



OJAI VALLEY ESCAPES

Hiking Trails in Ojai Valley

Ranger Contact: Ojai Ranger District, (805) 646.4348

Kim Herrera: (303) 715.8357

More Info Visit: alltrails.com/us/california/ojai

Rules of the road

1. Travel to the right and pass to the left
2. Cyclists call out when passing
3. No motorized vehicles
4. Hours: Dawn to Dusk
5. Dogs must be leashed
6. Please keep the trails clean!

Ojai Valley Trail

This trail runs from the end of Fox St. in Ojai west to the Pacific Ocean in Ventura. It is 16 miles one way and is never more than a 3% grade. The trail is used for bicycles and hikers on one side of the trail, and horses and riders on the other (dirt) side, divided by wood fencing.

Shelf Road

A short, easy dirt road that's 1.75 miles long, Shelf Road is a public route closed to motor traffic and gated at each end. It runs east and west at the north edge of Ojai between Signal Street and Gridley. There is a beautiful view of the Ojai Valley. Drive to the end of N. Signal St. and park your car. Walk to the end of Gridley and back. You can also start at the other side by going up Gridley and parking on the left where you'll see a little dirt turnout.

Best Season: Spring, summer, fall

Pratt Trail

Distance: 6.8 mile round trip

Elevation Gain: 2101 ft.

Difficulty: Moderate

Summary: This hike follows the Pratt Trail from its beginning near the Signal Street catch basin in Ojai to its junction with the spur trail to Valley View Camp, and on to the camp. By following the stream which runs

through the camp for a short distance through the brush, the hiker comes to a series of small waterfalls and a nice view of the Ojai Valley.

Directions: In downtown Ojai, follow Signal street north to the unpaved road leading westward to the catch basin. A sign at the junction points the way towards the trailhead. Go straight ahead past the catch basin, past a private road going off to your right, and proceed to the spacious parking area by the trailhead. The trail passes through private property for over a mile before entering the forest. Follow the trail signs and please respect the private property.

Walk the loop around Wheeler Gorge Campground

Drive 8 miles north on Highway 33 (starting at the "Y" where Highway 150 connects with Highway 33 at the Von's shopping center). Park your car near the Ranger's stone house. Walk up the road on one side of the creek and then reverse down the road on the other side of the creek. At the bottom of the campground, you will see a pipe from a fresh mineral spring. Many locals get their bottled water from here.

Cozy Dell Trail

The trailhead is located 3.3 miles north of Ojai and 0.1 mile south of Friends' Ranch Packing House. It ends at Cozy Dell Creek, where it ties into the Foothill Trail and Cozy Dell Road. From this junction, a loop can be made by following the Foothill Trail and then continuing back along the Ojai Fuelbreak Road. There are no camps or water along the way. Along this trail, large oak trees provide plenty of shade and there are spectacular views of the Ojai Valley.

Matilija Creek

Highlights: Great mountain views, wonderful cascades and pools along stream

Distance: 7 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 600 ft.

Hike Time: 3.5 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Trail Condition: Ok, but with a few difficult spots

Best Seasons: Fall, winter, summer

User Groups: Hikers, dogs, horses

Summary: The destination of this hike is a spectacular section of Matilija Creek that flows over unusual rock slabs. Lovely pools and cascades abound over this half mile section of water. Getting to this section of the water is somewhat less inspiring, although the mountain views are lovely.

Follow the road north west from the parking area for about a mile, passing through a wildlife refuge and past side trails to several camps. At the one mile mark, you will come to a T in the road. Take the right branch, follow it through an easement past a house, and along a fence made of rocks. At about 2 miles the road narrows to a single-track trail and gets somewhat overgrown. At about the 3 mile mark, you will come upon a very rocky gully at the top of a small hill overlooking the creek. Scramble down the gully and pick up the trail again to the left near the bottom. Travel a few hundred yards upstream on the trail until you see the water cascading over large rock slabs.

Trailhead: From Ojai, drive 4.9 miles north on highway 33 to North Matilija Road and turn left. Continue 4.8 miles to the parking area on the left by the trailhead gate.

Rose Valley Falls

Highlights: Spectacular 300 ft. waterfall, lovely creek, easy hike

Distance: 1 mile round trip

Elevation Gain: 300 ft.

Hike Time: 1 hour

Difficulty: Easy

Trail Condition: OK, but with a few difficult spots

Best Seasons: Year-round

User Groups: Hikers, dogs, bikes, horses

Summary: This relatively easy hike takes you to the base of the two tier 300 foot high Rose Valley Falls. The trail follows Rose Creek for a pleasant half mile before the upper falls come into view, with water cascading over a sheer sandstone cliff. The trail takes you to the base of the lower falls, with water trickling in ribbons through the moss covered cliff. A number of side trails lead up to the base of the upper falls, but these routes are very steep and exposed in places, so use extreme caution if you decide to try this.

I did this hike during a rather dry March, and although there was water coming down the lower falls, I could not see any water on the upper falls. I imagine that this waterfall must be a stunning spectacle a few days after a rainstorm.

Trailhead: From Ojai, drive 15 miles north on Highway 33 to the Rose Valley turnoff and make a right. Continue 3 miles to the Rose Valley Campground turnoff and make a right. Park at the end of the road, about a half mile up near the trailhead sign.

Chief Peak

Highlights: There are views all along the trail up to the peak, and from the peak there are spectacular 360 degree views. On clear days you can see six of the Channel Islands, the Santa Monica Mountains, Ojai Valley, Lake Casitas and the rugged interior wilderness. The ridge when viewed from the Ojai Valley has some resemblance to the relief of a sleeping Indian. Chief Peak is the highest point and is the head and bonnet.

Elevation Gain/Loss: 2,100 ft.

Hiking Distance: 8.8-mile roundtrip

Hiking Time: 3.5 hours

Difficulty: Strenuous

Signs: There is a sign at the trailhead in the campground and a marker sign for the trail up to the peak

Spurs: None

Dogs: Dogs on leash are permitted on trails

Drinking fountains and picnic tables: Tables in the campground, but no drinking fountains.

Restrooms: In Rose Valley Campground

Directions to Trailhead: Travel 13.4 miles north, on Highway 33 from Highway 101, to the "Y" junction with Highway 150. Bear left, staying on Highway 33, heading toward Maricopa. Continue 14.8 miles to the Rose Valley/Piedra Blanca turnoff and turn right Follow this narrow paved road 3 miles and turn right toward Upper Lake and Rose Valley Falls. Rose Valley Camp is 0.5 mile farther. If the campground is full, park off the road outside the campground. National Forest Adventure Pass required for parking or camping. One day passes are \$5 and can be obtained from Ranger stations and sporting good stores.

Hiking Directions: Hiking directions: Insect repellent is recommended to help with biting flies during the summer. The trailhead is in the west corner of the campground and is marked "Chief Peak Road." The trail/fire road starts on the other side of the gate. The road is mostly dirt with patches of old asphalt. It is a steady climb for the first couple of miles. Just past a cattle guard, at 2.17 miles, turn left at the "Y" intersection. You're now on Nordhoff Ridge Road. At 3.8 miles is a marker on the right for the narrow trail up to the peak. The closer you get to the peak, the trail is sometimes hard to see where it goes over rocks. When you are just below the peak, follow the ducks (stacked rocks) around the right side of the ridge and then turn left up to the summit. The last 0.1 mile is a rock scramble. The peak is at 4.4 miles. There is a register on the north side of the peak. After resting and enjoying the views, return the way you came.

Sisar Canyon

Highlights: Shady streamside hike, pools, waterfall, view of upper Ojai Valley

Distance: 4.5 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 1000 ft.

Hike Time: 2.5 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Trail Condition: OK, but with a few difficult spots

Best Seasons: Year-round

User Groups: Hikers, dogs

Summary: This is a very pleasant hike that can be done in a couple of hours. Most of the trail follows the banks of Sisar creek, with several easy stream crossings along the way. The stream has many large boulders and sheer walls of rock which are quite spectacular. There is a pretty little waterfall dropping into a pool just as the fire road does a hairpin turn and leaves the stream. At the elbow of the turn, walk upstream on a little trail next to the bank a few hundred feet and you will see the waterfall. Very peaceful and pretty. Once the trail leaves the stream, it moves upwards quickly to a wonderful lookout with views of upper Ojai valley.

Trailhead: From downtown Ojai, drive 7.8 miles east towards Santa Paula on Highway 150. Turn left on Sisar Road along the eastern side of Summit school. Drive one mile to the trailhead gate, bearing right at the split in the road. Park on the side of the road.

Horn Canyon

Highlights: Pine knoll, lovely stream, breathtaking views

Distance: 3 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 1800 ft.

Hike Time: 2.5 hours

Difficulty: Strenuous

Trail Condition: Ok, but with a few difficult spots

Best Seasons: Spring, winter, fall

User Groups: Hikers, dogs, bikes, horses

Summary: This is a very enjoyable, but somewhat strenuous hike located near the picturesque town of Ojai. The trail starts out along the banks of beautiful Thatcher Creek, with several crossings, then heads upwards almost 1800 feet to a shady pine studded campsite with spectacular views. Recommended.

Trailhead: Take highway 33 north from highway 101 in Ventura. Stay on Highway 33 until it turns off from highway 150. Then bear right and take Highway 150 (Ojai Ave.) east through the city. Once outside town, turn left on Reeves road. Follow Reeves about a mile to McAndrew Road and make another left, following the signs

for Thatcher School. Another mile up the road, take the road into the school grounds. Stay to the right and follow the signs to the gymkhana field. Park near the fire gate at the trailhead.

Piedra Blanca Camp

Highlights: Magnificent rock formations, lovely creek, great mountain views

Distance: 5 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 500 ft.

Hike Time: 2.5 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Trail Condition: Ok, but with a few difficult spots

Best Seasons: Fall, summer, fall

User Groups: Hikers, dogs, bikes, horses

Summary: This great hike has a bit of everything. Great mountain views, the Sespe Creek, huge white sandstone formations, and a lovely meandering creek. From Lions Camp you cross Sespe Creek, then head north on the towards Piedra Blanca Camp. When you reach the junction, stay right (the left route takes you to Howard Creek). The trail loops around and up into the rock formations. You can stay on the trail, or just wander around a bit scrambling over the spectacular formations.

The trail then drops down the backside of the formations and follows Piedra Blanca Creek to the peaceful and lovely Piedra Blanca Camp, a perfect place for lunch or a break. This is the turn around point.

Also consider also hiking the Rose Valley Waterfall if you are in this area

Trailhead: From Ojai, drive 15 miles north on Highway 33 to the Rose Valley turnoff and make a right. Continue 5 miles to a road split, where you take the left branch for 1 mile to Lions Camp. Park at the roads end near the trailhead, and cross the shallow creek. Look for a trail marker on the far side of the bank from the parking area.

Sespe Creek - Lions Camp

Highlights: Swimming hole, fishing, good exercise

Distance: 3.5 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 200 ft.

Hike Time: 2 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Trail Condition: Well maintained trail

Best Seasons: Fall, winter, spring

User Groups: Hikers, dogs, bikes, horses

Summary: This easy hike stays high on a bluff above the creek for most of the hike. Unless the water levels are pretty high, you really cannot see the stream unless you take one of the side trails down to the water. The topo map notes one particularly inviting side trail that drops down into a great swimming hole. This swimming hole is on the section stream below a grove of pine trees on the steep slopes on the far side of the stream. The turn around point is a metal gate part way up a shallow ridge. From this point you get a nice view of the Sespe creek and surrounding area.

Also consider also hiking the Rose Valley Waterfall or the Piedra Blanca Formations if you are in this area.

Trailhead: From Ojai, drive 15 miles north on Highway 33 to the Rose Valley turnoff and make a right. Continue 5 miles to a road split, where you take the left branch for 1 mile to Lions Camp. Park at the roads end near the trailhead, and cross the shallow creek. Look for a trail marker on the far side of the bank from the parking area.

Reyes Peak

Highlights: Mountain views, possible condor sightings, lush wooded forest, coastal vistas

Distance: 7 miles round trip

Elevation Gain: 1600 ft.

Hike Time: 4 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Trail Condition: Well maintained trail

Best Seasons: Fall, spring, summer

User Groups: Hikers, dogs

Summary: This is a good hike, and you don't have to be in the best condition. You get some great backcountry views, some peak vistas, and some great overlooks from unnamed saddles. On clear days, you get some amazing looks at the Channel Islands. You don't actually summit Reyes Peak, unless you continue off the right branch of the road. It is very close to the trailhead, and the peaks along this trail have numbers rather than names. But, the trail is lushly shaded most of the way, so even when it is very hot out, this hike is pleasant. There is a nice forest covering on the trail, which makes this hike perfect for dogs, and you may even get the chance to scope out an endangered California Condor. I have friends that have seen them in the campground.

Looking into the Piedra Blanca and the Sespe Wilderness is breathtaking; the mountainsides are rippled and beautiful. You don't have to have a destination on this one, just turn around when you feel like it.

Trailhead: From Ventura - take the 33 North, stay on the 33 and watch for it to branch when you reach the quaint town of Ojai. You have to make a left after the grocery store and strip mall, and watch to stay on the 33. Continue North for about 30 miles. Turn right at the signed road Pine Mountain. There are two campgrounds that fill up during weekends, but are fair game during the week. Drive to the end of the road and park - then start hiking. You'll follow the dirt road for a bit until it branches on your left. Take the high road and the left branch.

The road closes during the winter, and when there is snow.

Santa Paula Canyon

Highlights: Lovely waterfall, beautiful canyon, rugged mountain views

Elevation Gain: 1000 ft.

Hike Time: 3.5 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Trail Condition: Well maintained trail

Best Seasons: Year-round

User Groups: Hikers, dogs, bikes, horses

Summary: Santa Paula Canyon is one of the best hikes in Ventura County. The trail takes you through picturesque St. Thomas Aquinas College, then along the shady banks of Santa Paula creek with plentiful swimming holes, capped by a spectacular 25 foot waterfall just past Big Cone Camp.

Trailhead: From downtown Ojai, drive 11 miles east towards Santa Paula on Highway 150. Park in the trailhead parking on the right side of the road just east of the bridge, across from Thomas Aquinas College. Note that you must walk through a portion of the campus to reach the trailhead.

Punch Bowl

Highlights: Picturesque waterfall, deep swimming hole and forested canyon trail

Elevation Gain: 580 ft.

Hiking Distance: 6.5 miles roundtrip

Difficulty: Easy Moderate short climb

Signs: Signs keep hikers off private property

Spurs: None

Drinking Fountains and Picnic Tables: None

Restrooms: Steckel Park is 1.2 miles southeast of trailhead on the east side of Highway 150 and Mill Park is 4.8 miles southeast on the west side

Directions to Trailhead: The hike starts at the entrance to Thomas Aquinas College on Highway 150. Take E. Ojai Ave to the east end of town and follow the road to the right of Boccali's. Continue on up the grade (Highway 150) for about 10.5 miles. Thomas Aquinas College will be on the left.

Hiking Directions: From either parking area, hike across the bridge to the entrance to Thomas Aquinas College. Stay on the paved road to the right. Near the top of the campus, the road forks. Veer to the right to a walk-through gate. You're now on Ferndale Ranch property and there are signs to keep you from trespassing. Stay on the main paved road past some oil pumps on the left until the pavement ends at a fence surrounding some more oil pumps. The trail goes left, skirting the fenced enclosure. Continue to stay off private property. The first creek crossing is at 1.7 miles. On the other side, take the fire road to the right. In another mile you cross the creek again and start ascending to Big Cone Camp. There are some nice views of the canyon along the way. Continue through the camp and descend a narrow switchback to the creek. Continue downstream (left) for about 50 yards and cross the creek and climb over some large rocks to the punch bowl the slide is another .25 miles. Pick a path that you're comfortable with. Sometimes it's easier to wade across the creek, rather than climb up and over some sections. The dry rocks are slippery and the wet ones are even more slippery. It is a beautiful area with cascading water and singing Canyon Wrens. Plenty of great spots to relax and enjoy lunch. Return the way you came. In the warmer months, this area becomes very crowded.

Sulphur Mountain Road

Highlights: This road is open to hikers, bicyclists, equestrians and dogs on leash. This old county dirt road follows the 2,600-foot Sulphur Mountain ridgeline from Highway 33 in Casitas Springs to Highway 150 in the upper Ojai. As the trail winds around the mountain the views alternate between panoramic views of the coast and Channel Islands, and the Ojai Valley and Los Padres National Forest. Also, there are views from Point Mugu to South Mountain, and from Lake Casitas to the Topatopa Mountains. There are many deer. The hike can be moderate or strenuous depending on your choice of trailhead. It is all uphill from the Casitas Springs end, but more moderate from the upper Ojai end.

Elevation Gain/Loss: 2,200 ft.

Hiking Distance: 10-miles one-way

Hiking Time: 4 hours

Difficulty: Strenuous when starting at the bottom and moderate when starting from the top

Signs: Both trailheads are signed. There are mileage posts along the trail. Since all of the property surrounding the road is private, there are numerous no trespassing signs

Spurs: None

Dogs: Dogs on leash are permitted

Drinking fountains and picnic tables: None

Restrooms: None. However, if needed, there are several gas stations in Ojai along the drive between the two trailheads

Directions to Trailhead: Leave a shuttle car at the end of the hike. From Ojai Ave, head to the east end of town. Veer-right at Boccali's and continue on up the grade (Highway 150). Turn right on Sulphur Mountain Road at about 11 miles. Continue on Sulphur Mountain Road 4.6 miles to the trailhead gate. Parking is limited and be sure not to block the gate. To the lower trailhead: Drive back down Sulphur Mountain Road 4.6 miles and turn left on Ojai/Santa Paula Road/Highway 150. Drive for 6.5 miles into Ojai and turn left on Ventura Street. Follow this road, which becomes Creek Road, for 6.1 miles and turn left on Ventura Avenue/Highway 33. Turn left again 0.6 mile farther on Sulphur Mountain Road. Continue another 0.3 mile to where no parking begins. Park alongside the road prior to the start of no parking. The trailhead gate is visible about 80 yards farther. Driving directions to the lower end from Highway 101: From Highway 101 in Ventura drive north on Highway 33 7.7 miles and turn right on Sulphur Mountain Road.

Hiking Directions: The road between the two trailheads is obvious and side roads are either gated or posted no trespassing.
