

May 21 --- Aliso/Wood Canyons Loop Paul Welton**Distance:** 10 miles (5 hours total)**Elevation Gain:** Less than 950 feet gain /loss or 400 feet gain/loss 8 mile easier hike. In the book “Afoot and Afield in Orange County” Jerry Schad, B4 Laguna Coast, Trip #2**Directions:** Take the 405 Freeway south to the 5 Freeway and then off at Alicia Parkway then south 3.5 miles to just past Aliso Creek Road. On the right (west side) turn into Aliso and Wood Canyons Park (28373 Alicia Parkway) where you can park for a \$2.00 fee in the lot or early cars can park on the street by the Mormon Meeting House. If the 405 Freeway is clogged you can take the #73 Toll Road (\$3.00) and exit at **Aliso Creek Road** south to Alicia Parkway south.**Hike:** The trails are well marked and maintained. I'll have some highlighted maps to show the route. The hike starts adjacent to the parking lot where there is shade, museum, a restroom, and tables for our refreshments when we return. The first part of the hike is 1.4 miles southwest gently down a road (0.7 miles) and then a path on the right side of the road in Aliso Canyon (0.7 miles) to the Wood Canyon junction. Rabbits were popping up at the edge of the road. Some rattlesnakes were reported near the path by other hikers. The “Visitors Center”, a small signboard, has trail maps and there are 2 restrooms. The trail turns north here to follow Wood Canyon. A short distance up this trail is Cave Rock on the left. It's worth a look into the cave in the rock, which is close to the trail. You can also walk around behind the rock on a loop trail, which accesses to top of the rock. Continuing on a half mile on the Wood Canyon Trail, we come to the trail for Dripping Cave on the left. This is a must see for all hikers so this is where we branch left. If you cross the stream on the Wood Canyon Trail you've missed this trail. We hike the short trail staying left at the fork directly to the cave. This cave is was a 19th century thieves hideout. After exiting the cave we'll take the left fork (north) to continue up a slight ridge with some interesting rock ledges, trees, and vistas. After another half mile there is junction with the Mathis Canyon Trail going left up to the ridge for a steep 500-foot climb or to the right, back to the Wood Canyon. This is where the choice is made for the easy hike to the right. This would be a good cookie stop.

The left loop climbs a steep (500 feet elevation gain) dirt road for a mile then levels off near the crest. It's all right to stop and look at the scenery/vistas on this climb. At the junction with the West Ridge Trail we turn right (north) We're on this trail for another 1.5 miles. At the junction of the Lynx Trail (on the right) there are rocks to sit on for lunch, but no shade. If its too early for lunch we continue down the Lynx Trail back to the Woods Trail and have lunch near that junction in the shade by Wood Creek. Near the Lynx/Woods junction the Wood Creek trail branches off to the right or southwest. This is a must because it becomes shady and frogs are croaking in the creek. After the Wood Creek trail follow the Run Trail and then the Coyote Trail. These Trails all follow Wood Creek and have a lot of shade. Finally they will exit back to the Wood Canyon Trail which is also parallel to the creek but not in the shade. It takes us back for the return to the Aliso Canyon Trail left 1.4 miles to the parking lot.

(ALTERNATE) The right turn on the Mathis Trail goes back to the Wood Canyon Trail. Turn left (north) on Wood Canyon Trail and continue until you get to the Lynx Trail intersection or you see the Wood Creek Trail. This would be the stop for lunch. Turn around and take the Wood Creek Trail back along the creek.

Continue on the Run Trail and the Coyote Trail to stay along the creek and in the shade. The Coyote Trail exits to the Wood Canyon Trail and the return to the Aliso Canyon Trail left 1.4 miles to the parking lot.