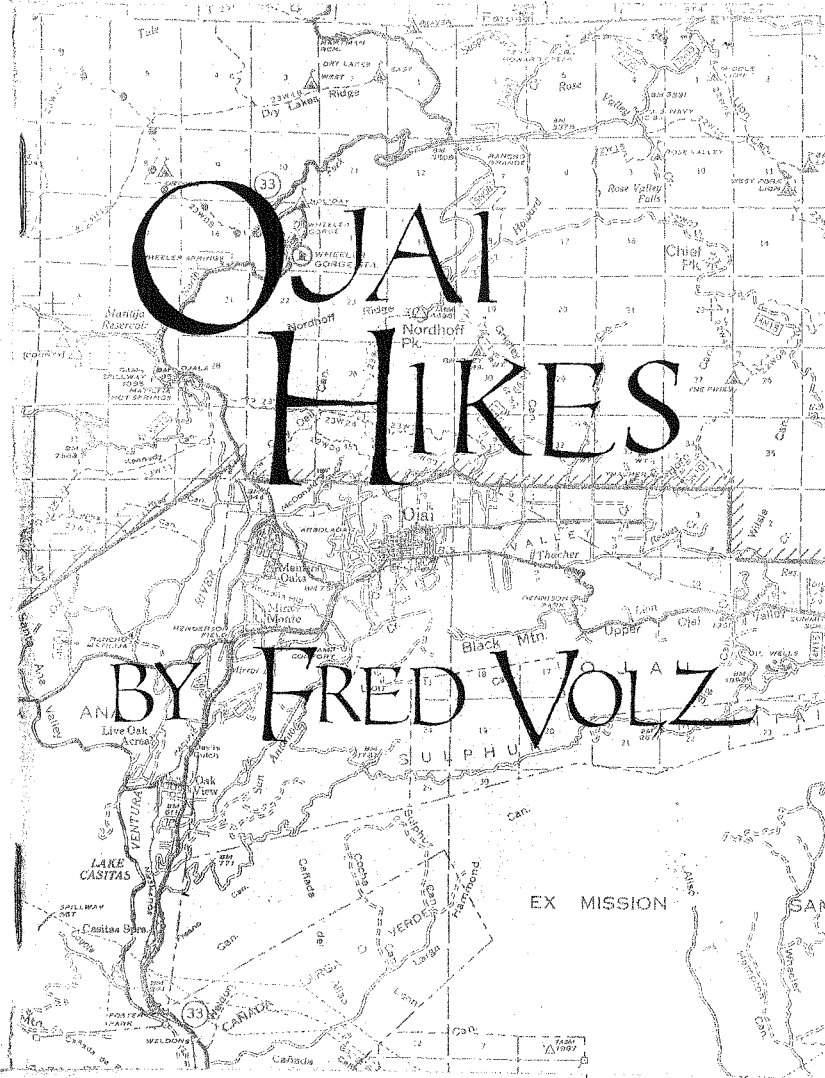


**FRED VOLZ** - editor and publisher *Ojai Valley News* for 25 years and veteran backpacker. He was trip biographer on the 1973 Mt. Everest expedition, and has written extensively about backpacking in Alaska's remote Gates of the Arctic Brooks range, the Katmai and Mt. McKinley National Parks, as well as the national parks of Tanzania. He was formerly a foreign correspondent for the Associated Press in the Far East.



Let's chart the first part of this 3,000' elevation switchback trudge to Nordhoff Peak, undoubtedly this book's hardest climb. Starting above the water tank on North Foothill (refer to Entrance 1) and heading up the hill at the marked sign, the trail switchbacks unrelentingly up the mountain from elevation 1,200. A tip: save this hike for a cool winter day because a warm sun angling straight down on the mountain makes for a sweaty 3 hours.

After passing the saddle where the Cozy Dell Trail wanders down to the left, you'll soon note that the steep trail is bearing up a broad canyon that is narrowing to a V. At the tip of that V watch for a trail dipping perhaps 50 ft. into the canyon to a lovely series of pools (listen, at this point you can hear water down there.) We like to take a dip here and with tired kids along this can be a destination in itself. We remember stretching out in the lowest pool and lifting our head and looking 2,000 ft. out over Ojai Valley. A place for one of those better moments in life.

From the V notch the trail snakes on broad switchbacks to the peak. There used to be a fire tower with a lady ranger enjoying unsurpassed views of everything to Catalina Island. She stayed up there all summer and had a telephone with a 646 number, so we always called home and reported in.

From here you can walk down a road to Hwy. 33 and the Wheeler's ranger station as an alternative to retracing your steps. But first enjoy the view.

## Santa Paula Canyon

### *...See Entrance 5*

*Unfortunately, this became one of the most popular weekend hikes in southern California after frequent articles lauding its beautiful pools and waterfalls in L.A. newspapers. Don't expect this to be some lonely trail except in its far upper reaches. You may find Boy Scouts camping at two sites up the way, teens skinny-dipping in its pools, and Sierra Club types roaming the canyons on the way to far corners. However, this is a fine all-day journey for the walking family, especially in the cool days of winter. The forest service closes Santa Paula Canyon during fire season in summer until the first fall rains. Check with them before entry.*

The trail begins on a fire road leading past an old farmhouse (off limits) and runs down to the river through a noisy, stinking oil field, which we hope will not spill your spirits. Once this was all owned and developed by the notorious Teapot Dome scandalist of the

Harding administration, Edward Doheney (his 30 room mansion is near the highway behind iron gates.)

The Santa Paula riverbed along here was ravaged by previous floods, but its upper reaches have been left fairly intact by flood waters that ran 15 ft. deep below. The main trail winds across and along the boulder-strewn riverbed for a mile or so. [Keep looking left for a faint trail which runs towards Echo Canyon, visible about a mile away. There's a fine waterfall during wet season and you can climb, carefully, to its lip. This could be a destination for a picnic.] The main trail continues for a bit then re-crosses the stream and switchbacks sharply up to a shady plateau with an idyllic campground.

At the far end of the campground descend and follow the stream to the left along the cliffside (tricky in places) to a considerable waterfall plunging into a deep pool. Great place for a swim.

Retrace your steps to the main trail and climb to the top of the falls. Along here another old trail branches to the east up a canyon towards Santa Paula Peak. The trail runs out in about 1/2 mile but the determined hiker can find good trout fishing in the pools beyond.

At the top of the falls get ready to exclaim at a magnificent series of falls, pools and chutes during the next half mile. In late spring when algae coats the shallow slides, children can zip down in perfect safety (with dad

and mom, of course) into shallow pools--in their underwear, if they're modestly inclined.

Now for wild country up the trail to another plateau. At the last campsite turn right up a canyon. The trail tends to disappear and it's slippery going up the cliff to the left of a beautiful 50 foot waterfall which comes out of heavy brush beyond the lip of the falls. Skip this if you need something more challenging.

The real beauty of this great canyon begins at the waterfalls just beyond the second campground. The trail which used to run up the hill to the left of the falls may be almost impossible to find; the forest service discouraged hikers by letting it become heavily overgrown. But intrepid hikers can most always find ways and their reward will be considerable. Above the falls (you are probably 4 hours from your car) lies the real back country of marvelous campsites, pristine pools, high sandstone ridges, tall pine and oak groves -- all with nobody there. Backpack country! The trail, what there is of it, leads higher and higher to the very top reaches of the Topa Ridge and 6,700 foot Hines Peak. There and back is 3 or 4 testing days. We don't recommend doing this route in any less. This is IT for well conditioned, experienced backpackers. Snow in winter, splendid in spring.

HIKING & BACKPACKING

# SANTA BARBARA & VENTURA



*A complete guide to the trails of the  
southern Los Padres National Forest*



Craig R. Carey

WILDERNESS PRESS



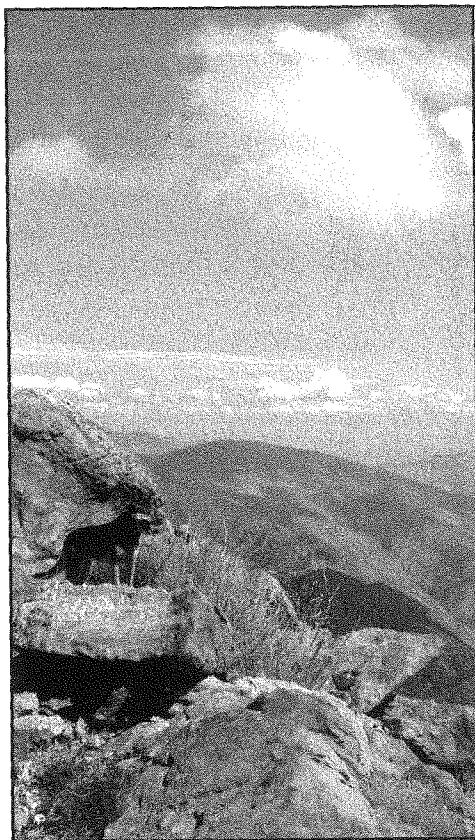
### Trip Description

To start, follow the Red Reef Trail (*Route 88*) to the **saddle (6,020', 309046E 3820460N)** between Timber and Santa Paula Creeks. Approach the peak from the northwest.

From the saddle, climb along the thin use trail southeastward up the shale-and-talus edge, punctuated only by the occasional gnarled tree, until reaching the slightly more-stable rock of the peak's northern flank. The going here can be slow, with loose rock and scree. Keep your hands free, as numerous sections are steep enough to warrant scrambling on all fours.

Follow the route upward (it is often marked by cairns) to a **gap (0.35 mile from saddle, 6,565', 309327E 3820803N)** on the western edge of the peak. Head left (east) here for another 0.1 mile through the burn area to the benchmark and trail register atop **Hines Peak (0.45 mile, 6,704', 309466E 3820751N)**.

Farther eastward along the ridge, one can catch glimpses of the old Topatopa Peak Trail that skirted the southern flanks of the Hines long ago and led some 6 miles eastward to Topatopa Peak and the fire lookout tower that once stood there. The route fell into disuse when Topatopa Peak was included in the Sespe Condor Sanctuary as part of the sanctuary's 1954 expansion.



## Route 62

### LAST CHANCE TRAIL (21W09), SANTA PAULA CANYON, and TOPATOPA BLUFF

**LENGTH AND TYPE:** 7-mile out-and-back to Big Cone Camp; 3.6-mile one-way to East Fork junction; 7.4-mile out-and-back to Graffiti Falls; 11.8-mile out-and-back to Jackson Hole Camp; 6.1-mile one-way to Jackson Falls; 17-mile out-and-back to Last Chance Camp; 10.5-mile one-way to Last Chance Connector junction; 12.7-mile one-way to Topatopa Bluff; 13.5-mile one-way to Nordhoff Ridge Road

<b>RATING:</b>	Moderate to Big Cone; strenuous to Nordhoff Ridge Road
<b>TRAIL CONDITION:</b>	Well maintained (former service road) to passable (washed-out route requiring rock-hopping and scrambling)
<b>MAP(S):</b>	USGS <i>Santa Paula Peak and Topatopa Mountains</i> ; <i>Harrison's Sespe Wilderness</i>
<b>CAMP(S):</b>	Big Cone, Cross, Jackson Hole, Last Chance, and Topatopa Lodge (abandoned)
<b>HIGHLIGHTS:</b>	Riparian trekking; some of the best swimming holes in Ventura County; conifer stands; unique geology

**TO REACH THE TRAILHEAD(S):** Use the Santa Paula Canyon (Thomas Aquinas/Ferndale) Trailhead to access this route as described south to north; use the Topatopa Bluff Trailhead for the upper terminus.

**TRIP SUMMARY:** This route ascends Santa Paula Canyon from the trailhead near Thomas Aquinas College, past the East Fork, and along the Last Chance (main) fork through riparian, oak woodland, and conifer-clad scenery and some extremely popular cliff-jumping and swimming spots. The lower stretch is by far the most heavily traveled in the Ojai Ranger District but is seldom followed all the way to its true northern terminus along the western edge of Topatopa Bluff. Litter and graffiti can be a problem along the lower trail, despite the efforts of local volunteers.

### Trip Description

From the **parking area (975', 307824E 3811547N)**, walk east along the shoulder of CA 150 to the entrance of the Thomas Aquinas College grounds. Follow the well-marked road around the eastern edge of the college grounds for about a mile (respect the college's property and stay on the road) and through the Ferndale and Rancho Recuerdo properties, following signage throughout until the sealed road ends just before a pair of fenced-off **pump jacks (1.2 miles, 1,100', 308556E 3812697N)**. (Dogs must stay leashed through these stretches of privately held property.) Circumnavigate this fenced-off area on the creek side, and thereafter the old road (formerly 4N03) will lead you along the left (south) banks of Santa Paula Creek (the other side of the creek here is privately held).

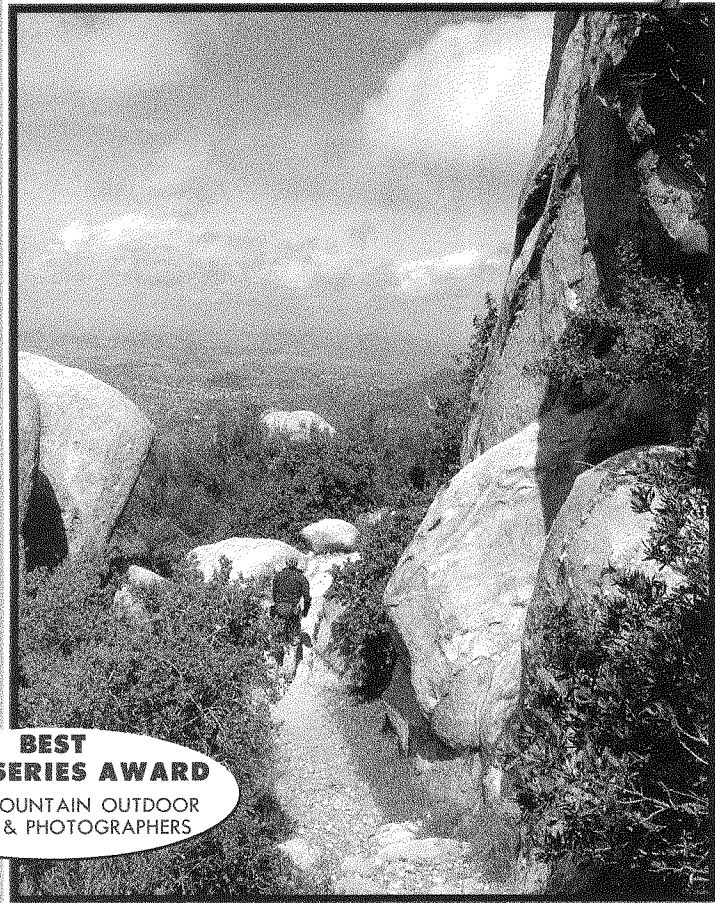
Floods in 2005 scoured much of this stretch of the canyon, and portions of the trail were lost to the torrents. As a result, a bit of route-finding and rock-hopping is involved at points, but overall if you simply head up-canyon, you'll be fine. The US Forest Service has done a competent job of remarking the route as it currently stands, with a handful of Carsonite signs indicating the prescribed route.

You'll hike in both cobble-strewn creek bed and oak- and alder-shaded glens, where there is also a fair amount of poison oak (so be diligent in your route-finding, especially in



DAY HIKES AROUND

# Ventura County



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## 32. Santa Paula Canyon

**Hiking distance:** 6–8 miles round trip

**Hiking time:** 3–4 hours

**Elevation gain:** 750–900 feet

**Maps:** U.S.G.S. Santa Paula Peak  
Sespe Wilderness Trail Map

**Summary of hike:** The Santa Paula Canyon Trail in the Topatopa Mountains is among the most beautiful and popular hikes in the Ojai area. The trail begins by walking through picturesque Saint Thomas Aquinas College into Santa Paula Canyon. The hike follows Santa Paula Creek up a shady, forested canyon past a number of deep bedrock pools and cascades surrounded by rugged mountain views. The trail leads to The Punchbowl, a scenic, narrow gorge with waterfalls and pools between Big Cone Camp and Cross Camp.

**Driving directions:** OJAI. From downtown Ojai, drive 11 miles east on Highway 150 towards Santa Paula. Park in the trailhead parking area on the right side of the road, just east of the bridge over Santa Paula Creek. The parking area is across from Thomas Aquinas College.

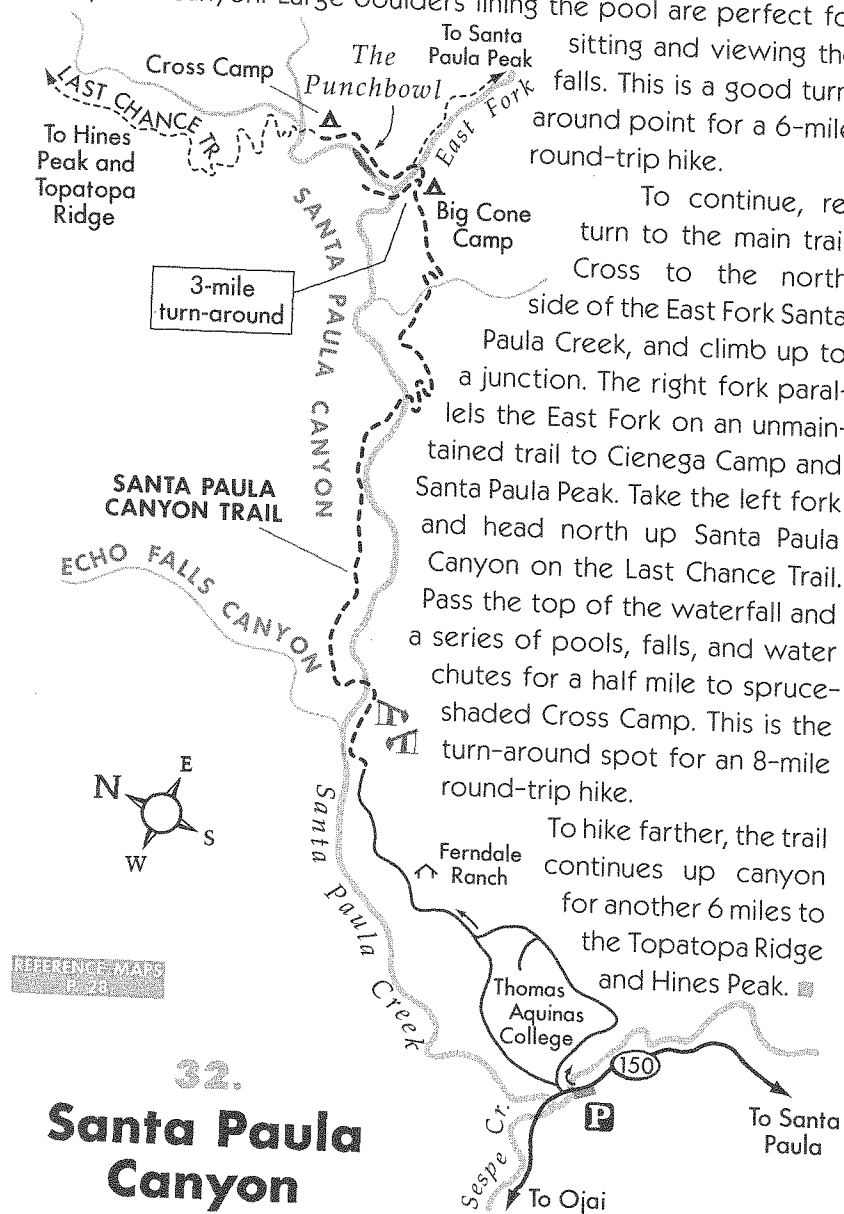
SANTA PAULA. From Santa Paula, drive 5.7 miles northwest on Highway 150 towards Ojai to the trailhead parking area on the left. The parking area is across from Thomas Aquinas College.

**Hiking directions:** From the trailhead parking lot, hike 500 feet up and across the road, entering Thomas Aquinas College. Stay on the paved road, heading north towards the far end of the campus. Near the top, take the road veering off to the right. Walk through the gate and past Ferndale Ranch. The road ends in front of two rusty oil rigs. Curve around to the left, then enter forested Santa Paula Canyon along the creek. Cross to the north side of the creek, and head up-canyon under sycamore and alder trees to a fire road at 1.2 miles. Continue up the fire road. Recross the creek at two miles, and begin switchbacking up the mountain. The trail levels off before dropping down into Big Cone Camp, located on a shaded terrace above Santa Paula Creek. At

the far end of the grassy flat, the narrow path descends to Santa Paula Creek in a sandstone gorge. Detour to the left, leaving the main trail, and head 30 yards downstream to a side canyon on the right. A 25-foot waterfall and pool are twenty yards up this canyon. Large boulders lining the pool are perfect for sitting and viewing the falls. This is a good turnaround point for a 6-mile round-trip hike.

To continue, return to the main trail. Cross to the north side of the East Fork Santa Paula Creek, and climb up to a junction. The right fork parallels the East Fork on an unmaintained trail to Cienega Camp and Santa Paula Peak. Take the left fork and head north up Santa Paula Canyon on the Last Chance Trail. Pass the top of the waterfall and a series of pools, falls, and water chutes for a half mile to spruce-shaded Cross Camp. This is the turnaround spot for an 8-mile round-trip hike.

To hike farther, the trail continues up canyon for another 6 miles to the Topatopa Ridge and Hines Peak.

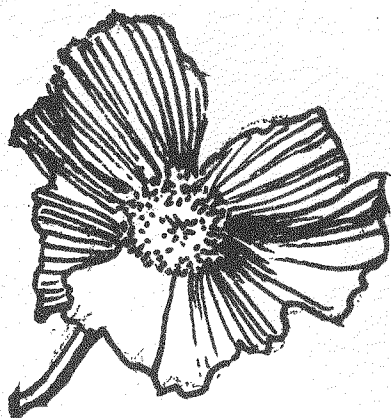


# Roam

## *Ojai's Hip Little Hiking Guide*

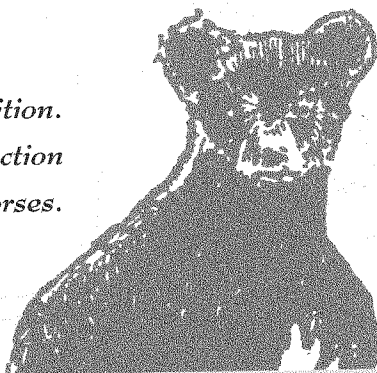
Gael Belden  
with Dawn Belden  
and Amanda Belden

foreward by  
Rick Ridgeway



*Fold-out map included*

*Updated 2011 edition.  
Includes a new section  
on Bikes, Climbs and Horses.*





becomes private property, but the road left will take you upwards to Ladybug, White Ledge, and on. At the second gate, the trail continues another 100 yards then takes off going north (left) to White Ledge Camp and Nordhoff Road. There is a wilderness barrier here. Hines Peak is right in front of you, and there you can go left down to Ladybug Camp toward the Sespe, or, at the barrier, you can hike a worn-out path up to the Bluffs for the view of a lifetime.

## 11

### SANTA PAULA CANYON (21W09)

Length: 2 1/2 miles to Big Cone Camp and Punchbowls  
Easy to moderate

Santa Paula Canyon is a much used and well-loved hiking road and trail that ends at a handsome ravine where rock pools spill over onto one another. If you don't want to hike that far (about 1 1/2 hours each way), there are nice areas along the way to sit with a snack or a journal. It is especially busy on the weekends, so the best time to go might be early on a weekday.

**DIRECTIONS.** Travel on Hwy 150 past the Summit Café in the Upper Valley and follow the road downhill as it winds around toward Santa Paula. From the hamburger stand at the Summit to where you'll stop is about 3 miles on the left. Park there at the turnout just before the bridge at Santa Paula Creek (at the Ferndale Ranch gate). Walk across the bridge and go through the Thomas

Aquinas College gate. Continue to walk on the paved road through the campus (there will be well maintained trail signs all along the way). As the road leaves the school you will walk by houses, dogs, fruit trees and a private ranch. Stay on the road. When you come to a fenced-in oil derricks, bear left on narrow trail until you get to the stream. In the spring and summer watch out for poison oak!

**THE HIKE.** Go past oil rigs and then keep left past chain-link enclosure. The trailhead really starts now, where the streambed borders on the left. Cross stream and keep walking until you see a fenced in avocado orchard. Trail will be on the right, bordering the stream, which is also on your right. It changes after heavy rains, so it may be different each year. The way you can tell if you're on the right track is to know that the trail is an obvious trail when you find it. The stream is always on your right side. There is shade amidst the broadleaf trees and the sound of water. At the final stream crossing, before the trail turns into a wide road that climbs right, you might want to rest. The next bit is a winding ascent up a side of a mountain. It will take about 25 minutes to get to Big Cone from the base where you start up the road. At the summit will be Big Cone Camp with five fire pits and campsites. There is a narrow trail/path at the far end of the camp, which descends into a canyon gorge. There you will find the punchbowls—waterfalls and deep pools and big rocks for sitting. I am always happy to see pine trees in the middle of an oak forest, and I imagine you will, as well, when you arrive at the gorge and the camp.