

Lower Rock Creek

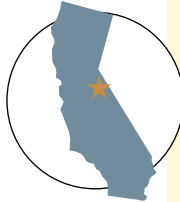
Enjoy a variety of seasons in Inyo National Forest

THE HIKE This downhill shuttle hike may be hard on the knees, but the views of seasonal change are easy on the eyes. In spring, you can watch the last remnants of snow give way to blooming wildflowers; in fall, you can see autumn colors rewind to vibrant summer greens as you descend 1,900 feet over 9.3 miles. Start on the Lower Rock Creek Trail as it drops gently from the upper trailhead, then cross the creek and follow its banks southeast for 2.2 miles. When you reach the road, hook right; follow the road briefly, then cross the creek again and pick up the trail on its west bank. Head another 2.2 miles south through the woods until you cross the road and creek again for the last and most scenic section. The path drops deep between the cliffs amid tall conifers, willows, fluttering aspens, and rushing water, crossing the creek several times over the next 4.9 miles. Exit through the Paradise Resort.

DIRECTIONS *Start:* From US 395, turn S onto Lower Rock Creek Rd. to trailhead. *End:* Stay on road to Paradise Resort trailhead.

INFO USGS quad: *Toms Place*. fs.fed.us/r5/inyo

Hike provided by Kathy Morey, author of *Hot Showers, Soft Beds, and Dayhikes in the Sierra* (Wilderness Press)



Morris Meadow

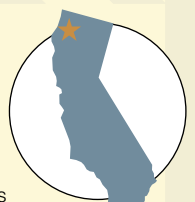
Get an alpine fix, maybe some fish, on this Trinity Alps trek

THE HIKE If you can't wait for the warmup to thaw high routes in the Sierras and southern Cascades, this 18-mile out-and-back into the heart of the Trinity Alps Wilderness is just the ticket. Follow the Stuart Fork Trail as it parallels the tumbling waters of Stuart Fork, winding through a rocky channel beneath a dense canopy of mixed hardwoods. The river supports a healthy population of rainbow trout, so pack tackle. You'll climb a gentle slope up a canyon amid black oaks, ponderosa pines, and incense cedars, crossing several streams. After nearly 9 miles of forest, expansive Morris Meadow opens up at 4,400 feet. The meadow is generally snow-free by April, and the views of glistening snowfields and shimmering granite on Sawtooth Mountain are memorable. Pick a campsite among the trees at meadow's edge; if spring's in full swing, you'll likely spot deer grazing the grasses during the morning or just before dusk.

DIRECTIONS From Weaverville, head N on CA 3 for 13 mi., then turn onto CR 112. Go 3.5 mi. and park at trailhead.

INFO (530)623-2121; fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity

Hike provided by Mike White, coauthor of *The Trinity Alps: A Hiking and Backpacking Guide* (Wilderness Press)



Strawberry Valley

Escape into the serene San Jacintos on the Pacific Crest Trail

THE HIKE Ringed with granite cliffs, open forest, and lush meadows, Idyllwild's Strawberry Valley is an accessible respite in the San Jacinto Mountains just 2 hours from L.A. This 11-mile clockwise loop begins on Deer Springs Trail and meets the PCT at 4.1 miles; turn east to traverse the south slope of Marion Mountain. In another 2.3 miles, you'll turn right to stay with the PCT and descend Marion Mountain's southwest ridge to Saddle Junction. From here, two signed trails lead east, to Tahquitz Valley and Skunk Cabbage Meadow. Pick either destination as your basecamp among the Jeffrey pines, then pick your dayhike: south to 8,846-foot Tahquitz Peak, or east to the Caramba Overlook for views down rugged Tahquitz Canyon into Palm Springs. From Saddle Junction, descend 2.5 miles west on the Devil's Slide Trail to Humber Park.

DIRECTIONS Deer Springs trailhead is 1 mi. W of town on CA 243; Humber Park trailhead is just N of town on Fern Valley Rd.

INFO Get permit at ranger station on CA 243 and Pine Crest. (909) 382-2921; fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/contact/sanjacinto

Hike provided by David Money Harris, coauthor of *San Bernardino Mountain Trails* (Wilderness Press)



White Wash

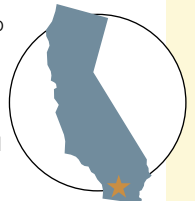
Follow a salt-and-pepper sediment trail to a desert overlook

THE HIKE The far north corner of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park contains stark, striking landscapes few ever see. This 7.2-mile out-and-back leads to a prime viewpoint at the top of a distinctive wash. Enter Horse Canyon from Turkey Track Road (it's the middle canyon) and follow the wide streambed to a cottonwood grove at 1.3 miles, where the black-and-white speckled granite walls of White Wash extend on your right. The wash, littered with cones from the piñon pines high above, climbs and narrows over 2.1 miles, with a few small ridges to navigate. At 3 miles and 3,800 feet, you'll see the pines along the trail, along with agave, evergreen juniper, and wild grasses that sweep like waves in the breeze. Scramble out of the gulch and follow a narrow ridge southwest for an overlook into Clark Valley at 3.6 miles. Find a campsite here and enjoy a night in high-desert wilderness, then retrace your steps to return.

DIRECTIONS From Anza, go S on Kirby, E on Wellman, S on Terwilliger, then W on Coyote Canyon Rd.; in 8 mi., park at gate.

INFO (760) 767-5311; parks.ca.gov/?page_id=638

Hike provided by Sheri McGregor, author of *Day & Overnight Hikes: Anza-Borrego Desert State Park* (Menasha Ridge Press)



CALENDAR

THINGS TO DO, PEOPLE TO SEE, PLACES TO GO

CALLING ALL CAMPFIRE CHEFS

Fancy yourself a backwoods gourmet? Enter your best original recipe in the Redwood Creek Campfire Classic. If you're one of five finalists, you'll win a trip to the Big Apple in June to fix your grub for an audience. Grand prize is \$10,000 in cash, a \$5,000 donation to the national park of your choice, and bragging rights as America's Greatest Campfire Chef. Visit redwoodcreek.com for an entry form. Deadline is May 14.

April 21

Willson Peak Hike Henry W. Coe SP
Located in NoCal's largest state park, Willson Peak is blanketed with blooming wildflowers in spring. Check it out with the Orinda Hiking Club; if you're game for more, visit orindahiking.org for a list of the club's weekly hikes throughout the Bay Area and beyond.

April 21–22

Monterey Bay Kayaking Monterey Bay
Learn the basics of flatwater kayaking in one of California's few remaining coastal wetlands. Watch for pelicans, sea otters, and harbor seals, then stretch your legs with a hike along the coast. On day 2, test your paddling skills in the open waters of Monterey Bay's National Marine Sanctuary. \$440; rei.com

THE SIERRA AT A GLANCE

From Lassen to Tehachapi Pass, a new map of the entire Sierra Nevada from Imus Geographics renders the range in exacting detail. Terrain shading, water sources, and more than 3,100 place names (searchable online) all help you scout your route before you set foot on the trail. \$9.95; imusgeographics.com

April 28–May 5

Big Sur Backcountry Service Ventana Wilderness
You'll camp among the pines deep in the Ventana Wilderness, which straddles the Santa Lucia Range above Big Sur's rugged coastline, and work with the USDA Forest Service to help improve eroded trails. Then enjoy free time to explore on your own. \$395 includes meals; sierraclub.org/outings

April 8–13

Death Valley Trails Death Valley
Labyrinthine slot canyons, hidden oases, and remote desert summits highlight this guided trek through the seldom-traveled backcountry of Death Valley. This spring trip is also timed for prime viewing of blooming cacti and wildflowers. \$1,325; rei.com

April 7–9

Sequoia Winter Mountaineering Sequoia National Park
Develop essential winter skills while extending your backpacking season. From your remote basecamp, you'll learn core winter camping, alpine travel, mountaineering, and survival techniques in preparation for the final challenge: 11,204-foot Alta Peak. \$665; rei.com

April 20–22

Wildflower Photography Point Reyes
It's the perfect setup for the aspiring nature photographer: dramatic cliffs, the wild Pacific, and a profusion of blooming wildflowers covering the Point Reyes peninsula. You'll get tips from a pro, helpful critiques of your work, plus plenty of time for field shoots. \$230 includes lodging at the Historic Lifeboat Station; ptreyes.org.

March 31–April 7

Service in an Island Paradise Santa Catalina Island
Just 20 miles offshore from L.A.'s urban sprawl, this unique ecosystem hosts 15 species found nowhere else. You'll camp on the island and work to preserve native plants, while also taking time to tour historic sites, hike the island's interior, or explore its rugged coast. \$495; sierraclub.org/outings

April 29

Beginning Backpacking Class Sierra Nevada
Want to pick up some tips, meet kindred hiking buffs, or introduce a friend to the outdoors? This 18th annual course, taught over 3 consecutive Sunday evenings, culminates with an overnight in the Sierra Nevada. \$50; angeles.sierraclub.org



IN LIVING COLOR

In April, San Luis Obispo County's **Carrizo Plain National Monument** is teeming with wildflowers. Look for pronghorn antelope and tule elk grazing among the blooms. Info: tnc.org/natural-events

CLEAN AIR ACT ONE ACRE OF FOREST OFFSETS THE ANNUAL CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSION OF 18 PEOPLE. SEE ARBORDAY.ORG FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE THE EQUATION.