

Wed 0930 "121/90 OTP Hiker #0050



Season: All Year

Marshall Canyon Trail

7-mile loop through Marshall Canyon
800-foot elevation gain

Marshall Canyon, a county park in-the-making, offers some fine hiking in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. Marshall Canyon and its neighbor, Live Oak Canyon, are shaded with oak, alder and sycamore. From atop the canyon walls, there are great clear-day views of the mountains to the north and San Gabriel Valley to the south.

For several years this semi-wild area above San Dimas and Claremont has been something of a secret—frequented only by a few horseback riders and a very few hikers. Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation planners say their intention is to leave Marshall Canyon more or less alone—that is to say undeveloped, with minimum facilities. In the parlance of land use planners, Marshall Canyon will remain as “open space”—something to be thankful for in the fast-growing eastern edge of the metropolis.

A good network of equestrian/hiking trails explores the brushy ridges and lush canyon bottoms of the park. Much of the network is fire roads, which may sometimes be closed during the dry summer months.

Depending on your time and inclination, you can fashion a number of loop trips ranging from 2 to 8 miles. Park trails and roads are unsigned, so expect to improvise a little.

Directions to trailhead: Follow the Foothill Freeway (210) to its end, continuing east on Highway 30 and still farther east on Foothill Boulevard. Turn left, north on Wheeler Avenue, ascend to Golden Hill Road and turn right. You'll see signs for Marshall Canyon Golf Course. Just before the road turns right toward Live Oak Reservoir, turn left into a dirt parking lot. On weekends, you're likely to find a few horse trailers in the lot.

The Hike: The trail begins at the east end of the lot and soon begins descending into the Marshall Canyon. During winter, the snow-covered peaks of the San Gabriel Mountains framed by oaks are a picturesque sight.

Just before a creek crossing, the trail splits. Marshall Canyon is to the left, Live Oak Canyon to the right. (The trails intersect again, so you may choose either.)

Marshall Canyon Trail crosses the creek a couple times, then rises out of the canyon as a dirt road. You'll pass a side road leading to the park's nursery, and a couple side trails offering access to the canyon bottom.

Rather than traveling a northeast course through the canyon, it's enjoyable to wind along in a half-circle toward a prominent water tower and partake of the fine ridgetop views.

Atop the ridgetop, the trail rollercoasters along. You turn left on signed Miller Road, then descend into Live Oak Canyon. You'll reach a three-way junction and continue a hundred yards along the main fire road to a picnic area. Enjoy this oak-shaded retreat, then double back and look sharply right for an unsigned footpath descending into Live Oak Canyon.

The canyon's oaks are accompanied by sycamores, walnuts, cottonwoods, mosses and ferns. It's a most delightful half-mile descent to the canyon bottom. You'll continue your descent to an unsigned junction. The right fork follows Marshall Canyon back to the trailhead. Bear left and meander along with Live Oak Canyon 1 1/2 miles back to the trailhead.

