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OTP HIKE
DECEMBER 5, 2001

Verdugo Mountains Off I-5

Directions to trail head:

From Interstate 5 in Burbank, exit onto Olive Avenue. Drive 1 ¼ miles northeast toward the mountains to Sunset Canyon Drive. Turn left, drive ¾ mile to Walnut Avenue, turn right and go north one mile to road's end and the parking lot below Stough Canyon Nature Center.

The Hike:

Walk north on the dirt fire road, which climbs the brushy west wall of Stough Canyon. A ½ mile ascent brings you to a junction – the fire road continues north while a footpath bends west. Take the footpath, first to an overlook of the Burbank airport and the San Fernando Valley (as well as a not-so-inspiring landfill). Walk another ½ mile to a building foundation and chimney – all that is left of a 1920-era youth camp.

Past the ruins, the trail climbs briefly and bends east to meet Verdugo Fire Road. Turn right and you'll pass a fire road on the right. This road returns to the nature center and family –friendly, 2 ½ mile hike.

For those seeking a longer trek, pass a junction with left-branching La Tuna Canyon Trail and ascend 2 more miles to Fire Warden's Grove. Picnic among the pines, an area also called Experimental Forest, Plantation Forest or Enchanted Forest .

The road splits just as you approach the grove. Verdugo Fire Road continues east into the main part of the grove. Take the right fork, heading south to the base of a communication facility and the signed Link Trail.

Link Trail extends to De Bell Municipal Golf Course . At first I thought this path should have been named Links Trail for its golf connection, but then I discovered it was built to link Wildwood Canyon and Strough parks. Unfortunately the link is broken by the golf course, so hikers must walk 1 ¼ miles on paved roads and sidewalks to complete a loop. (No wonder Mark Twain said, "Golf is a good walk spoiled.")

The trail begins with a knee-jarring descent down a ridgeline on tight switchbacks and stair steps. Ignore a couple of left-branching connector trails to Wildwood Canyon Park; continue until you're near the intersection of Wildwood Canyon Road and Harvard Road.

Walk west on Harvard Road about ¼ mile to De Bell Drive, turn right and walk carefully (there's no shoulder) a ½ mile past the golf course to Walnut Avenue. Turn right and walk on the sidewalk north another ½ mile back to the nature center and the trail head.