

Take a Hike in Joshua Tree National Park

TRAIL GUIDE for the
Park Prescription Program

Recreation in any form has been shown to improve physical and mental health. Benefits from increased physical activity include increased energy and stamina, reduced levels of stress, tension and depression, improved blood pressure and cardiovascular function, and body weight management. Joshua Tree National Park provides more than 270 miles of trail which range from short, flat and paved to strenuous, steep climbs. The number of unique exercise opportunities seems endless. Hiking is just one form of exercise that can be accomplished while in the park. Biking on the paved or dirt roads offers different views and perspectives. Rock climbing in the park is enjoyed by many visitors, including those who come from all over the world.

The National Park Service, in celebration of its centennial in 2016, is reaching out to local communities throughout the nation to create programs and partnerships to celebrate "America's Best Idea." One result is a unique partnership between Joshua Tree National Park and the Morongo Basin Healthcare District that has been established to promote healthier lifestyles in the Morongo Basin through community wellness workshops, education programs and other outreach efforts. This guide provides an overview of a few trails, with varying difficulty levels, to assist you and your doctor with outlining an appropriate course of action to improve your physical well-being.

On any desert hike, remember the ten essentials:

- Water
- Hat
- Sunscreen and sunglasses
- Food
- Sturdy shoes
- Map and compass
- Layers of clothing
- Pocket knife
- Flashlight
- First aid kit.

Leave your planned route and expected return time with a friend or family member before hiking. Check in with this person when you return. In an emergency, call **911** or **909-383-5651**.



Joshua Tree National Park
74485 National Park Drive



**NATIONAL PARK
FOUNDATION**

*In partnership with Morongo Basin Healthcare
District to improve the health of our communities.*



MORONGO BASIN
HEALTHCARE DISTRICT

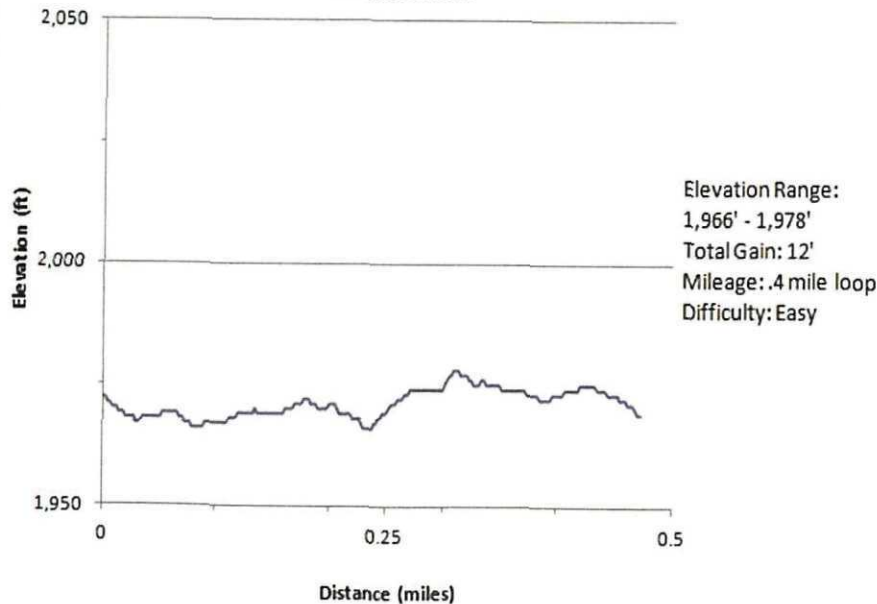
Oasis of Mara Nature Trail



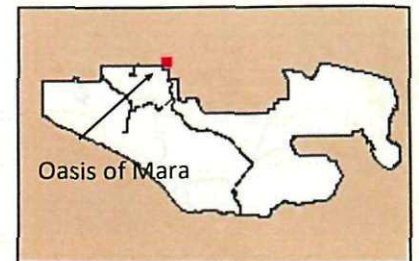
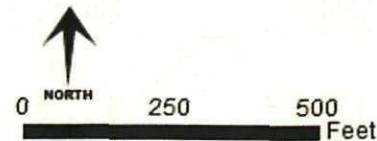
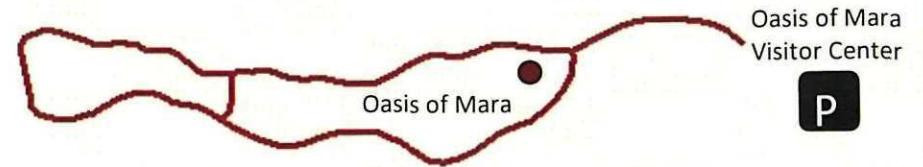
Located in the town of Twentynine Palms and adjacent to the Joshua Tree National Park's Oasis of Mara Visitor Center, this paved, level loop offers the most accessible place to view the park's unique California fan palm oasis habitat. A few brisk loops on this trail provide a great way for hikers to get the heart pumping with minimal strain. Hikers can stroll past shaded pools of water underneath towering fan palms and spot numerous birds and other wildlife. Interpretive signs introduce visitors to the historical significance and local ecology of this site.

Oasis of Mara Nature Trail

Elevation Profile



Oasis of Mara Nature Trail



Cholla Cactus Garden Nature Trail

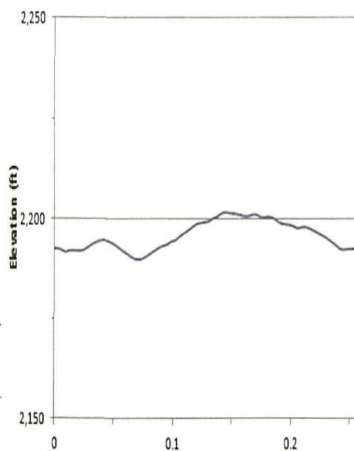


Approximately twelve miles south of the park's north entrance, the peculiar teddy bear cholla cactus dominates the landscape. The quarter-mile Cholla Cactus Garden Nature Trail leads hikers from a pullout along the park's Pinto Basin road through the 10 acre Cholla Cactus Garden and past interpretive signage explaining the area's plant and animal inhabitants.

Hikers beware – as their name suggests, the teddy bear chollas may seem fuzzy and harmless from a distance, but these plants can inflict painful wounds on contact with their numerous spines.

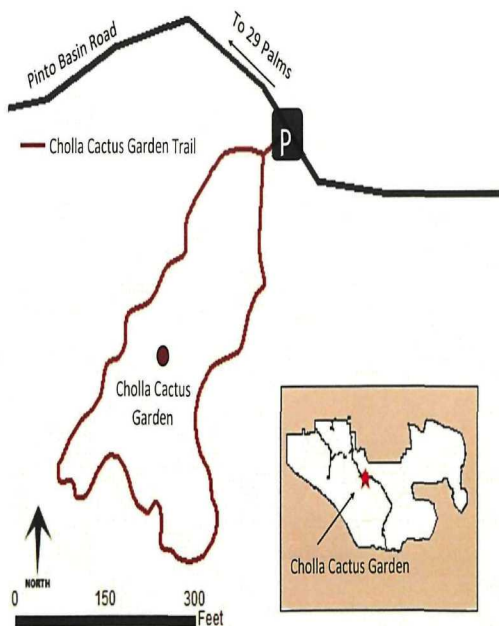
Cholla Cactus Garden

Elevation Profile

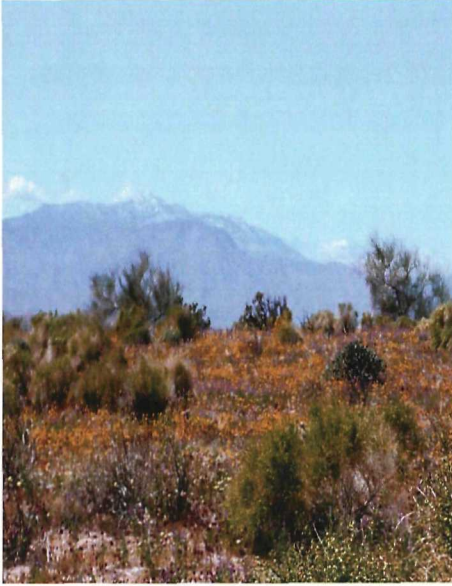


Elevation Range:
2,190' - 2,201'
Total Gain: 11'
Mileage: .25 mile
loop
Difficulty: Easy

Distance (miles)



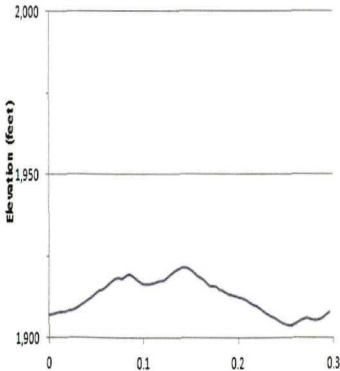
Bajada Nature Trail



Four laps around the short, paved Bajada Nature trail make a quick, scenic and stress-free mile through prime Colorado Desert habitat. Signs provide hikers insight into desert plant adaptation, including how plants such as the distinctive ocotillo and palo verde survive in extreme desert conditions with very little water. This trail is located just north of Interstate 10 and one-half mile south of the park's southernmost entrance.

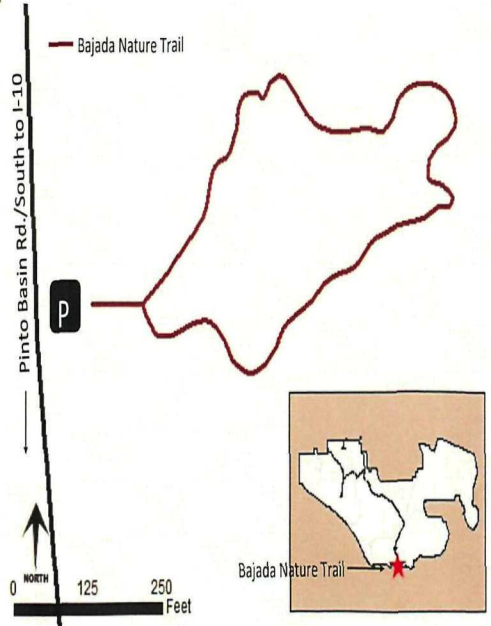
Bajada Nature Trail

Elevation Profile



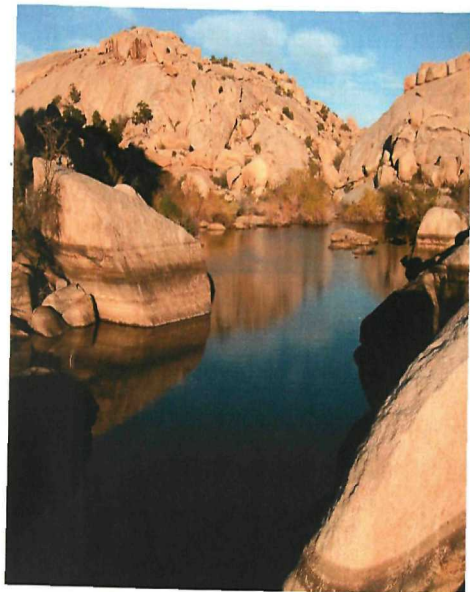
Elevation Range: 1,903'
- 1,921'
Total Gain: 18'
Mileage: .47 mile loop
Difficulty: Easy

Distance (miles)



Barker Dam Nature Trail

Easy

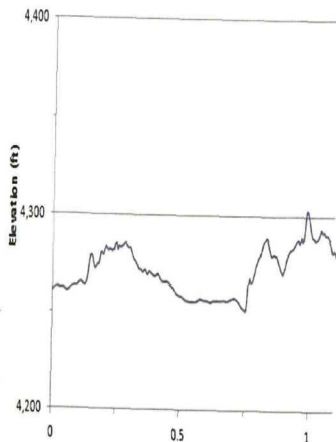


Barker Dam, once owned by famed homesteader Bill Keys, creates a seasonal lake that offers plentiful wildlife viewing, including bird watching and occasional sightings of the park's resident desert bighorn sheep herds.

The one mile Barker Dam Nature Trail guides hikers along the lake's edge, to the dam structure and across the rock-enclosed Piano Valley, offering interpretive signage that explains the vegetation, wildlife and history of the area. This is a great trail for hikers to gradually build up their trail-time and mileage in preparation for more strenuous hikes.

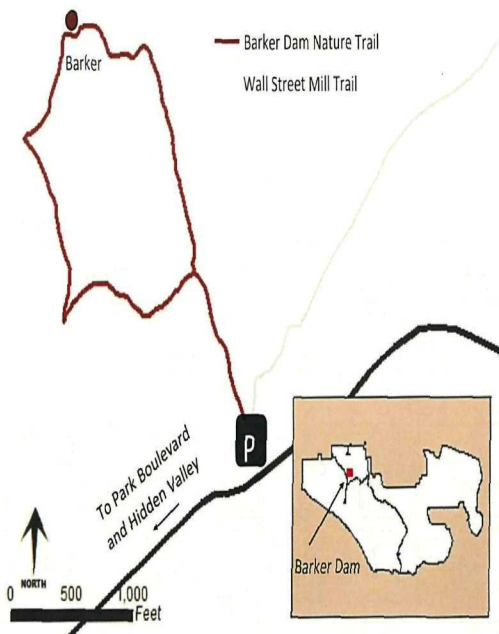
Barker Dam Nature Trail

Elevation Profile

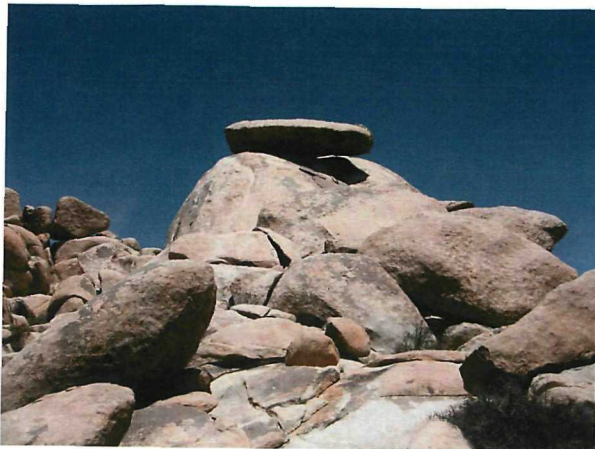


Elevation Range:
4,251' - 4,303'
Total Gain: 52'
Mileage: 1.1 mile loop
Difficulty: Easy

Distance (miles)



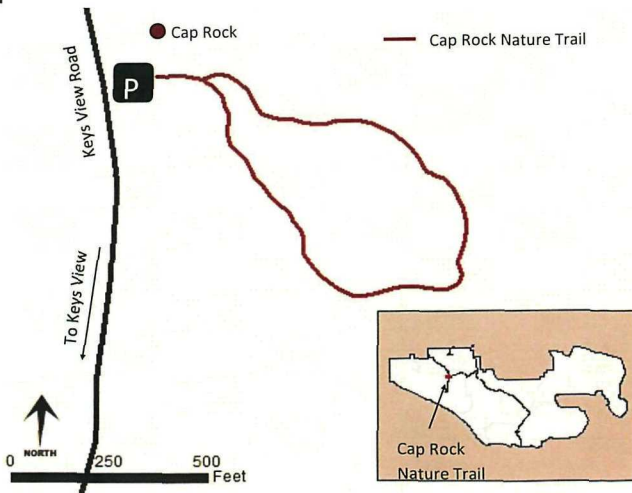
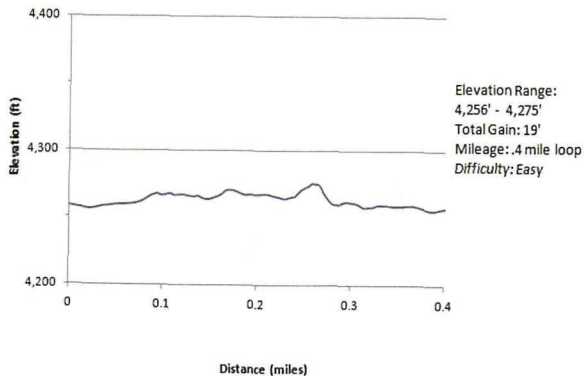
Cap Rock Nature Trail



This short, level trail offers hikers an easily accessible way to experience the park's distinctive Mojave Desert landscape. Hikers will encounter massive monzogranite boulder piles, including the Cap Rock Formation, with Joshua trees and other celebrated Mojave Desert vegetation serving as accents to the geological backdrop. The trail offers signage that interprets the area's distinct geology and vegetation. Four laps around this peaceful trail and you've added two miles to your weekly mileage. Access this trail from Keys View Road off of Park Boulevard.

Cap Rock Nature Trail

Elevation Profile



Wall Street Mill Trail

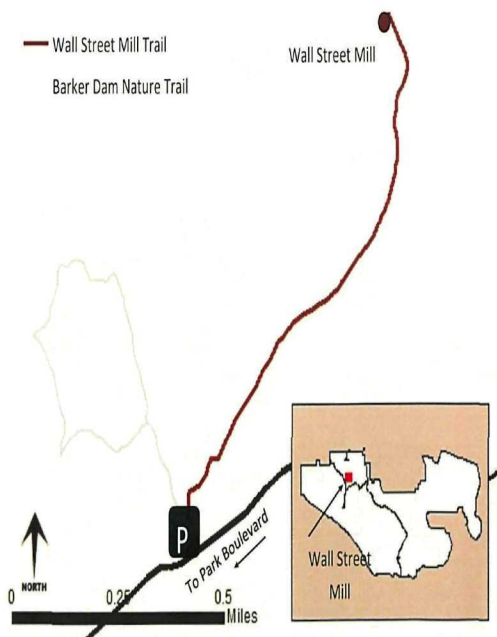
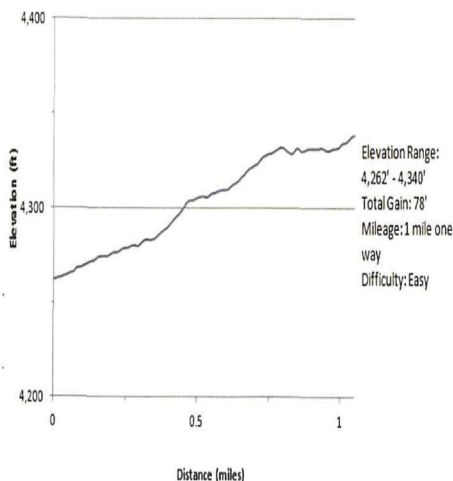
Easy

This level, two-mile round-trip trail is an easy way for hikers to get off the pavement in the beautiful Wonderland of Rocks area. From the Wall Street Mill trailhead located in the Barker Dam parking lot, hikers move past manzanita, jojoba, and oak towards a well-preserved gold-ore processing mill once owned by Bill Keys. Bring a camera—hikers can spot historical artifacts, including old mining and milling machinery, from the trail, providing great photo opportunities.



Wall Street Mill Trail

Elevation Profile



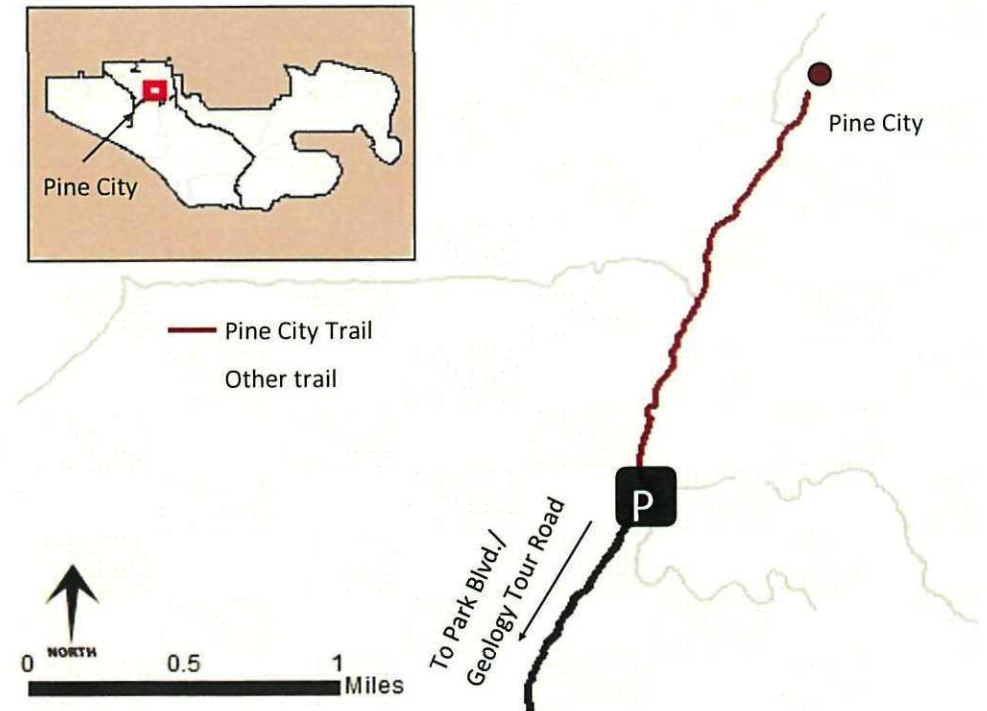
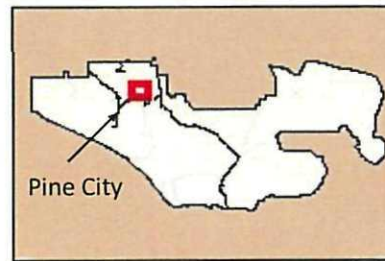
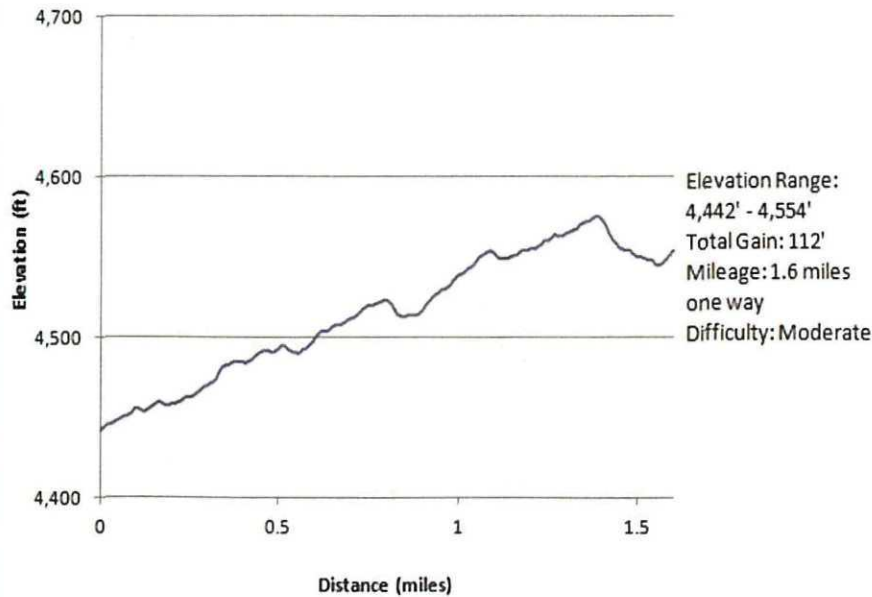
Pine City Trail



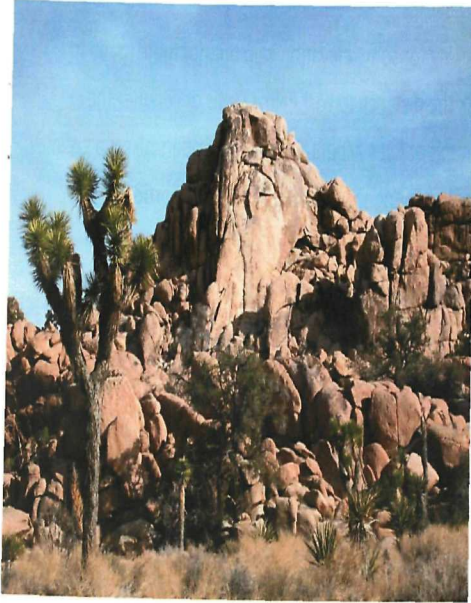
For hikers ready to build up their strength and mileage, this three-mile roundtrip trail offers refreshing solitude, cooler temperatures and lush vegetation among large boulder formations. Birders will enjoy the area's outstanding birdwatching opportunities. To access the trailhead at the Pine City Backcountry Board, take the dirt road north off Park Boulevard opposite Geology Tour Road.

Pine City Trail

Elevation Profile



Hidden Valley Nature Trail

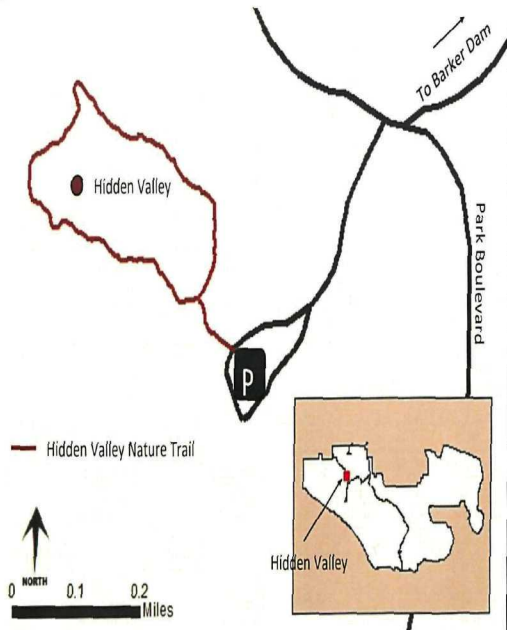
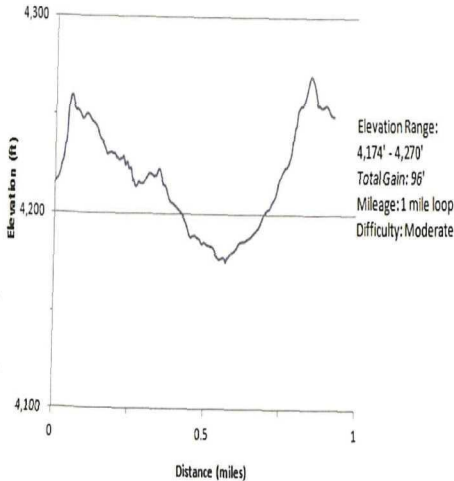


Hikers of the Hidden Valley Nature Trail will wander through a cloistered valley enclosed by rock walls and massive boulder formations. Hikers may see rock climbing action. The trail follows the valley perimeter. The interior is peppered with Joshua trees and other Mojave Desert vegetation. Some stair-stepping action while moving up, down and across rock formations on the trail provide hikers strength building and cardiovascular benefits. Rumor has it that this valley was once a cattle-rustlers' hideout; signs interpret the area's various pre-historic and historic uses.

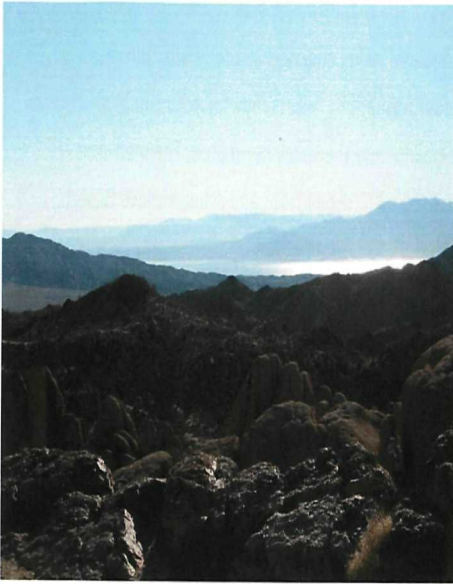
Moderate

Hidden Valley Nature Trail

Elevation Profile



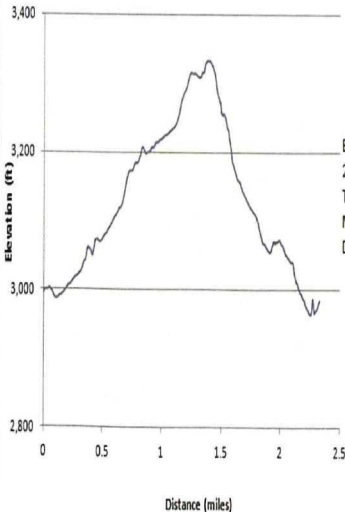
Mastodon Peak Loop Trail



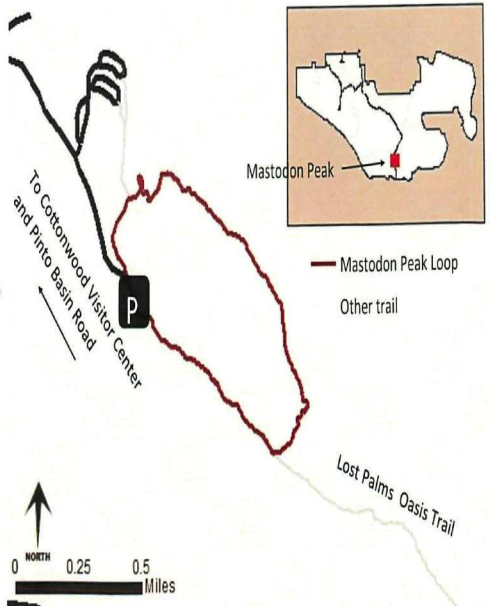
Looking for some elevation gain but not quite ready to trek the distance to Lost Palms Oasis or conquer the summit of Ryan Mountain? This trail offers hikers a great way to experience the Colorado Desert portion of the park, view a piece of early 20th century park mining history and get some moderate exercise. Located in the park's scenic Eagle Mountains, this trail loops off of the Lost Palms Oasis trail roughly a half-mile after Cottonwood Spring. The trail passes the historic Mastodon Mine, which is towered over by Mastodon Peak.

Mastodon Peak Loop Trail

Elevation Profile

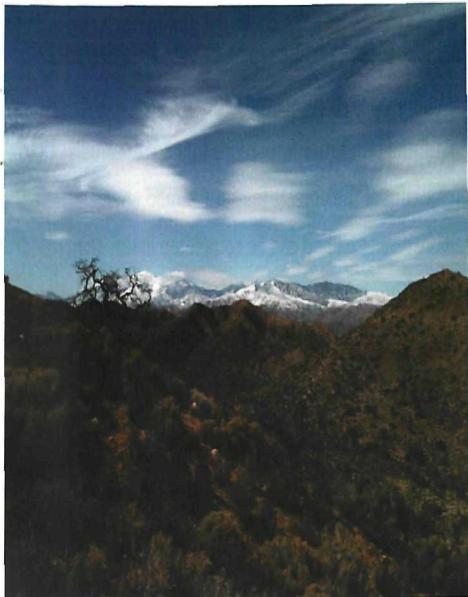


Elevation Range:
2,965' - 3,333'
Total Gain: 368'
Mileage: 2.3 mile loop
Difficulty: Moderate



Hi-View Nature Trail

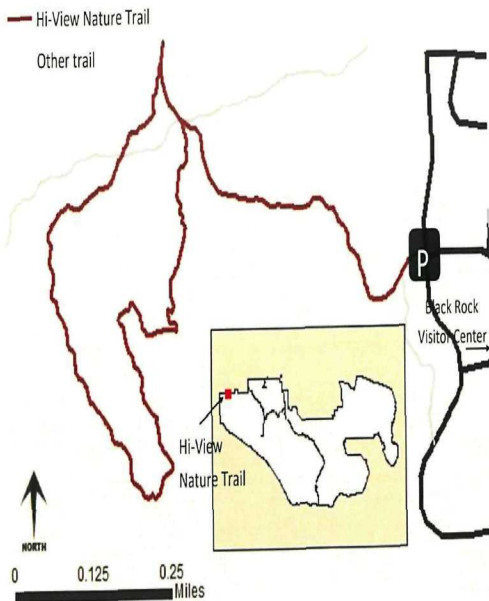
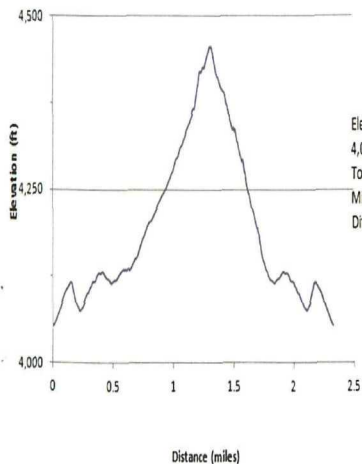
Moderate



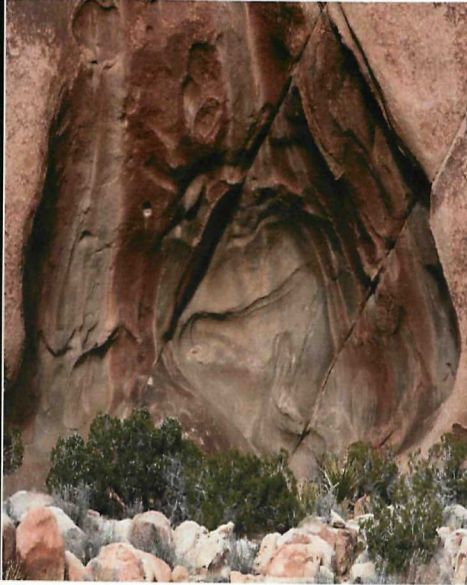
Going at a moderate pace, hikers will get anywhere from one-half to one hour of solid cardiovascular exercise due to this trail's moderately steep elevation gain. Breathtaking views of Mt. San Geronio and the surrounding San Bernardino Mountains reward hikers. This trail is easily accessible from the town of Yucca Valley since the trailhead itself is adjacent to the Black Rock Visitor Center.

Hi-View Nature Trail

Elevation Profile



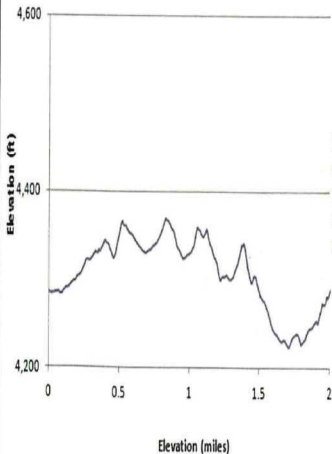
Split Rock Loop Trail



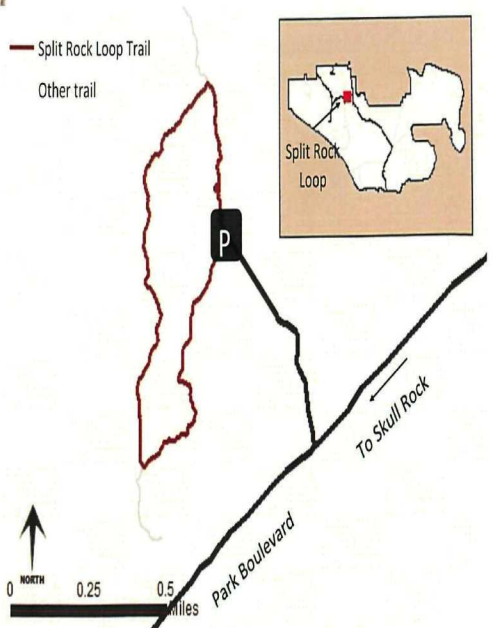
Split Rock Loop Trail offers some of the park's best rock formation viewing. Hikers can see "The Tulip", "The Molar" and other rock formations that are uncannily reminiscent of the objects they are named after. The trail is well-signed and can be completed in less than an hour. The short unpaved road to the Split Rock parking lot is accessible from Park Boulevard just east of Skull Rock.

Split Rock Loop Trail

Elevation Profile

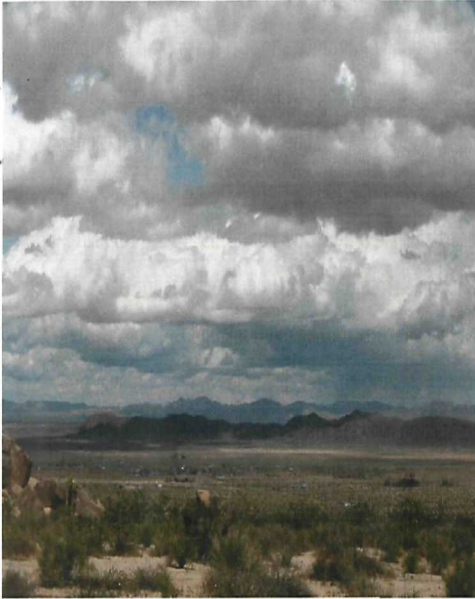


Elevation Range: 4,223' - 4,369'
 Total Gain: 146'
 Mileage: 2 mile loop
 Difficulty: Moderate



Burro Loop Trail

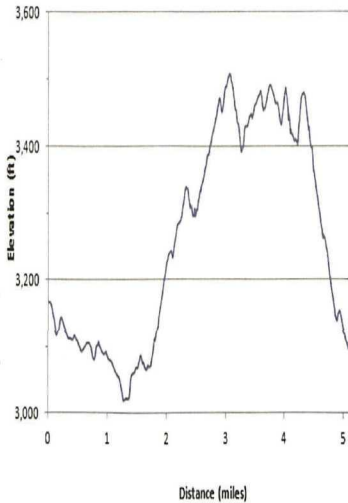
Moderate



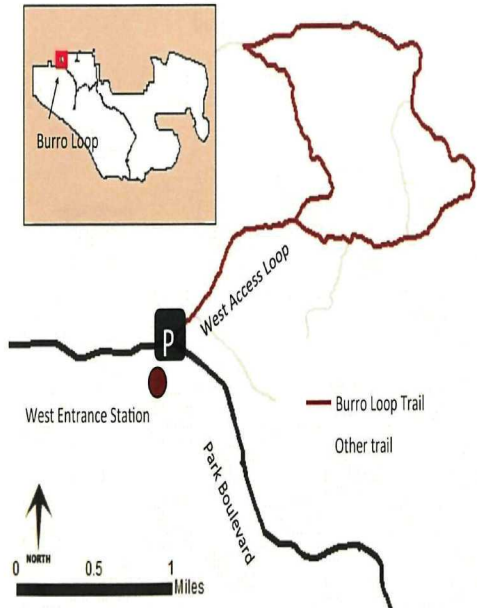
Hikers will find plenty of solitude and beautiful views on this seldom travelled, rugged trail. The Burro Loop follows canyons and traverses ravines, so make sure to pick up a good topographic map of the area before attempting this trail. From the West Entrance station, south of the town of Joshua Tree, use the West Access Loop to access the Burro Loop.

Burro Loop Trail

Elevation Profile



Elevation Range:
3,019' - 3,507'
Total Gain: 488'
Mileage: 5.1 mile loop
Difficulty: Strenuous



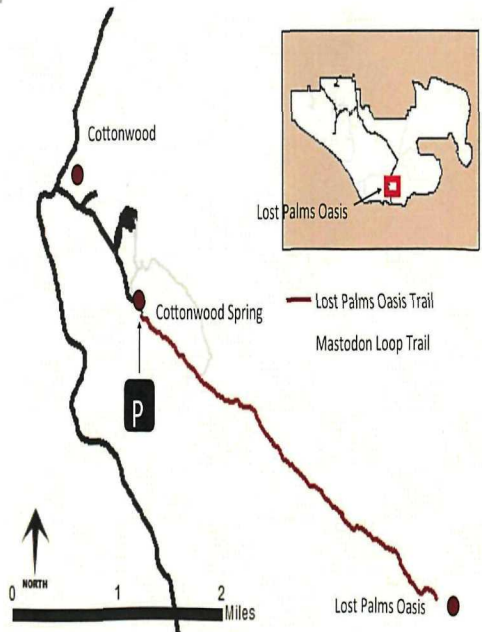
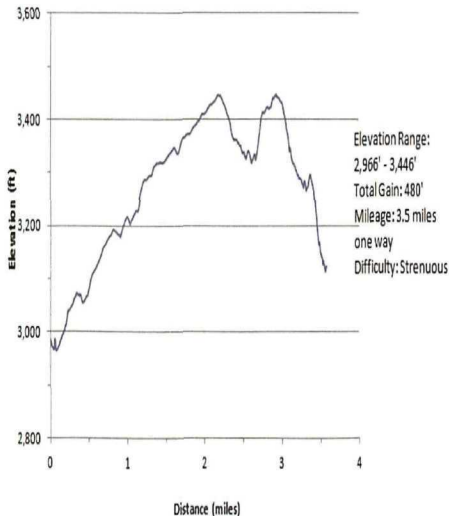
Lost Palms Oasis Trail



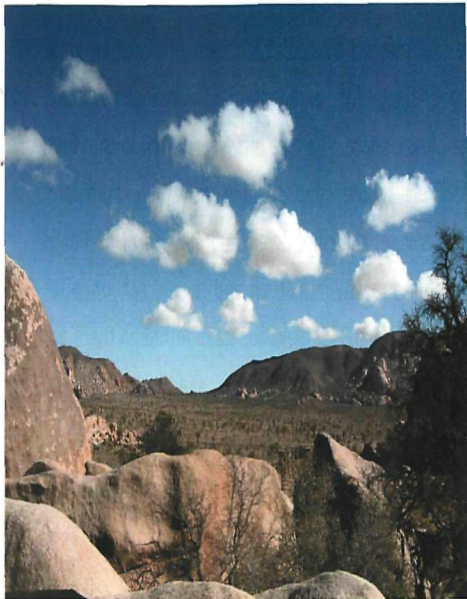
Want to build endurance and spend a great day among the ocotillo? This long but well-marked trail starts at the Cottonwood Spring trailhead and travels 3.5 miles one way across varied, rolling terrain through the Colorado Desert's Eagle Mountains. For hikers looking to build their ankle strength, a short but steep section at trail's end leads hikers from an overlook of Lost Palms Oasis into the Oasis itself. Trekking poles may be helpful for this section if hikers are carrying a heavy pack or are unsteady on their feet. Lost Palms Oasis is the park's largest California fan palm oasis, with more than 100 palms in its rugged canyons.

Lost Palms Oasis Trail

Elevation Profile



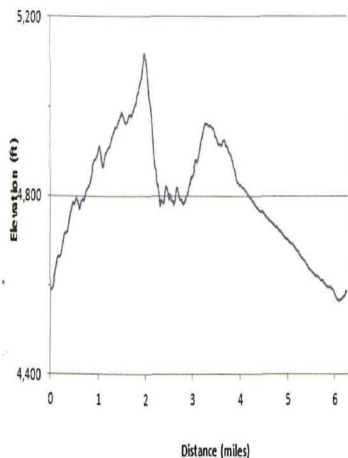
Lost Horse Loop Trail



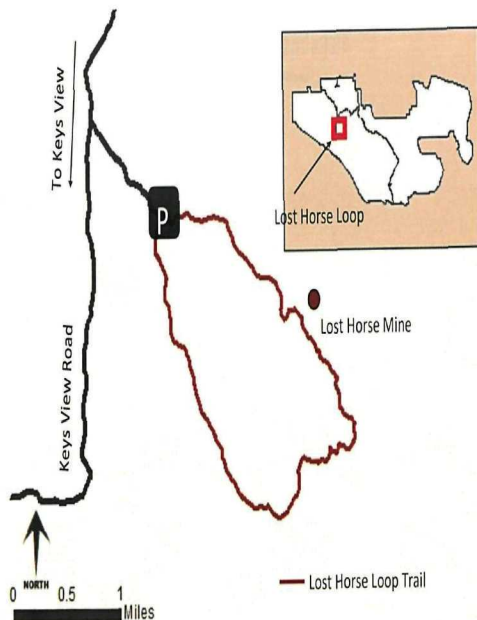
Hikers can improve their endurance on a long-distance hike over the rolling terrain of the Lost Horse Loop Trail. Hikers will pass the Lost Horse Mine and Mill, which produced 10,000 ounces of gold and 16,000 ounces of silver (worth approximately \$5 million today) between 1894 and 1931. Lost Horse Mill is considered one of the best preserved mills of its kind in the National Park Service.

Lost Horse Loop Trail

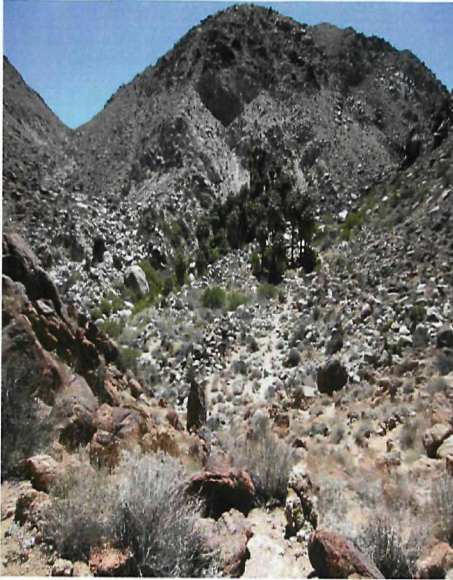
Elevation Profile



Elevation Range:
4,565' - 5,118'
Total Gain: 553
Mileage: 6.25 mile
loop
Difficulty: Strenuous



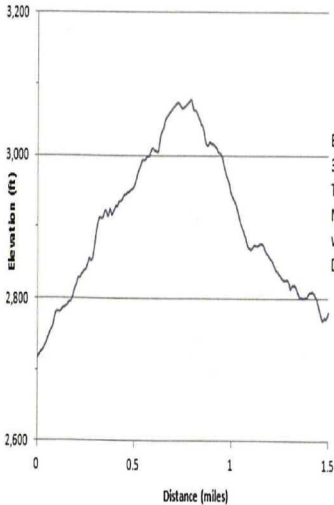
49 Palms Oasis Trail



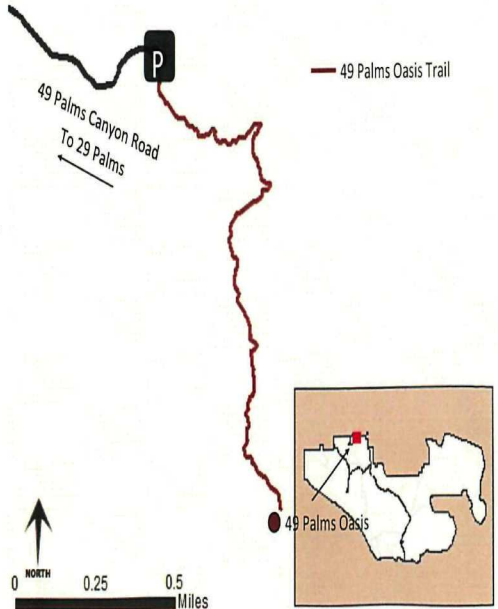
The trail offers a total of 1,500 feet of elevation gain/loss, making for excellent cardiovascular exercise, regardless of pace. The hike may seem strenuous at first, but hikers should keep pushing onward and upward. Hikers will get their first, welcome glimpse of 49 Palms Oasis, tucked away in a steep and rugged canyon, after achieving a rapid 362' elevation gain. Although there are palm trees at the end of the trek, shady spots are few and far between along the trail.

49 Palms Oasis Trail

Elevation Profile

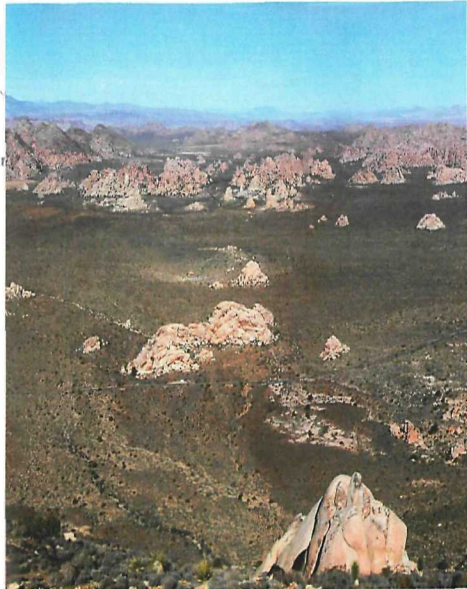


Elevation Range: 2,716' - 3,078'
Total Gain: 362'
Mileage: 1.5 Miles one way
Difficulty: Strenuous



Ryan Mountain Trail

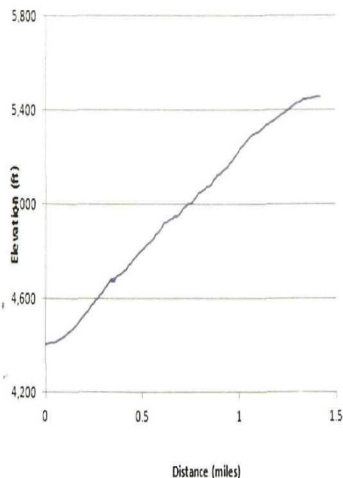
Strenuous



Ready for Ryan Mountain? If so, hikers will be rewarded by the park's most panoramic views, including views of the Pinto Basin, the Wonderland of Rocks, Mt. San Gorgonio and Mt. San Jacinto. From the trailhead off of Park Boulevard, the trail proceeds to the summit of Ryan Mountain, offering consistent elevation gain. This is one of the park's most strenuous yet accessible hikes. Hikers can access the Ryan Mountain parking area off of Park Boulevard just east of the turnoff to Keys View Road.

Ryan Mountain Trail

Elevation Profile



Elevation Range:
4,405' - 5,454'
Total Gain: 1,049'
Mileage: 1.4 miles one way
Difficulty: Strenuous

