

The Red Box Loop

October 19, 2005, 9:30 AM

Ron Forbess' Hike

Summary

This is a loop for the ambitious and a shorter jaunt for those wishing for a more leisurely hike - all on good trail, and plenty of shade. The entire loop is 8.3 miles - going up 1100 ft., dropping 2100 ft., and finally trudging back up 1000 ft. to Red Box. The shorter - 4.5 mile round trip - option returns to Red Box after reaching the saddle and walking to the top of Mount Disappointment.

Trailhead Directions

Meet at Red Box Station at mileage paddle 38.38 on the Angeles Crest Highway (about 14 miles from I-210 at the Mt. Wilson road turn off). Be sure to be there in plenty of time for a 9:30 departure. There is a restroom at the trailhead.

The Hike

From Red Box we walk up the Mount Wilson Road for .4 mile to the Mt. Disappointment service road. The well maintained (built in 1988) San Gabriel Peak Trail starts from there. It wastes no time in zigzagging up the steep oak and conifer shaded slopes to the west. After about .6 mile the trail comes close to a stretch of the service road. It then resumes switch backing, offering occasional views of the Mt. Wilson and West Fork country to the east. The trail finally intersects the service road and after .2 mile reaches the road to Mt. Disappointment. At this point we will break into two groups. One will go another 200 ft. gain and about a quarter mile to the top of Mt. Disappointment, a former Nike missile base, now an antenna site, then return to Red Box, either back down the trail or down the paved road. The other group will continue the loop hike by going down the trail to Markham Saddle. From there we head toward Eaton Saddle through the tunnel on the dirt service road. At Eaton Saddle we cross the Mt. Wilson Road to the beginning of the Valley Forge Trail. Down we go on this shaded and well maintained (for the most part) trail - 2.6 miles and 1400 ft. drop - until we join the Gabrielino Trail. The upper part of this trail goes on a fairly straight course high on the west wall of Falls Canyon, the lower part switchbacks through the shade of tall chaparral, big cone spruce and oak trees. Once on the Gabrielino trail we continue down for another .3 mile, passing the junction to Valley Forge Campground and a stone cabin before starting back up. Then it's up a little over 1000 ft. with one short level part just before we cross the service road, .7 mile from the Red Box parking lot and refreshments.