

Area S-2, Trip 7
Upper Solstice Canyon (CASTRO CREST)

3/22/95

Bob Bernard

9:30 AM

	Distance	5.0 miles
	Total Elevation Gain/Loss	1000'/1000'
	Hiking Time	2½ hours
	Optional Map	USGS 7.5-min <i>Point Dume</i>
	Best Times	October through June
	Agency	NPS
Difficulty	★★★	

A splendid sense of isolation pervades the upper reaches of Solstice Canyon—thanks to the purchase of lands along the Castro Peak crest some years ago by the National Park Service. This brushy and dry country may look a bit unfriendly under harsh midday sunshine, but it's really quite intriguing when soft morning or evening shadows drape the hillsides and hollows.

Ideally you would start this loop hike in the late afternoon, and go clockwise to take advantage of evening shadows while climbing through the canyon below. If you can leave about 2 hours before sunset, you'll hit the Castro crest by sundown. The distant lights of L.A. will be in view by the time you arrive back at your car.

To reach the trailhead parking area,

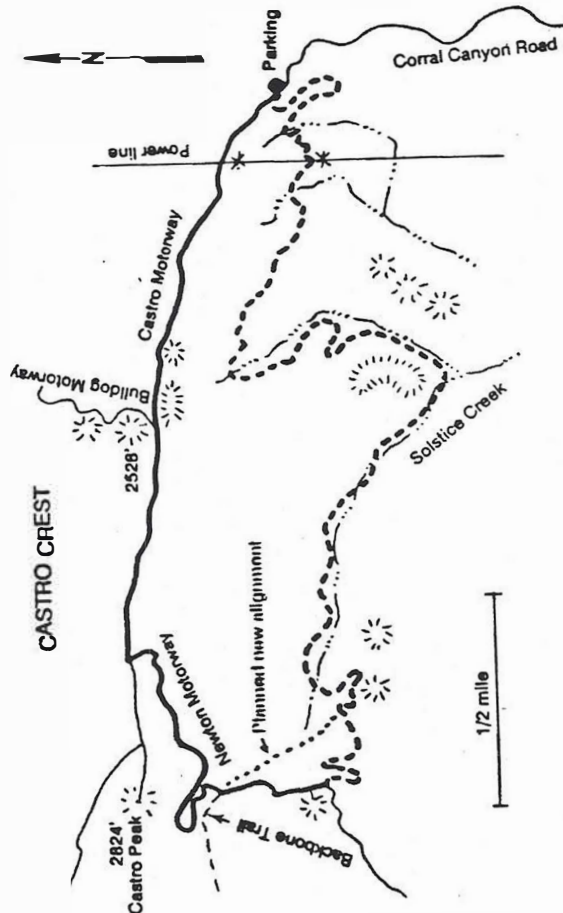
drive 5½ miles north from Pacific Coast Highway on Corral Canyon Road. From the west edge of the parking lot, follow the path (which may or may not be signed BACKBONE TRAIL) that switchbacks downward along the rim of a bowl drained by several upper tributaries of Solstice Canyon. Mostly the trail makes use of old roads, but some of it is newer trail tread—watch out for false trails. After about 1 mile of indecisive descent, you join a ravine bottom and then descend decisively to the main tributary of Solstice Canyon (1.3 miles). Turn sharply right and walk up-canyon 200 yards to a small meadow sporting a colorful assortment of wildflowers during the spring. A break may be in order here, since the next 2.1 miles will include 900 feet of elevation gain.

Above the meadow, the trail passes under the charred limbs of live oaks still recovering from a 1982 fire. Farther ahead, as the oaks thin, you start climbing out of

the canyon bottom. After rounding some switchbacks you come up to Newton Motorway (2.8 miles) on a saddle south of, and well below, Castro Peak. The Backbone Trail contours west toward Latigo Canyon Road at this point, but you go uphill on Newton Motorway, traversing Castro Peak's south slope.

When you reach the top of the grade (atop Castro Peak's east ridge) walk east about 50 yards on a side path to the top of a barren knoll. On clear days, the view encompasses almost the entire coastline from Ventura County to Palos Verdes. At least four of the Channel Islands can be seen poking out of the sea offshore. Near winter solstice, the sun sinks to an ocean horizon as seen from here.

Just past the knoll you'll hook up with Castro Motorway (3.6 miles). Turn right and let gravity repay you for your previous efforts. Within a half-hour your car in the parking lot should be in view.



* For a post-hike swim and/or soak come to Peppering U. Follow-ing refreshments. Bring swimsuit. Call Bob () for a parking permit & a pool pass. *