

OTP & OTHERS

HIKING & DEBATING SOCIETY

Bear Creek, Death March II

George Thomas has been temporarily incapacitated by back problems; therefore, he will not be able to lead his hike on June 8th. I have swapped hike dates with him.

Much interest has been expressed (mostly by me) regarding the infamous and notorious Death March of last fall. In spite of wise and excellent advice from my comrades the principal hike for Wednesday, June 8, 1994, will be Bear Creek and environs.

Due to the strenuous reputation of this hike, I will designate several alternate hikes and activities for those of fainter heart or perhaps better judgment. Don't feel bad about taking an easier option; I have led the Mouse Patrol many times.

The principal hike will be into the edge of the San Gabriel Wilderness along Bear Creek and ending at the West Fork of the San Gabriel River. The beginning of this hike is six miles from the end so a car shuttle will be arranged. The hike includes four miles of rock hopping and a few stream crossings but the trail is quite passable with a bit of effort and ingenuity. If you take this part of the trip you should wear shoes that you don't mind getting wet. It would also be convenient to have dry shoes in your car for the trip home.

We will hike west, three miles, and gaining 970 feet of elevation to Smith Saddle. For the peak baggers an indistinct trail leads south, about 1/2 mile and 800 foot elevation gain, to the peak of Smith Mountain. From Smith Saddle we will continue three more miles, and 1650 foot elevation loss, to Bear Creek. For another side trip there is a waterfall about 1/4 mile (north) up Bear Creek. There is no trail, just rock hopping up the creek. From the trail we will proceed four miles (south) down Bear Creek over a frequently obscure trail, losing 960 foot elevation. At the mouth of Bear Creek we will come to the West Fork of the San Gabriel River. It is a one mile stroll on a paved road to the parking area and the post hike festivities. This hike will provide a bit more adventure and interest than some we have taken and only a few people call it a death march.

Those who are interested in a shorter hike can turn back after three miles at Smith Saddle, resulting in a six mile round trip. At the saddle the trip to the top of Smith Mountain is available.

An alternate choice is to hike up the West Fork to Bear Creek then hike north to meet the main group and then accompany them out to the road. Another choice is to hike up the West Fork for a couple of hours then return to the parking area join in the post hike festivities

If you wish to bring a bike you can easily ride up the West Fork road to Cogswell Dam. You can also bring fishing tackle and spend the day fishing along the river. The river above the first bridge is a catch and release area.

From the I-210 freeway, in Azusa, turn north on Azusa Avenue, SR-39. Allow 25 minutes driving time from the freeway. We will meet 11.5 miles from the freeway in the parking lot at the West Fork of the San Gabriel River. We will leave some of the cars at this parking lot and we will share rides in the other cars to the trailhead, about six miles up the canyon. We will park in the parking area on the west (left) side of the road about 1/4 mile before Coldbrook Campground. A metal sign used to mark the Bear Creek Trail, it may be gone now.

Plan to arrive at the West Fork parking area before 9:00 AM for a few minutes of milling around and changing shoes and adjusting packs and gear, etc. We will leave for the trailhead at 9:15 AM sharp. If you are late and we have already left, you may drive to the trailhead and attempt to catch up with us, or you may hike up the West Fork and then up Bear Creek to meet us coming out.

Trip data:

Distance:	11 miles
Elevation gain:	970 feet
Elevation loss:	2675 feet
Effort:	Moderate to Strenuous
Leader:	Mike Gessner

Recommended Maps:

LA County & Vicinity:	Auto Club
Angeles National Forest:	US Forest Service
Glendora:	7.5 Min. Topo
Crystal Lake:	7.5 Min. Topo
Waterman Mtn.:	7.5 Min. Topo