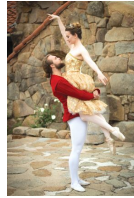




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## A Hiker's Paradise: Hiking Clevenger Canyon North

By Angela McLaughlin – Ramona Home Journal • Thu, Aug 25, 2016

As you head down Highway 78 toward Escondido, you'll find a small parking lot on the right side of the road. This is the trailhead for the Clevenger Canyon North hiking trail.

The hike begins with a downhill descent from the road into the canyon below. At the beginning of the trail, hikers will encounter a lot of graffiti and broken bottles. If you are bringing a dog on your hike, take care to ensure they do not get glass in the pads of their feet. It is a good idea to check the bottoms of your shoes after you pass through this area, as well. After a short distance, the ground clears up and this is no longer much of a concern.

At the bottom of the canyon, you will meet Santa Ysabel Creek. During certain times of the year — after a heavy rain — it may be difficult to cross. Most of the time, however, passing over the creek poses no issues. Tall sycamores, oaks and willows create a pleasing canopy of shade, providing a nice resting place from the heat of the sun.

Shortly after crossing the creek, you will begin your climb up into the foothills. This trail is not for the faint of heart. At more than a 1,000-foot climb in elevation, it can be considered "moderate" in terms of difficulty, though novice and expert hikers will also find much to enjoy.

The narrow, winding dirt trail is mostly well maintained. Numerous switchbacks bring hikers up the mountain. Some areas of the trail have been washed out from rain or erosion and have not been repaired, which can make for an exciting experience when trying to cross the collapsed ground on the side of a steep incline. Hiking on such a narrow path at this great height can certainly provide an adrenaline rush.

Large, precariously balanced boulders on the trail and beautiful valley views create a dramatic and interesting landscape during the hike. Remember to watch out for rattlesnakes while exploring the boulders.

At the top of the peak, the trail peters out and is difficult to follow much farther. Though it supposedly once continued for many miles, the rest of the trail has not been maintained, and this summit marks the turn-around point for most hikers.

If you work your way through the brush, you can climb onto one of the large boulders for a stunning view of San Pasqual Valley and the Cuyamaca and Volcan mountains in the distance.

When descending toward the trailhead, make sure to stay on the maintained path to avoid causing more erosion. Oftentimes, people will try to take a shortcut up or down the hill, and this generates issues with trail maintenance, not to mention the excess strain it places on your knees.

At around five miles round trip, it is not an overly long hike, but the steep rise in elevation makes it feel intense. This trail is popular with hikers looking for something a little different and with trail runners — providing a great workout for both.

Visitors should note that this trail is not approved for bicycles or horses. Hikers are advised to wear long pants and sturdy shoes, to bring plenty of water for yourself and your canine companions, and to hike during a cooler part of the day.

As it is usually uncrowded, the trail is a wonderful opportunity to get away from the daily grind and enjoy a bit of nature — and



View of San Pasqual Valley from trail. Photo by Angela McLaughlin

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a lot of exercise. Birders and plant enthusiasts will enjoy the variety of sights available. After a bit of rainfall, the trail comes to life with an assortment of plants, such as cacti, flowering yucca, agave and a multitude of wildflowers.

Strap on your hiking boots and bring your camera, Clevenger Canyon North is a must for anyone looking for a scenic adventure.

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