



Local Self-Guided Hikes in the Malibu Area

Compiled for Pepperdine Community Use by Campus Recreation Outdoor Staff

Local Hikes in the Malibu Area! Get out and see some sites!

Malibu and the surrounding areas are full of natural wonders and beautiful views. Hiking trails crisscross the mountains and hills offering miles of trails to be explored. Inbetween attending hikes and excursions led by Outdoor Recreation student staff, we suggest these ten local hikes.

1. Escondido Falls
2. Solstice Canyon: Rising Sun-Solstice Canyon Loop
3. Calabasas Peak
4. Red Rock Canyon
5. Eagle Rock Loop
6. Mishe Mokwa-Backbone Loop Sandstone Peak (located in Circle X Ranch)
7. Paramount Ranch
8. Santa Ynez Canyon Trail to Santa Ynez Waterfall (in Topanga State Park)
9. Sullivan Canyon-Westridge Fire Road Loop
10. Parker Mesa Overlook (from Paseo Miramar)

We have included a brief description of each hike including the distance, estimated hiking time, and elevation gain. Driving directions and hiking directions are also included. If you would like further information about any of the hikes including maps, please visit the Campus Recreation Office. We have resources including guidebooks (both for camping and hiking) and atlases. All the hikes listed here can be found in:

Stone, Robert. (2003) *Day Hikes Around Los Angeles*. Red Lodge, Montana: Day Hike Books, Inc.

Campus Recreation has a copy available for viewing in our office. This book includes maps for each hike and information about 72 other hikes in the Los Angeles area!

We hope this list is a helpful resource and will enable you to see more of the beautiful sites Malibu has to offer! When hiking, be sure to take all necessary safety precautions including taking plenty of water and not starting a hike too late in the day. Also, having a cell phone available in case of emergency is a good idea, but keep in mind that cellular service may not be available along trail routes.

Let us know how your hikes go. We would love to hear about your experiences and any new trails we should add to our list!

1. Escondido Falls

Hike distance: 4.2 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 2 hours

Elevation gain: 300 ft.

The starting point for this hike is a 10 to 15 minute drive from Pepperdine. The end location, the falls, are mossy and have a whimsical look. The falls are different from typical cascades you would find in say, Yosemite. The hike is well worthwhile and has both flat shaded sections and steep sections in the sun.

Driving directions: From Santa Monica, drive 16.5 miles north on PCH to Winding Way. Make a right on Winding Way. There is a small parking lot on the left side of the road.

Hiking directions: Hike north up Winding Way. This isn't really the hiking bit as you are walking on a paved road past beautiful houses, but it is uphill. After 0.8 miles get off the road and take the trail on the left. Hike downhill into Escondido Canyon and cross the creek. After crossing, take the left fork upstream. Continue on the trail alongside the creek. The trail crosses the creek several times. After the fifth crossing you'll be able to see the falls. The trail ends up a shallow pool at the bottom of the falls. Return the same way you came.

2. Solstice Canyon: Rising Sun-Solstice Canyon Loop

Hike distance: 2.8 mile loop

Estimated hiking time: 1.5 hours

Elevation gain: 400 ft.

The starting point for this hike is the next right past Malibu Seafood when driving north on PCH. If you park close to PCH you'll have to walk into the parking lot by way of a windy road that you are better to drive onto so long as there is parking space. The hike is alternately uphill, flat, and downhill as it winds up the side of the canyon. A beautiful view of the ocean is visible from the trail on your way to the Tropical Terrace. The Tropical Terrace is the burned down ruins of a house from the 1950s. There is a waterfall near by and lush tropical plants make it a nice picnic or resting spot.

Driving Directions: From Malibu Canyon Road, drive 2.3 miles north on PCH. Turn right onto Corral Canyon Road and continue to the gated entrance on the left. Turn left and drive to the parking lot at the end of the road.

Hiking directions: Hike north up the steps past the TRW Trailhead sign. Follow the trail up the hill to the TRW buildings. The Rising Sun trail begins on the right of these buildings. The trail goes up the east ridge of the canyon to the back of the canyon and then descends to the canyon floor. Here after crossing the creek you'll arrive at the ruins of Tropical Terrace. A path leads upstream to the waterfall and pools. To return to the parking lot, take the flat service road which runs parallel to Solstice Creek. When the road splits, bear to the left, cross a bridge, and return to the starting point.

3. Calabasas Peak

Hike distance: 4 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 2 hours

Elevation gain: 900 ft.

The 2,163 ft. Calabasas Peak overlooks Red Rock Canyon, Old Topanga Canyon, and Cold Creek Canyon. The hike to the peak takes a graded fire road and has sweeping views of the three surrounding canyons and the San Fernando Valley.

Driving directions: From PCH take Malibu Canyon Rd. 6.5 miles to Muholland Highway. Make a right and drive and continue to Stunt Road (4 miles). Turn right on Stunt and drive one mile to a pullout on the right side of the road.

Hiking Directions: From the pullout, cross Stunt Road. The trailhead is 20 yards downhill. Walking up the fire road you'll pass a gate, and should continue to a junction at 0.7 miles. The right fork of this trail goes to Red Rock Canyon (another hike listed on this page). For the hike to Calabasas Peak, continue straight on the trail. You'll be walking along the cliff's edge and will have views of sandstone slabs and Red Rock Canyon. The trail curves to the right and circles Calabasas Peak along its eastern ridge. Old Topanga Canyon is visible from the ridge. The trail fools you by going gradually downhill and then turning into a steep descent. Right before the descent becomes very steep, look for a narrow path on the left which leads to the summit. After reaching the top, enjoying the view, and taking pictures to prove you were there, descend on the same path and reverse your route to get back to the trailhead.

4. Red Rock Canyon

Hike distance: 4 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 2 hours

Elevation gain: 700 ft.

Red Rock Canyon is a great example of California's multifaceted landscape. Instead of going to the southwest to see a multicolored canyon you can hike into Red Rock!

Driving directions: From PCH take Malibu Canyon Rd. 6.5 miles to Muholland Highway. Make a right and continue to Stunt Road (4 miles). Turn right on Stunt and drive one mile to a pullout on the right side of the road.

Hiking directions: From the pullout, cross Stunt Road. The trailhead is 20 yards downhill. Walking up the fire road you'll pass a gate, and should continue to a junction at 0.7 miles. The right fork of this trail goes to Red Rock Canyon. Take this fork going east into the canyon. After 1.4 miles of trail passing red rock formations you'll come to the Red Rock Canyon Trail marked with a sign. Go left on the footpath and walk up the wooden steps that lead to the base of a few formations. The trail curves upward and after crossing a seasonal stream leads along the north wall of the canyon. Continue uphill to an overlook at the trail's end. Take the same path back to the canyon floor. To see additional formations before you head back to the canyon floor, take a detour 200 yards to the left on the main trail. After this detour, the trail continues half a mile to a picnic area by Red Rock Road. After lunch or picnic shenanigans, return on the same trail back to Stunt Road.

5. Eagle Rock Loop

Hike distance: 4 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 2.5 hours

Elevation gain: 800 ft.

Located in Topanga State Park, this hike has both a breathtaking end destination and beautiful sights along the trail! Eagle rock offers a view of mountains, valleys, and the Santa Ynez Canyon. The rock itself is sandstone and riddled with caves.

Driving Directions: From 101 exit Topanga Canyon Boulevard. Then drive 7.6 miles south (toward the coast) to Ensendad Drive. Take a left and follow the posted state park signs to the Topanga State Parking lot.

Hiking directions: The trail starts at the end of the parking lot by the picnic area. Walk uphill to a posted junction and take the left trail called the Santa Ynez Fire Road (or Eagle Springs Fire Road). Continue up the trail and pass the Santa Ynez Canyon Trail on the right. A mile after that juncture is the Musch Trail on the left. Stay on the trail you're on. Follow the ridge to a trail fork and take the left fork to Eagle Rock. After playing around the rock, exploring the caves, and savoring the exciting view hike back to the Musch Trail junction. Take the footpath on the right which goes down into the valley. After a mile of crossing ravines and walking through foliage and oak, sycamore, and laurel trees is the junction for Musch Camp. Follow the trail sign across the meadow and after a short distance there will be an unmarked junction. Turn left here and then left again at the second unmarked junction. The trail passes by a pond before ending at the Topanga parking lot.

6. Mishe Mokwa-Backbone Loop Sandstone Peak (located in Circle X Ranch)

Hike distance: 6 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 3 hours

Elevation gain: 1,100 feet

The Mishe Mokwa Trail passes red volcanic formations as it follows Carlisle Canyon along Boney Mountain. There is a picnic site located in a forested stream-fed area close to Split Rock. The second trail is part of the Backbone trail and includes views from Inspiration Point and Sandstone Peak. Sandstone Peak is the highest point in the Santa Monica Mountains (3,111 feet) and offers an awesome view of the Pacific Ocean, Channel Islands, and other mountains.

Driving directions: From Malibu take northbound PCH and turn right onto Yerba Buena Road. This road is 38 miles north of Santa Monica and two miles past Leo Carrillo State Beach. After turning right continue 5.3 miles to the Circle X Ranger Station on the right. After passing the ranger station continue one mile to the Backbone Trailhead parking lot on the left.

Hiking directions: Begin on the Backbone trail which heads uphill and north. After 0.3 miles leave the road for the Mishe Mokwa Connector Trail which is straight ahead. After 0.2 miles on this trail you'll hit the junction for the Mishe Mokwa trail. Take the left fork. This trail goes along the Boney Mountain and after 1.4 miles Balanced Rock comes into view on the opposite side of Carlisle Canyon. The trail descends into the shady canyon to the picnic area close to Split Rock, a great spot if you have food or want to rest! Next, follow the trail across the stream and walk out of the canyon to cross another stream by volcanic rocks. Walk along side the stream to a junction with a sign. At this junction take the left fork, the Backbone Trail. This trail will take you uphill to Inspiration Point. A side path leads from the main trail to the overlook. Back on the Backbone Trail continue east to another junction to Sandstone Peak. The path switch-backs up to the peak for a panoramic view of the Santa Monica Mountains, Pacific Ocean, and the Channel Islands. After returning to the Backbone trail it is 0.8 miles downhill to the juncture with the Mishe Mokwa trail. Turn right to take the Backbone Trail back to the parking lot.

7. Paramount Ranch

Hike Distance: 2.75 miles

Estimated hiking time: 1.5 hours

Elevation gain: 200 ft.

This hike is less about a strenuous workout than diverse scenery from natural wonders to a Western Town movie set. The ranch was the site for hundreds of movies and TV shows. This trail includes two loops which show the diversity of this 326 acre ranch.

Driving directions: From PCH take Malibu Canyon Road 6.5 miles to Mulholland Highway. Turn left and drive 3.2 miles to Cornell Road. Make a right and continue 0.4 miles to the Paramount Ranch entrance on the left. The parking lot is 0.2 miles down the road.

Hiking directions: 1st loop: Cross the bridge over Medea Creek and continue through the Western Town to Coyote Canyon Trail. There will be a sign marking this. Head west to a junction. The left fork is the Overlook Trail which is ½ mile. Take the trail on the right instead, which follows the ridgeline to another junction. If you take the left fork it leads to a picnic area. The right fork returns to Western Town via a paved road.

2nd Loop: The 2nd loop is called the Medea Creek and Run Trail. To reach this trail from the parking area go south on the service road which runs parallel to Medea Creek. Take the trail marked by a sign which goes left. Switchbacks lead to a junction. Keep going straight on the Run Trail to a trail split. Go left towards Sugarloaf Peak. Continue to the right above a meadow at the base of the mountain. The trail descends into the wooded area parallel to Medea Creek. Since this is a loop it returns to the trailhead.

8. Santa Ynez Canyon Trail to Santa Ynez Waterfall (in Topanga State Park)

Hike Distance: 3 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 1.5 hours

Elevation gain: 300 feet

Santa Ynez Canyon is a beautiful verdant canyon. The trail meanders through the canyon, with several stream crossings. The waterfall at the back of the canyon is an 18 foot cataract set in a grotto and falling into a fern surrounded pool. This peaceful hike will reward hikers with a cool walk and a beautiful end location.

Driving directions: From Santa Monica drive north on PCH 3 miles to Sunset Boulevard. Make a right turn and drive 0.4 miles to Palisades Drive. Turn left onto this road and after 2.4 miles make a left onto Vereda de la Montura. Proceed 0.1 mile to the end of the road. Park here.

Hiking directions: Pass the gate marking the trailhead and go down the steps to the creek. Follow the creek's east bank. Cross a side stream and continue up the canyon. Cross the creek four times. After a sandstone outcrop the trail splits at Quarry Canyon. Stay to the left and cross to the west side of the creek and a posted trail split at a half mile. The left fork leads to Trippet Ranch. Take the right trail called the Waterfall Trail and cross to the east side of the creek. Follow the creek and cross it four more times as you walk back into the narrowing canyon. Continue into the canyon past boulders and sandstone formations. Boulder up into the rock grotto to reach the waterfall located at the end of the box canyon. Just before the falls a path on the right ascends to the canyon wall to overlook the canyon. Return using the same route.

9. Sullivan Canyon-Westridge Fire Road Loop

Hike Distance: 10 mile loop

Estimated hiking time: 5 hours

Elevation gain: 1,300 feet

This loop provides a longer hike with more elevation gain. The hike showcases Sullivan Canyon and then climbs to Sullivan ridge for a view of Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley, and the Encino Reservoir. The trail

goes through San Vicente Mountain Park, the former site of the NIKI Missile Control Site which was active from 1956-1968. The trail returns via the Westridge Fire Road on the ridgeline between Sullivan and Mandeville Canyons.

Driving directions: From Santa Monica, drive north on PCH 1.6 miles to Chautauqua Boulevard. Make a right turn and drive 0.9 miles to Sunset Boulevard. Turn right. Drive 2.8 miles on Sunset to Mandeville Canyon Road. Turn left. On Mandeville, turn left at the first street, called Westridge Road. Drive 1.2 miles to Bayliss Road and make a left. On Bayliss drive 0.3 miles to Queensferry Road. Turn left onto it and park near the trailhead gate.

Hiking directions: Walk around the vehicle-restricting gate and walk 0.2 miles on a paved service road. This leads to the floor of Sullivan Canyon. Go right and enjoy the shade from the forest the trail meanders through. At 1 miles cross a seasonal stream and continue past sandstone outcroppings. At 3.5 miles the canyon curves right and the trail curves left up a narrow side canyon. Climb the west canyon wall. This trail overlooks Sullivan Canyon. Continue up to the ridge where there is a T-junction at 4.3 miles. This is the Sullivan Ridge Fire Road. This is a turnaround spot for the Sullivan Canyon hike. To complete the 10 mile loop go right and follow the ridge north. This ridge is between Rustic and Sullivan Canyons and reaches Mulholland Dr. at a half mile. Walk around the gate and take Mulholland Drive (to the right) for 0.8 miles. From this trail you'll enjoy a view of Encino Reservoir and the San Fernando Valley. Pass another gate and walk right. You'll soon be in San Vicente Mountain Park. Walk up the paved road leading through the park. There are picnic spots and vista overlooks which you can take advantage of if you wish. After walking through the park, take the Westridge Fire Road (also called the Sullivan Ridge East). This follows the narrow ridge between Sullivan and Mandeville Canyons. Head south to reach the hike's highest point: 1,986 feet. From this high point the trail descends gradually with great views of Sullivan Canyon, Rustic Canyon, Temescal Canyon, and the Los Angeles Basin. The fire road you've been on exits at Westridge Road. Walk a half mile down Westridge and turn right onto Bayliss Road. After a half mile on Bayliss turn right onto Queensferry to reach the trailhead.

10. Parker Mesa Overlook (from Paseo Miarmar)

Hike distance: 5 miles round trip

Estimated hiking time: 2.5 hours

Elevation gain: 1,200 feet

This hike offers vista after vista with multiple views of the surrounding area! From the trail there are views from Venice to Malibu and from West Los Angeles to Topanga. The overlook at the end of the trail is situated over Santa Monica Bay and offers a view all the way to Palos Verdes. On a clear day Catalina Island is also visible.

Driving directions:

From Santa Monica, drive three miles north on PCH to Sunset Boulevard. Turn right and continue 0.3 miles to Paseo Miramar. Turn left and drive to the end of the road where you can park (about 1 mile).

Hiking directions: Start going north and go past the fire road gate. The road then climbs along the ridge which overlooks Santa Ynez Canyon. Pass the Los Lions Trail on the left. After two miles you'll reach a junction. Leave the fire road and take the junction on the left. After half a mile the trail ends at the Parker Mesa Overlook. This bare knoll offers views of the Pacific Ocean, Santa Monica Bay, and on clear days Catalina Island. Return on the same trail.