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March 18, 2015

Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (in Laguna Niguel, Orange County)

Bob Singer, Hike Leader

Distance: Baseline hike = 8 miles round trip. Elevation gain: 900 ft.

Directions to Trailhead: Take the 5 South (from the Valley and from north O.C.) or the 405 South (from the coast cities) past the "Y" junction where the 5 and 405 merge. Exit the 5 at El Toro Road, turn right on El Toro for about 1 mile to Moulton Parkway, turn left on Moulton and go about 1 mile to Glenwood Drive, turn right on Glenwood (which will become Pacific Park Drive) for about 1.5 miles, turn right on Canyon Vistas. Go about 1/2 mile until it reaches its end at Silkwood. Park by the corner here at Canyon View Park, where we will gather for the hike. Parking is in the streets of the neighborhood and there is no parking fee. The Wilderness Park is accessed through the city park.

A somewhat shorter route if you wish to pay the toll is to take the 73S toll road from the 405, exit on Glenwood Drive / Pacific Park, turn right on Pacific Park and shortly turn right on Canyon Vistas. Follow the directions above to drive to the bottom of the hill and park on the street.

The Hike: We will start from, and return to, Canyon View Park, which has one upgraded port-a-potty and three picnic tables. There are occasional port-a-potties along the hike. The trailhead is reached by walking through the park to the rear right corner to a gate into the Wilderness Park. Excellent signage exists along the trails in the Wilderness Park. All hikes begin by walking through the city park to the entrance. After walking in the Wilderness Park a short distance we come to a bench and poster board, and a fork in the trail.

The baseline hike is a loop starting down Wood Canyon Trail along Wood Creek, with shade, trees, creek, and meadow scenery and a short 0.5 mi round trip excursion to Dripping cave and a 0.5 mile side loop to Cave Rock until we reach the end of this trail at Aliso Creek Trail, for a total of about 4 miles. We then head back directly (no side trips) for about 1 mile to Mathis Trail to the left making a steady 1.25 mile climb without much shade, gaining about 550 ft. We then get to West Ridge Trail, turn right (north), traverse along the ridge of the park, and return to the trailhead on Cholla Trail to Wood Canyon Trail again. This last portion of the hike is about 1.7 mi.

Several excellent hike alternatives exist here and will be explained, with a map, at the start of the hike.

Two suggested shorter hikes are (1) Go down Wood Canyon Trail to Dripping Cave and return (5.1 miles without much elevation gain, and in pretty, shaded scenery) and (2) a full 5 mile loop but that turns onto Mathis Trail without side trips and without going all the way to Aliso Creek Trail (this keeps the climb for elevation gain).

Hike extensions include (1) a half mile walk each way to Top of the World (for a panoramic view of Catalina, Palos Verdes, the San Gabriels, and San Clemente Island) by turning left on West Ridge Trail at the end of Mathis Trail, (2) up to 1.75 miles each way by walking along Aliso Creek Trail or possibly Meadows Trail at the end of Wood Canyon Trail, and (3) various little trail options along the way. Some of us like to hike the baseline hike in the opposite direction.

Refreshments will be in the city park. Glass bottles and alcohol are prohibited, so all beverages will be in cans, and plastic cups will be provided.

Please bring a copy of the [Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park Map](#) with you to the hike.

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