

Sandstone Peak in Circle X Ranch April 1, 2009

Hike leader: Dick Battin: 818-346-7923

This hike starts from a parking lot off of Yerba Buena Road and goes on the Mishe Mokwa Trail counter-clockwise around a loop to the Backbone Trail and Sandstone Peak, then return. Maps will be available on the day of the hike.

Primary hike: 6 miles

Elevation gain: 1100 feet

Several alternate hikes varying from 3 to 3.5 miles

The following is a description from Jerry Schad's *Afoot & Afield* in Los Angeles County.

"Sandstone Peak is the destination for peak baggers in the Santa Monicas, at 3111 feet the highest in the range, and the one with the most panoramic view. At best you should come on a crystalline day in late fall or winter to take best advantage of the skyline views. Spring is dependably good because of the wildflowers. In addition to blue-flowering stands of ceanothus, the early to mid-spring bloom includes monkey flower, nightshade, Chinese houses, wild peony, wild hyacinth, morning glory, and phacelia.

Start hiking at the large parking lot on the north side of Yerba Buena Road, 1 mile east of Circle X park headquarters. Proceed past a gate and up a fire road 0.3 mile to where the marked Mishe Mokwa Trail branches right. Right away you plunge into brush so thick and tall it's often hard to see the outside world. Both your hands and feet will come into play over the next 40 or 50 minutes as you're forced to scramble a bit over rough-textured outcrops of volcanic rock. You'll make intimate acquaintance with mosses and ferns and several of the more attractive chaparral shrubs: toyon, holly-leaf cherry, manzanita, and red shanks which is identified by its wispy foliage and perpetually peeling, rust-covered bark. You'll pass several bay trees, under which the temperature seems to fall about 10 degrees. After about a half hour on the trail, keep an eye out for an amazing balanced rock that rests precariously on the opposite canyon wall that lies just below you.

At about the 1.7 mile point you will come upon some picnic tables and "Split Rock", a fractured volcanic boulder wide enough to walk through. At this point you pick up a dirt road that crosses the canyon and turns west. You pass some healthy volcanic outcrops and at 2.8 miles come to the junction with the Backbone trail."

At this point the Rabbit hikers can take off and climb Tri Peaks for a good view and are only .5 miles away as shown on the handed out map. We, the more conservative hikers, continue on about 200 yds. pass the water tanks and look for an obscure side path to the right. This takes us to "Inspiration Point". The direction-finder points out such places as Mt. Baldy, Santa Catalina and San Clemente islands.

Press on and just pass two closely spaced hairpin turns make your way up to Sandstone Peak. You will enjoy the 360 degrees panoramic view. The Boy Scouts call this "Mt. Allen", a long time benefactor of the Scouts and Circle X ranch. Incidentally, you are on Boney Mountain.

There are many alternate hikes as shown on the handout. Various people in our group have done them all so ask around if you are interested. Many have done the Grotto hike and I remember Mike doing the Canyon view trail once.

DIRECTIONS: From the 101 in Thousand Oaks go south on the 23 for 6miles, turn right on Mulholland for 2.2 miles, right on Little Sycamore which becomes Yerba Buena and park at the 2nd parking lot on the right at about 4.9 miles. There is a picnic table in the lot.

From PCH going north and 1.1 miles past the LA County line, take Yerba Buena about 5-1/2 miles to parking lot on left. This is about 1 mile past the Circle X Ranch headquarters.