East Fork Road of yesteryear. Cross the bridge and turn right, following a narrow trail that drops into the heart of The Narrows, the most impressive gorge in the Angeles. In ¼ mile, down to your right just above the tumultuous river, is Narrows Trail Camp, beckoning you to stay overnight.

Note: The area adjacent to the "Bridge to Nowhere" is private property. Some mining exploratory work is being done. Hikers are allowed to cross the bridge and continue through the upper Narrows, but please respect private property.

OTP HIKE JUL 10, 1996 SHOTI KUBO
 BRIDGE TO NOWHERE (MAY HAVE TO MAKE IN PLACES)

