

8-6-97

Maps: Canoga Park, topo
Topanga, topo
Distance: 9½ miles roundtrip
Elevation: 1250' gain and loss
Terrain: Road and gravel streambed
Time: 4 hours 15 minutes
Trailhead: Queensferry Road

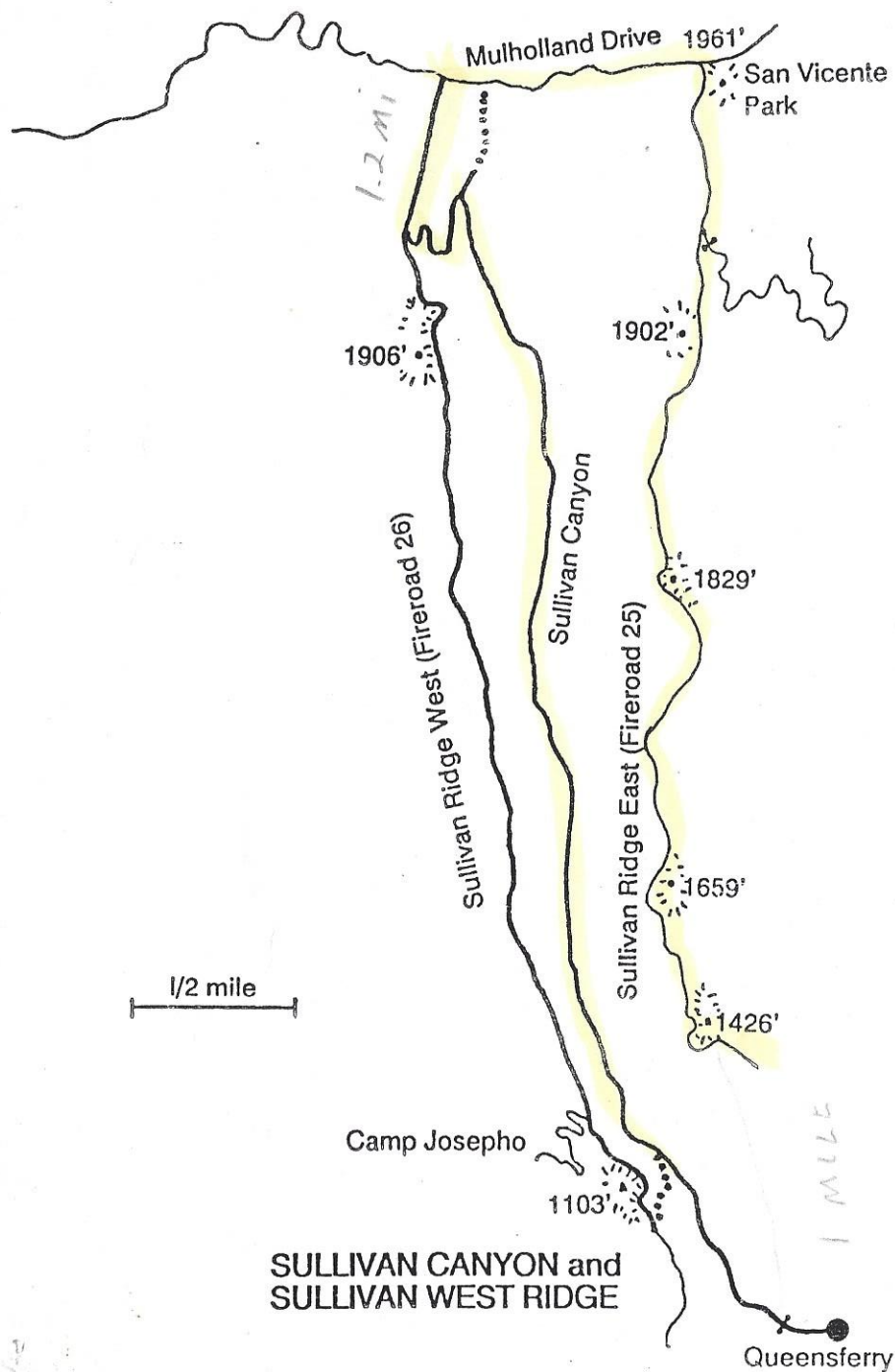
In Brentwood go 2.3 miles west of the San Diego Freeway on Sunset Blvd. Turn north onto Mandeville Canyon Road for 0.3 mile to Westridge Road, turn left and follow the twists and turns for 1.1 miles turning left at Bayliss Road, then 0.3 mile to Queensferry Road, turn left and park. The trail is on a private road and presently posted "No trespassing."

This hike is along the floor of a narrow steep-walled canyon. During the heavy flood stage, water covers the entire floor and distributes a large amount of 150 million year old gravel (called Santa Monica Slate) rather indiscriminately along the entire area. The floods of early 1980 eliminated most of the road and trails in the canyon, restoring it to a near pristine state.

Pick your way along the bottom of the canyon as it very gently ascends to the north. You will cross the stream many times — this will be of concern only early in the year when the water is high. As soon as summer arrives, the surface water disappears but the stream continues to flow down in the gravel several feet below.

The floor of the canyon is shaded with Sycamore trees, Coast Live Oaks, Walnuts, and other moisture-loving trees. A wide variety of native wild flowers, some grasses, and small shrubs including Poison Oak are found here. Both sides, up from the canyon floor, are covered with chaparral. A fire early in 1978 burned the slopes and ridges except at the head of the canyon, but the chaparral recovered immediately by rootsprouting and new lush plant growth.

Two pipelines run down the valley floor, usually covered from view but sometimes exposed by flood waters. Remnants of a dirt service road exist for a short distance on the east slope a hundred



feet or so up. Trails go to both ridges but are presently overgrown and difficult to locate from below. Only one is in good condition, going to the west ridge.

The canyon floor continuously presents shady rest spots without many significant landmarks. About 1½ miles from the trailhead there is a 6' waterfall on the east side. This dries up early, but is clear cool water in the spring. Occasional outcroppings of the Santa Monica Slate bedrock can be seen on both sides of the canyon. The blue-gray color is sometimes covered by a layer of limonite that was deposited by percolating waters along joints and bedding planes. This brown color is deceptive because it makes the slate difficult to recognize. Farther up the canyon a tall Eucalyptus tree on the left makes a good landmark. It has reseeded and now some smaller ones are growing. This point is about 3 miles from the trailhead and is often used as a turnaround point for a shorter hike, as the trail becomes steeper from here on.

Continuing up the stream, you will be on an old road that is high enough above the stream to avoid being washed out. In about a half mile, a road forks to the right and dead-ends into a steep trail going up through the chaparral to Mulholland Drive. I prefer the left fork, staying on the road until reaching the fireroad on the ridge. Turn right and follow this to Mulholland.

The return trip presents two options: you may go back the same way you came or go back by way of the Sullivan Ridge Road West (Fireroad 26). The fireroad stays high on the ridge and goes south without many turns. It's best to pick a cool day for this trip as little shade exists except for a small clump of Oaks about half way.

A little over 3 miles from Mulholland a road goes downhill on the right to Camp Josepho. Stay on the ridge and one third mile farther a trail on the left leads down to the floor of Sullivan Canyon. Watch closely for the start of this trail as it is not marked. While still on the road, you pass under some telephone wires and go around a bend to the right; look to your left. A pole with the number 43975 is a good indicator. Go a few hundred feet farther to find the trail, overgrown and steep. In 15 minutes you reach the streambed and turn right. It is one-half mile to the end of the hike.