

A Guide to Adventures Along

EAST CAMINO CIELO



Raymond Ford • April 2026

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East Camino Adventures

1. EAST CAMINO ADVENTURES

The drive is awesome. Breathtaking. Even heavenly. The drive is awesome. Breathtaking. Even heavenly. Winding its way from the 2,250' summit of San Marcos Pass to the tip top of 3,985' La Cumbre Peak. Perhaps the best 2 hour drive you'll find here.

Winding its way from the 2,250' summit of San Marcos Pass to the tip top of 3,985' La Cumbre Peak, each turn along East Camino Cielo uncovers a new vista—the Santa Barbara coastline, Santa Cruz Island and on a clear day Santa Rosa and perhaps even San Miguel Island.



On the back country side of the roadway is the vast, mostly roadless interior, much of it dedicated wilderness: more recognizable places like Lake Cachuma or Figueroa Mountain, as well as others you may not have visited given they require foot or mountain bike travel to get to

East Camino Adventures

them such as Little Pine Mountain or in the further distance the Big Pine cliffs—a blend of images which suggests a wildness and an isolation rare to be found so close to civilization.

I lived on Camino Cielo for more than a decade, most of the 1980s and into the early 1990s. The home was a large two story house located on the back side of the crest a quarter mile or so east of San Marcos Pass and a perfect spot for quick access to the back country. Almost every afternoon I'd head out on my Tim Neenan built Lighthouse bike, often to Knapps Castle for the views and from there down the Snyder Trail to Paradise Road. From there I'd loop back via Cold Springs Tavern for a well-deserved beer and back to the house.

On the weekends friends would join me for a longer ride over La Cumbre Peak and east to Angostura Pass, a cruise down to Gibraltar Dam and the Santa Ynez River for a splash in one of the many pools—



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or when we really felt adventurous, we'd continue on another 4-5 miles to the backside Cold Spring Trail for an hour or so of soaking in the Little Caliente Hot Springs before heading home.

Getting to Know

Over time I got to know Camino Cielo to the point it felt like an old friend with every turn and twist taking me higher and higher: the slow steady pedaling like a series of Zen moments; quiet slow motion time, just the sound the wind, a red-tailed hawk overhead being chased by a flock of smaller birds; the chaparral seeming to glide by in effortless



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motion; the turkey vultures circling nearby, looking for a tasty meal on the road.

Then I turn back and head home the final treat, miles of downhill riding with no pedaling needed, my companion that absolutely delicious feeling of the cool breeze in my faces as I coasted along.

One of the things I learned quickly is how different the perspective is from the top of the mountain wall that it is when looking up at it. My favorite spot to take in the views has always been the top of La Cumbre Peak directly in front of the Lookout Tower looking out across the coastal plain to the Channel Islands. No matter how many times I've been there I'm hit with the vastness of the landscape below, the coastline fading into the distance for miles and miles in either direction, the wonder of what Chumash life must have been like.

From above there are no city sounds, just that of the wind and the sense that though life in the city often seems so complicated in reality we occupy such a small part of the land—yet impact so much of it.

A Unique Spot

It's a unique spot to get a sense of the Santa Ynez Mountain range. The drop off is almost vertical, the view directly down into the upper end of Mission Canyon. Over the ridge you can spot the Cold Spring drainages, Montecito Peak and the much further distance just past Carpinteria the 1,500-foot mound known as Rincon Mountain.

A scramble fifty yards or so to the right and you're looking down into the San Roque Canyon drainage, the Goleta valley and due west perhaps 15 air miles away you can spot Broadcast and Santa Ynez peaks.

The views don't get any better than this. But for me it is the view into the interior that is so impactful. Few roads are visible, no structures,

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no sense of "civilized" invasion. Simply a maze of ridges and ravines, of peaks and shadowed mountaintops and meandering drainages, taken as a whole the Santa Barbara back country.



View to the Interior

What you'll also see along the way are plenty of pull outs with wide open views of the Santa Ynez River below, Gibraltar Dam in some of them and upriver Jameson Reservoir, views that provide a variety of perspectives of the back country. It's taken me decades to really get to know this country and to be able to say there isn't a trail back there I haven't walked or backpacked.

Whether by bike or by vehicle there's plenty to explore along East Camino Cielo just from the ridge top but also trails along both sides of

the mountain that offer short excursions—or simply the opportunity to spend the afternoon getting acquainted with a bit more of the place we live.

East Camino Cielo—The Road That Knapp Built

Construction of Camino Cielo was begun during World War I, one of the many routes made possible by George Owen Knapp, who came to Santa Barbara in 1912. Born in 1855, Knapp graduated as a civil engineer from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of New York in 1876. He went on to work for People’s Gas, Light and Coke Company in Chicago, building gas plants. Eventually Knapp became president of the company before moving to Union Carbide, where he was Chairman of the Board for 25 years.

Retiring in Santa Barbara, Knapp quickly became involved with everything that seemed to be identified with the city’s progress. Within a few years he had funded a nursing school at Cottage Hospital with a \$200,000 contribution, donated substantial sums toward the construction of both All Saints-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church and Montecito Presbyterian Church, and provided money for a number of costly pipe organs in other churches.

Next to building organs and hospitals, Knapp’s abiding passion was building roads. Although he was past 60 years of age at the time, he personally supervised the construction of mountain roads to and from a lodge he was constructing in the Santa Ynez Mountains “with all the interest and enthusiasm of a man half his years.” More than anyone, it was George Owen Knapp who was responsible for the construction of Camino Cielo.

Knapp himself built four palaces in the mountains: the “Castle” above Painted Cave; one near Wind Cave (it is likely that the steps at the

East Camino Adventures

Chumash cave there were built by him); a third near Refugio Pass, now the site of Rancho La Chirpa; and the last next to a hot springs in the upper Santa Ynez drainage, now known as Pendola Hot Springs. The cement pool you will find there was added by Knapp.

An Afternoon's Drive on East Camino Cielo

For those of you who don't want to test your vehicle on the more primitive western section of this road, a drive on East Camino Cielo across the central portion of the Santa Ynez Mountains will provide a worthwhile afternoon full of beautiful views, islands and the coastline on the south side of the road and the Santa Ynez Valley, the San Rafael Mountains and wilderness areas on the north.

A 30-mile loop can be made by taking Highway 154 to the crest of San Marcos Pass, turning east and following Camino Cielo for 10 miles, and then dropping back down to Santa Barbara on Gibraltar Road.



East Camino Adventures

Following on the next page is a guide to what you might take time to experience as you drive from San Marcos Pass to Gibraltar Road.

Mileages are from San Marcos Pass. You might also start on Gibraltar Road and enjoy music at Cold Springs Tavern later.

Knapp's Dream

On April 9, 1916, George Owen Knapp purchased a 160-acre tract east of the Laurel Springs Ranch, wanting, in his words, "to make the tract a private mountain lodge that in natural beauty and grandeur will have few to equal it on the American continent." If the structure itself was anything like the view, it must have been awe-inspiring.

There were seven buildings in all, carved from thick sandstone blocks. The main house had five bedrooms, a large hallway, dining room, observatory, and a room especially designed for Knapp's pride and joy, a pipe organ. Over 20 men were employed during the construction of the lodge, which took more than four years. In addition to the main house, there was a studio next to it, a workman's cottage below, a dormitory which housed six servants, and a superintendent's house in the hollow where the lower road forks away from the path leading up to the lodge.

Lewis Falls

Soon after the lodge was constructed, Knapp discovered a series of cascades in the canyon east of the lodge, known now as Lewis Falls. Shortly thereafter an automobile road led down to them. If you look closely after you have hiked down this road about a mile, you will see the faint remnants of the rock steps he had built to the base of the falls, now mainly a dirt path with sandstone rocks lining the way. There he also added a bath house and a pool fed by the falls, installed

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lighting to illuminate the falls at night, and even had the organ music piped all the way down from the house!

The music was provided by resident organist Dion Kennedy. Concerts were given at the rustic retreat from time to time by Kennedy as well as by invited guest artists of local and national repute, including Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer.

All that Remains

Today all that remains of the Castle is the foundation and several chimneys rising like solitary spires into the sky. In 1940, Ms. Francis Holden purchased the lodge, but tragically five weeks later it was destroyed when a fire started in Paradise Canyon and raged out of control up the north slope of the Santa Ynez Mountains.

As the fire burned nearer, a friend of Ms. Holden painted the fiery mountain scene around her until she was forced to evacuate. Rather than worry about her fate, the woman seemed more concerned about her artwork, complaining of all the ashes falling in her paint and on her canvas. While everyone else panicked, including Ms. Holden, she calmly sat and painted.

The Forest Service finally made the women leave, with time enough only to throw a few belongings into a sheet, jump into a car, and go. When Ms. Holden tried to go back later to retrieve more, she was unable to get through a roadblock, though her chauffeur was able to climb a hill in time to see the flames reach the house and engulf it.

Five days later, only the observatory, built by Knapp in 1931 to house a large telescope, remained intact. Francis Holden never rebuilt, for

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the cost was simply too high. In 1964, the Coyote Fire claimed the observatory too, and the last of Knapp's dream.

Still, the beauty that Knapp saw as he first walked over the crest to his newly purchased property remains. Stepping onto the floor of the old observatory, its octagon-shaped walls long since destroyed, one can gain a vision of what life in the Santa Ynez Mountains must have been like a half century ago.

In Private Ownership

It is no longer possible to visit Knapps Castle though the Snyder jeepway and trail leads right by it. The property is private and the need to preserve the owner's privacy paramount. However it is possible to follow the jeepway down to the point where it takes you past the Castle to view what it looks like now - in some ways not too much different than it did when it was constructed.



2. THE PINES

A short distance before you reach the trailhead for the Fremont Trail there is a wide open area that has enough room for 405 vehicles to park, On the hills above you'll notice a fairly extensive number of pins trees, remnants of a period when the forest service was created in 1898 as what was then known as a forest reserve.

The prevailing thought at that time was that historically, the Santa Ynez mountains has been covered in what they considered to be the real forests—composed of pines and firs but had been pushed out due to wildfire.

Once over the top of the small knoll you'll discover a play area of sorts for the kids and plenty to explore.



3. FREMONT TRAIL

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—Variable, up to 1.5 miles Elevation Loss—200' Difficulty—Easy Topo—San Marcos Pass

HIGHLIGHTS: Fremont Trail provides a short hike with great views of the Santa Ynez Valley and is easy enough that you can take small children on it. The ridge is sharp and after an immediate downhill, meanders over a series of knolls to a point where you can sit and look out on the backcountry and all of valley. It makes a nice evening hike, just before sunset.

DIRECTIONS: To reach the trailhead, follow East Camino Cielo approximately 1.75 miles from San Marcos Pass until you spot a locked metal Forest Service gate on the left side of the road. You'll find



Fremont Trail

it several hundred yards after a small turnout by The Pines, which is described above in the section entitled, “An Afternoon’s Drive”.

CAUTION: Stop at the point where the trail drops steeply down into the valley. It is private property below and a tough walk back up if you go too far.



A Bulldozed Road

The Fremont Trail is actually a bulldozed road which provides a lateral firebreak down the north side of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The road leads downhill for several hundred yards, making it appear as if this will be a strenuous hike, but shortly after this it levels off and

Fremont Trail

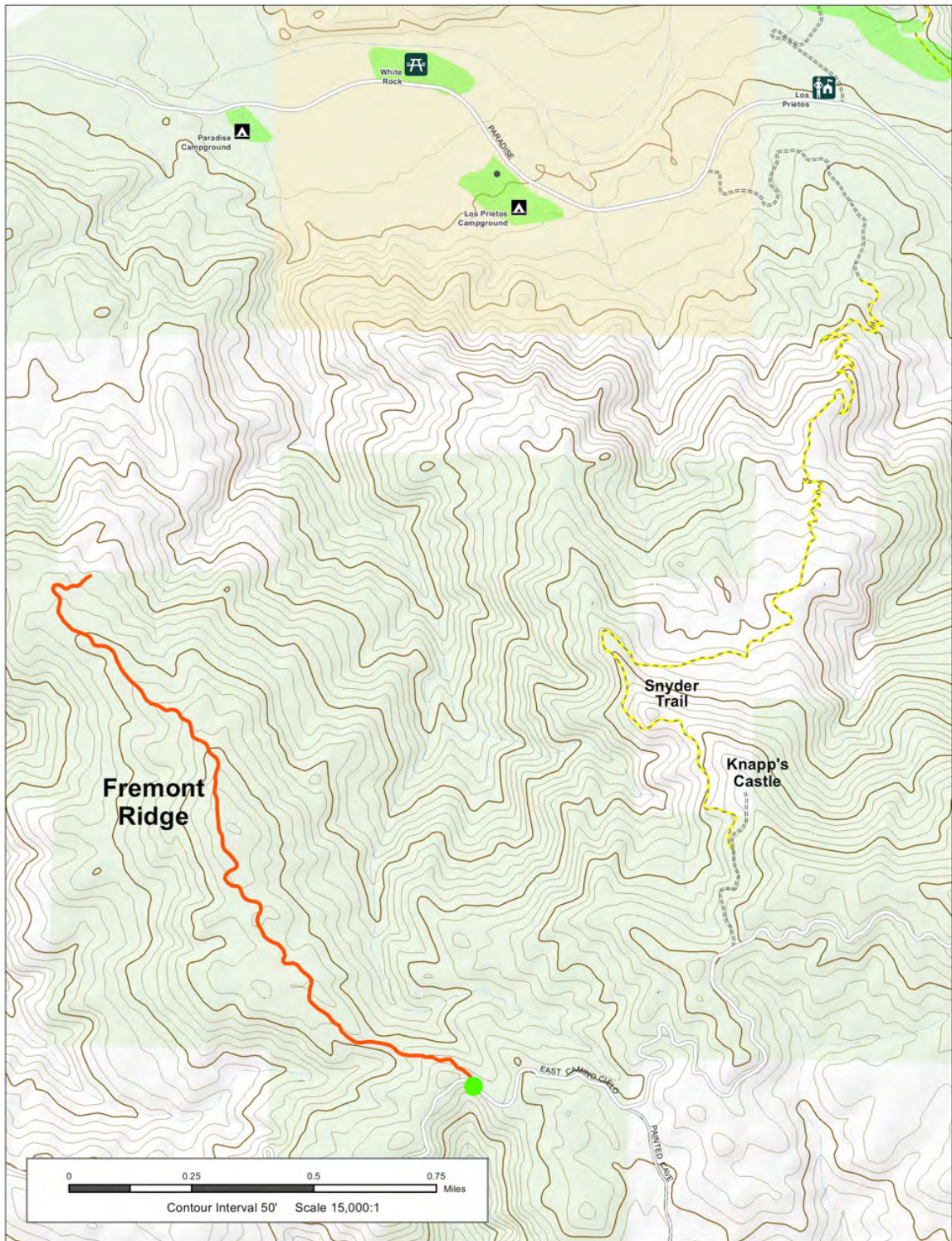
meanders over soft, rolling hills for a mile before finally beginning to drop steeply downhill.

Though not a long hike, it is a very enjoyable one, especially in the spring, when the hills fill with green grass and colorful wildflowers. The feeling here is one of openness, the ridge rather sharp, offering views up and down the Santa Ynez Valley. To the east the silhouette of Knapp's Castle provides an interesting backdrop, while Lake Cachuma and Figueroa Mountain make for a breathtaking view to the west. This is a nice hike anytime but especially so near sunset or on a moonlit night.

Turn Around Point

My advice would be to turn around at the point where the Fremont Trail begins to drop down into the Santa Ynez Valley. After this point the trail is loose and steep, with private property further down that will eventually force you to turn back anyway.

Fremont Trail



4. PAINTED CAVE

Perched high in the rugged folds of the Santa Ynez Mountains above Santa Barbara, the Chumash Painted Cave State Historic Park preserves one of the most evocative cultural sites on California's Central Coast.



Modest in size—a shallow sandstone overhang—the cave holds a remarkable concentration of pictographs created by the Chumash people over centuries.

The site's importance also lies in its rarity and preservation. Much Chumash rock art has been lost to erosion, development, or vandalism, especially in the region's fragile sandstone environments.

Painted Cave survives as one of the finest remaining examples, protected since its designation as a state historic park in 1976.

In a region often defined by scenic beauty, Painted Cave reveals a deeper story: not just of what we see, but of how people once understood the world around them.

The site is well worth the side trip down past the Painted Cave community. Look for the state park sign and steps leading up to the cave. Check the [State Park website](#) for additional information.

To reach the site the right turn onto Painted Cave Road is not too far beyond the Fremont trailhead. The road cruises past former owner Jane Fonda's Laurel Springs Ranch and the Painted Cave community before dropping down via several switchbacks (the lower one is very steep and sharp) to the Cave.

5. KNAPP'S CASTLE/SNYDER TRAIL

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—.75 miles to the ruins; 3.75 miles from Camino Cielo down the Snyder Trail to Paradise Road Difficulty— Easy to moderately strenuous Topo—San Marcos Pass (the trail on this map shows only as a jeep road down to Lewis Falls)

HIGHLIGHTS: Knapp's Castle is a short hike that is perfect for children, and sunset as well. The trail is only a half mile in length and almost level. The silhouette of the chimneys forms one of the most dramatic sights to be found anywhere in these mountains and kids



Knapps Castle

love playing around them. From the Castle you have 180 degree views of the entire bckcountry.

DIRECTIONS: To reach the trailhead, follow East Camino Cielo approximately 3.5 miles from San Marcos Pass until you spot a locked metal Forest Service gate on the left side of the road. The trailhead is approximately 1 mile past Painted Cave Road



CAUTION: The Castle is actually on private property, though for the present access is allowed but this could change. Be extremely careful and considerate while you are here.

A Special Hike

Even if you only have a few minutes to stop on your drive over the crest, the short hike to visit the remains of Knapp's Castle is well

Knapps Castle

worth the time. The easy hike not only offers a glimpse back into a period of time when this was wild, rugged country and the people who inhabited it were truly pioneers, but the most spacious views of the Santa Ynez Valley and the backcountry available anywhere.

For a half-mile, the dirt road winds through the chaparral, with enjoyable views out over the valley, though nothing that you might not have been afforded anywhere along Camino Cielo.

But then suddenly you make a turn to the right and the Castle comes into view, a series of chimneys, rock walls, and arches that almost take your breath away.

At the site the walls provide abundant places to rest, to marvel at the 180 degree views offered of Santa Barbara's mountainous interior, and to begin to picture in your mind what the Castle might once have been like when the rich made their way here for one of Knapp's famous social engagements. If you listen carefully, you can almost hear the haunting melodies of Dion Kennedy's pipe organ floating in the breeze.

A note of caution: while the dirt road is open to the public, the last several hundred yards leading to the Castle and the ruins themselves, are on private property. Over the past several years the Castle has been converted into a private home and is off limits.

Just before the Castle the road leading to the left, down and away from the ruins is the start of the Snyder Trail which winds its way for three miles to Paradise Road. For the first half of this length the trail continues as a jeep path, the original route taken by Knapp's guests on their way down to the Bathhouse.

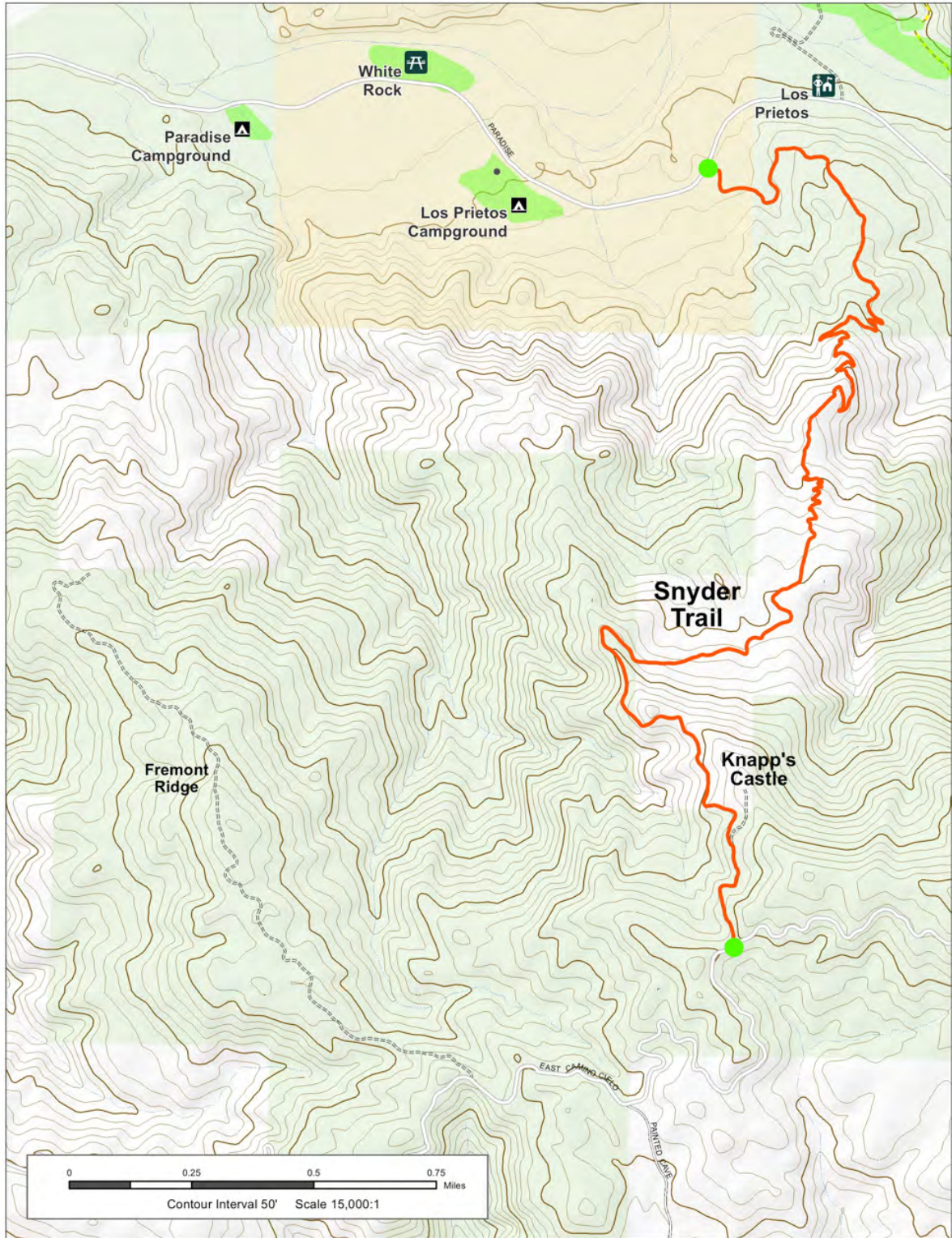
For a half mile the road curves around the base of a large knoll then turns east and cuts across its flank through a forest of oak and bay trees. After a mile it opens onto a series of large grassy knolls and

Knapps Castle



passes under a prominent set of power lines. Just after this point the trail drops down and to the left, in the process narrowing to a path that is just a few feet wide. To find the place where the trail turns left you'll need to look carefully as the road continues east towards Lewis Canyon. From this turnoff the trail winds for another 1.5 miles to Paradise Road, first steeply downhill through grass and chaparral, then a series of switchbacks which cut back and forth through forests of oak, eventually leading to a dirt road that services a water tank which supplies nearby Forest Service homes.

Knapps Castle



6. ARROYO BURRO TRAIL

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—3.25 miles Elevation Loss—2035'

Difficulty—Strenuous

Topo—San Marcos Pass and Little Pine Mountain

HIGHLIGHTS: This is a delightful trail that leads down into a narrow canyon and because it isn't traveled too often, is a nice hike for those who want a bit of solitude. From the saddle you can also walk down

the Arroyo Burro

Road. You can also

explore a little of the

front side of the

mountains. The trail

actually goes all the

way down into San

Roque Canyon, and

has just recently been

made accessible

through agreements

with property owners

near the bottom.

DIRECTIONS: To reach

the trailhead, follow

East Camino Cielo

approximately 5.5

miles from San Marcos

Pass. From the Pass,

Camino Cielo rises steadily for 5 miles to a high point then drops

abruptly to a saddle where Arroyo Burro Road intersects with it. Turn



left on the dirt road and continue past the shooting area. Arroyo Burro Trail is on the left, .2 miles down this road.

CAUTION: A Forest Service approved shooting area is located in the saddle at the intersection of Arroyo Burro Road and Camino Cielo. Use care if hiking near it.

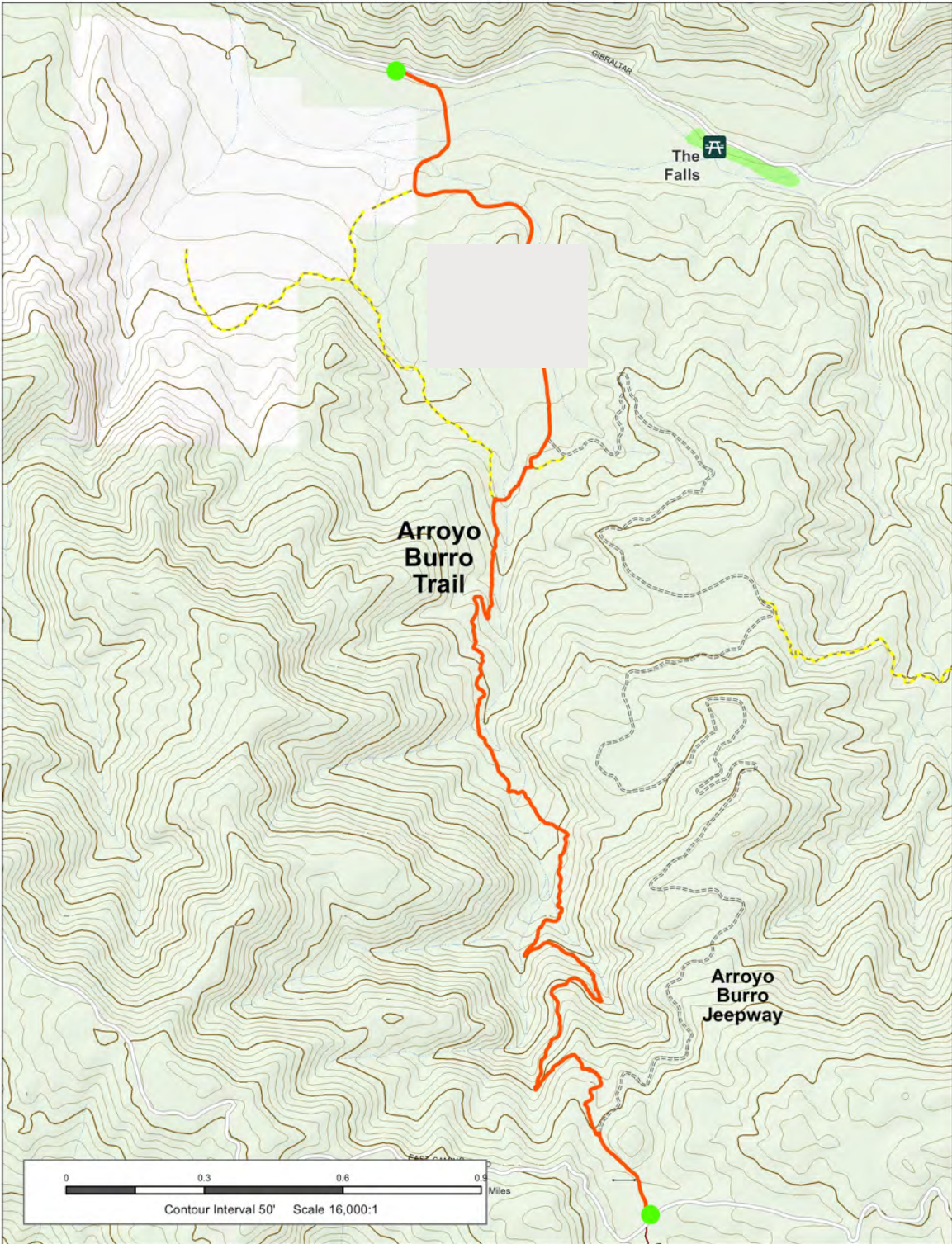
The Hike

The north-side portion of Arroyo Burro Trail winds through chamise chaparral at first then begins to drop steeply down into a narrow, rocky canyon, which is shaded and filled with lush riparian vegetation and a cool creek which runs year round except in extremely dry years.

Depending on how far down the trail you go the hike ranges from being easy to strenuous. At the bottom the trail ends on the lower part of Arroyo Burro Road at the edge of Rancho Oso (now a motor home park), approximately .8 miles from the Santa Ynez River. A loop can be made by following the dirt road back uphill to your car, a distance of about 3 miles.

If you'd like to sample a little of what the Arroyo Burro Trail was once like on the coastal side, the trail is still in passable shape and it is possible to make it all of the way down to the Jesusita Trail. The trailhead is opposite the Arroyo Burro Road intersection on the ocean side of East Camino Cielo. Look for a small pull out on the ocean side. You'll have to explore a bit to find it as the route down to where the trail crosses a jeep road and continues over a ridge down to where it intersects with the Jesuita Trail in San Roque Canyon.

Arroyo Burro Trail



7. LA CUMBRE PEAK

Most likely you will agree with me that the tip top of La Cumbre Peak—3,985' above sea level—provides the best views Santa Barbara has to offer.



The panorama is full circle, great views of the islands, the long arms of the San Ynez Mountains stretching in either direction towards Ojai and Gaviota, and breath-taking vistas looking back at the San Rafael Mountains.

A short loop can be made by following the remnants of the paved road leading up to the lookout tower. You will find benches and picnic tables at strategic locations, placed just right to enjoy the spacious views

La Cumbre Peak

while you munch on your lunch treats.

Directions: To reach La Cumbre Peak, follow Gibraltar Road 6.5 miles to East Camino Cielo, then turn left and drive another 1.8 miles to the peak. Park near the locked gate leading to the lookout station.

SETTING THE SCENE

The La Cumbre Lookout Station was first built in the 1920s and replaced again in the 1940s. It is a reminder of the days when seasonal spotters would live on the tops of these gnarly peaks, looking for the first hint of smoke which might signal the start of a forest fire.



Today the tower is abandoned, surrounded by barbed wire, and the windows broken out. The peak now serves a different function:

La Cumbre Peak

satellite communications systems.

Nevertheless, this is an enchanting place. Tumbles of huge tan and orangey-yellow boulders sit atop the peak, almost as if stacked in place to create the pyramid-shaped crest. There are small trails which lead here and there. My favorite leads down from a bench you will see as you walk towards the tower. Inscribed there are these words:

CHRISTOPHER AND SHANNON

ETERNAL LOVE

REAL MAGIC

At the turn of the century the newly-formed Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce helped develop one of the first tourist routes up to the top of the mountains. Known as the "Chamber of Commerce Trail"—following what is now Gibraltar Road—visitors at many of the town's plush hotels could rent horses for a day's outing to La Cumbre Peak. Today's hikers usually make this pilgrimage via Tunnel Trail.

Near a large flat rock by the lookout tower you may also spot a cross inscribed in the rock along with the words "Old Mission" and the date "1902." According to historian Jim Blakley—brothers in training at the Old Santa Barbara Mission had a day set aside for hiking in which they would climb the Tunnel Trail to the peak. Most likely they are the ones responsible for the carvings.

Cathedral Peak

The premier hike, actually a combination of boulder-hopping, rock scrambling and down climbing, leads to the peak you can see a bit below you and just out of reach—Cathedral Peak. When I first saw the peak I named it "Monkey's Tooth" because that's what it looked like to me. From Santa Barbara you can't see it because of its location. From

La Cumbre Peak

Goleta or the San Roque area, however, it is easily spotted.

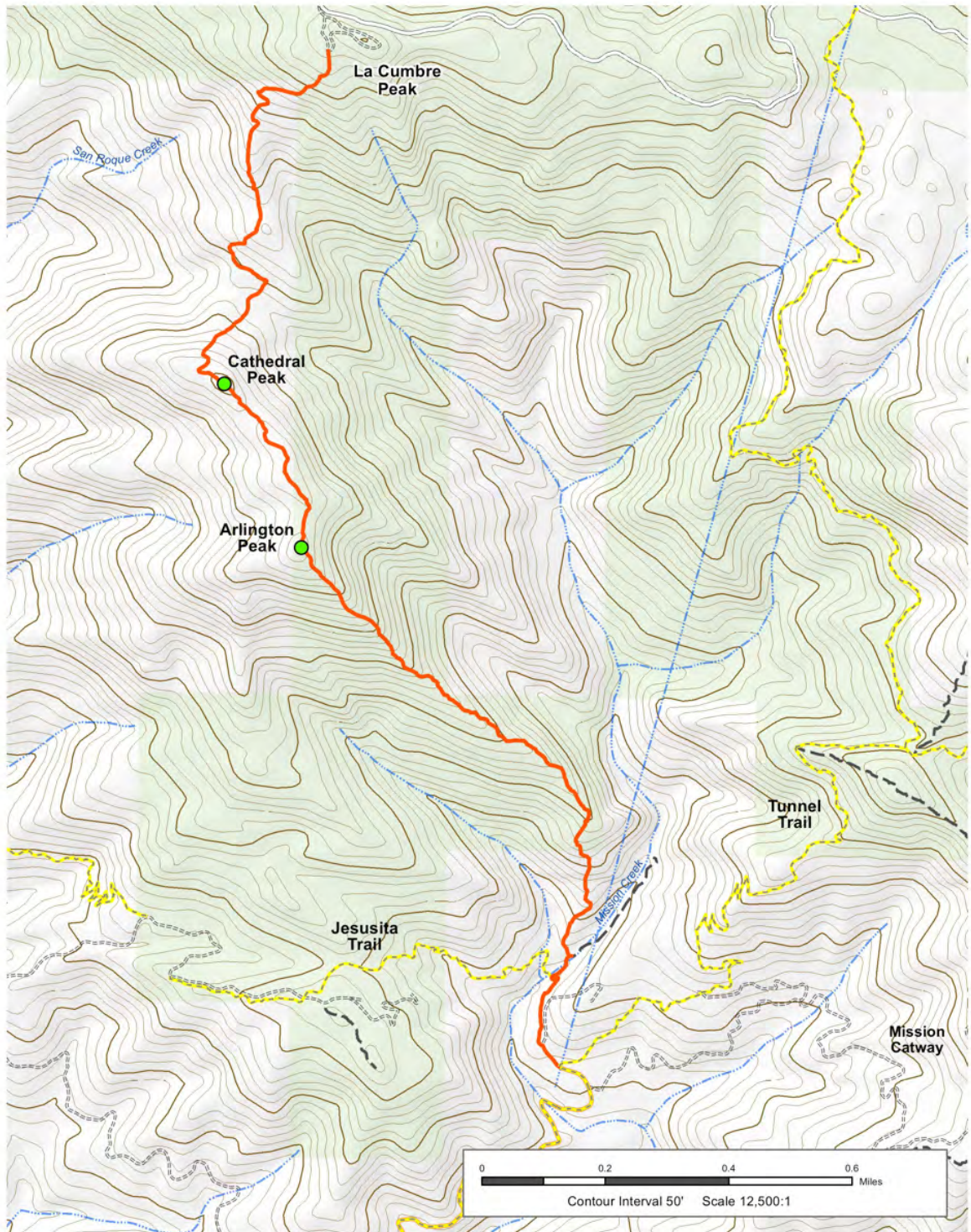
Perhaps it is the rock climbers who have created these thin openings in the chaparral, just wide enough to make your way along, but there



are numerous off-trail routes hidden in the mountain walls of Mission Canyon, mostly all of them leading to very special places.

The route to Cathedral Peak leads from Christopher and Shannon's bench down through sandstone boulders and waist-high manzanita to a larger boulder. To the right of the boulder is a 30' tall Coulter pine which marks the start of a precipitous plunge down for 900' to a saddle where you then are presented with the challenge of climbing up through relatively overgrown chaparral to the peak.

La Cumbre Peak



8. ANGOSTURA PASS

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—3 miles ELEVATION LOSS: 2000'
Difficulty—Easy to Strenuous Topo—Santa Barbara and Little Pine Mountain

HIGHLIGHTS: The dirt road from Angostura Pass leading down to Gibraltar Dam provides a nice hike with expansive views of the backcountry. For those who want a long day hike, Matias Potrero and



the Santa Ynez Mountains, in the process opening to expansive views of Little Pine and Big Pine Mountains. The hike is leisurely and you can make it as long as you want. Two miles down this road from Angostura Pass, Matias Potrero Trail leads steeply down and to the left. As it isn't marked with a sign you need to look for it carefully. This

Angostura Pass

trail cuts across the north side of the Santa Ynez Mountains for 6 miles, eventually intersecting with Arroyo Burro Road. Along the way two connector trails lead down to the Santa Ynez River, one in Devil's Canyon and the other near Live Oak Picnic Area.

For a full day's adventure you might consider leaving a shuttle car at Live Oak or Red Rock, eventually dropping down to the Santa Ynez River via one of these connectors. A dip in the large pool at Live Oak, followed by a BBQ could provide the perfect touch following this hike.

Devil's Canyon, which intersects with the Matias Potrero Trail 1.5 miles down the dirt road, leads to the Santa Ynez River near the base of Gibraltar Dam. To make this a loop trip, turn right at the



intersection and continue 1.5 miles across the grassy slopes and through the picturesque narrows of Devil's Canyon to the dam, then follow the dirt road back up to Angostura Pass, an 11 mile hike in total. Or continue down the river trail to one of the many swimming holes and eventually Red Rock, if you have a shuttle awaiting you.

9. MISSION FALLS

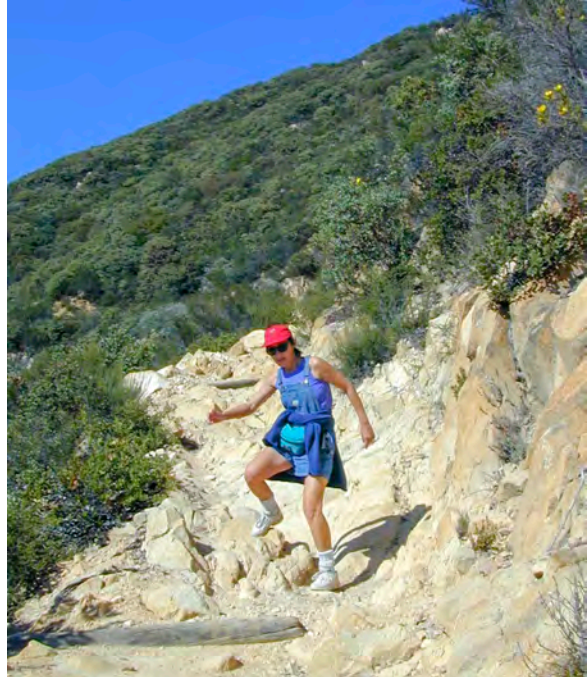
TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—1 mile down & 1 mile back up
ELEVATION GAIN/LOSS: 700' descent to Mission Falls; 700' gain back up to the top. **Difficulty—Moderate.** A Caution, the trail is rocky with uneven tread in many spots. Lots of mountain bike traffic at times.
Topo—Santa Barbara

Getting To The Trailhead

To reach the upper Tunnel trailhead follow Gibraltar Road 6.5 miles to East Camino Cielo, then turn left and continue another .75 miles. The trail begins almost directly opposite from the Angostura Pass jeepway.

Trail Description

The hike down from the trailhead appears on the surface to be a relatively moderate one with the trail being almost level as it passes by the west side of the El Deseo Ranch. The trail at this point is on private property for the next quarter mile or so then begins to get much rockier as it cuts through a 2,000' wide section of uplifted rock known as Matilija Sandstone.



The formation rises almost vertically across the trail to the 3,985' La Cumbre Peak to the west

Mission Falls

and White Mountain to the east. Almost abruptly the trail begins to descend rapidly and the gets much rockier, requiring a bit more care. The Falls remain out of sight until the last moment when you turn a sharp corner and descend down to the stream crossing and just after a small trail leading out onto the top of the falls.

And to perhaps the best spot for a picnic anywhere else in the Santa Barbara front country.

You might notice along the way what look like the remnants of an old telephone line—which it actually was, when those in the lookout tower would spot a wildfire developing in the back country and report them to City and County fire departments.

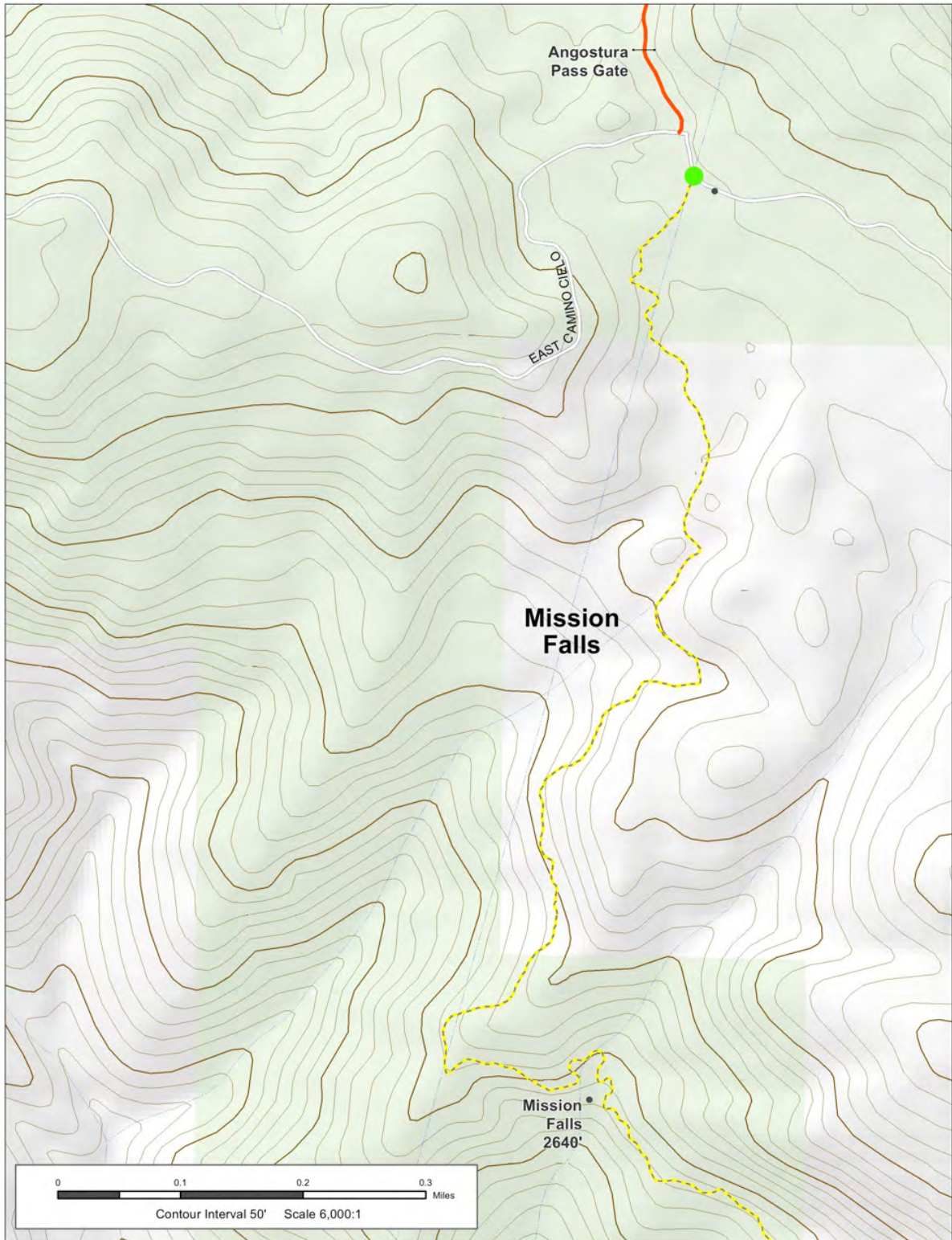


Mission Falls

Ray Ford © 2020



Mission Falls



10. MONTECITO PEAK

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—2 miles ELEVATION GAIN/LOSS: 600' descent to the saddle at the base of Montecito Peak; 200' gain to the top of the peak. Difficulty—Moderate Topo—Santa Barbara

Getting To The Trailhead

To reach the Cold Springs trailhead follow Gibraltar Road 6.5 miles to East Camino Cielo, then turn right and drive another 3.75 miles. The trail is at a saddle just after a downhill section of road. A trail sign on





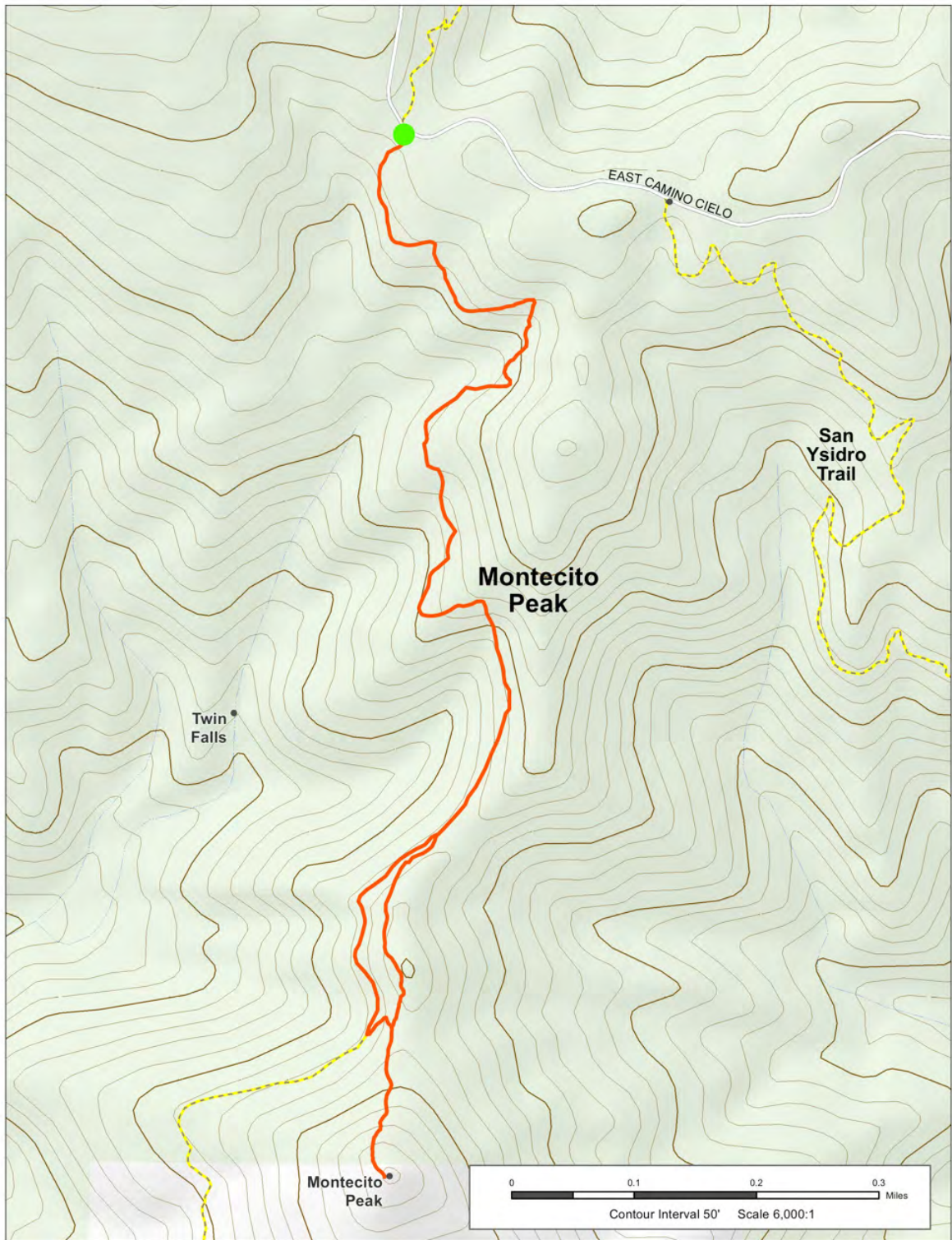
the left and a cement water tank on the right side of the road should make it easy to spot. San Ysidro Trail is .2 miles farther.

Trail Description

The upper part of the Cold Springs Trail leads a mile to Montecito Peak, a great place to spend the afternoon or enjoy sunset. You can be dropped off at the top of either of these trails and picked up by a friend back down in town. If you've just hiked down to Forbush Flats, why not walk back to town rather than drive?

Though these trails are covered in depth in another part of this book, you might consider short hikes on either of them from the crest. Both meander through layers of shale in their upper sections before passing through thick layers of sandstone, making them smooth and easily traversed as well as gentle.

Montecito Peak





11. FORBUSH FLATS

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—Gibraltar Trail 3 miles; Santa Ynez River 3.5 miles; Cottam Camp 3.8 miles **TOTAL ELEVATION**

LOSS: 1075' to Forbush Flats; 2000' to the Santa Ynez River

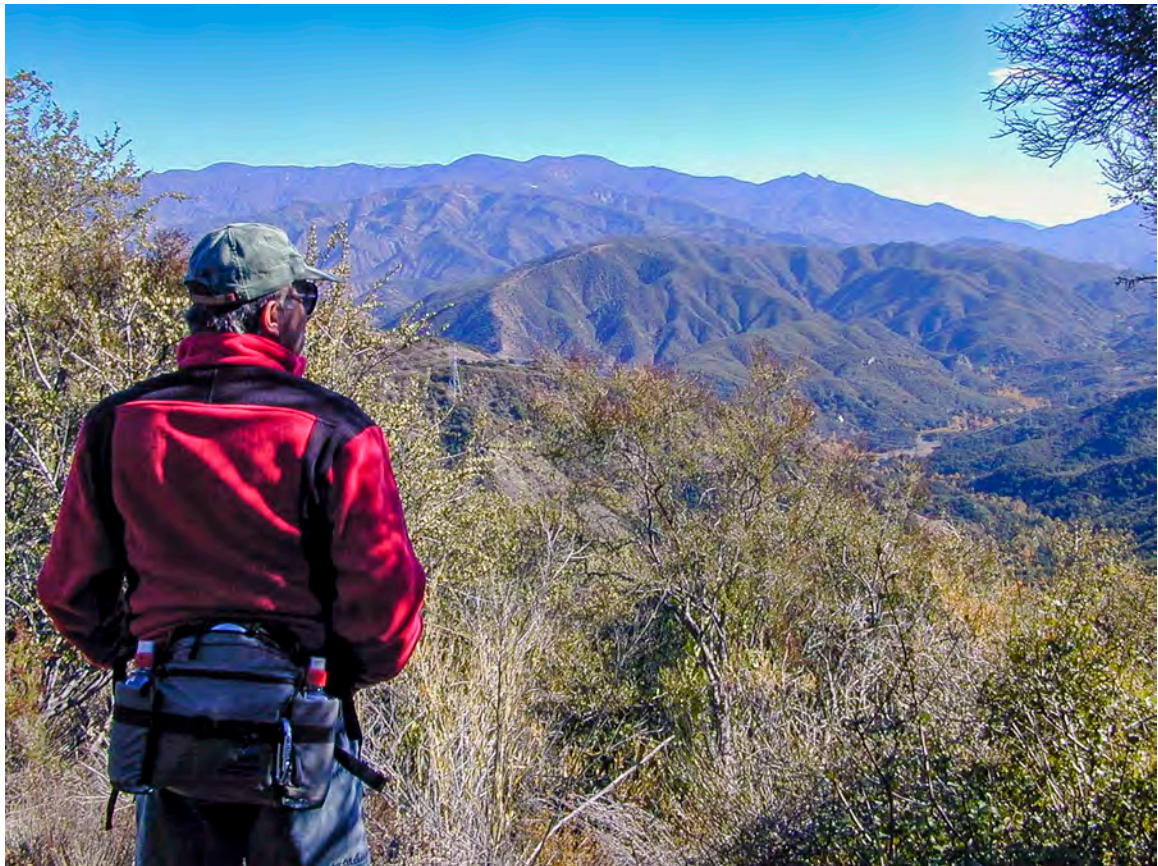
Difficulty—Moderate to strenuous depending on route chosen **Topo—**Santa Barbara, Little Pine Mountain, Carpinteria, Hildreth Peak

HIGHLIGHTS: Forbush Flats is a delightful camp situated right in the middle of of the Santa Ynez Fault. Because of this, shell fossils are exposed in the rock in this area, making it a geologist's paradise. You'll find an apple orchard here, the only remnants of Fred Forbush's

Forbush Flats

pioneer homestead. Gidney Creek leads off to the left, which is interesting to explore. Or you can follow the main trail to the river.

DIRECTIONS: To reach Forbush Trail follow Gibraltar Road 6.5 miles to East Camino Cielo, then turn right and drive another 3.75 miles to the trailhead, which is opposite the end of Cold Springs Trail. These trails are at a saddle just after a downhill section of road. A trail sign on the left and a cement water tank on the right side of the road should make it easy to spot.



The Forbush Trail (a continuation of the Cold Springs Trail) offers access to a number of parts of the upper Santa Ynez Valley and day loops, shuttle trips, or overnights depending on the type of arrangements you make. Originally it was one of the main

Forbush Flats

thoroughfares into the backcountry, leading from Montecito through the upper part of the Santa Ynez drainage, along Mono Creek, and over a window in the San Rafael range known as the Puerto Suelo to Santa Barbara Canyon and the Cuyama Valley. When the Chumash revolted briefly in the 1820s, fleeing to the tule marshes in the lower San Joaquin Valley, this was the route taken by soldiers whose task was to round them up and bring them back.

The first 1.5 miles of the trail leads through chaparral to Forbush Flat, dropping a thousand feet in elevation. The camp is pleasant, well shaded and at the foot of Gidney Creek which often flows year round, though not always. Nearby is a small meadow, complete with an aging apple orchard, courtesy of Fred Forbush, who built a cabin there about 1910.

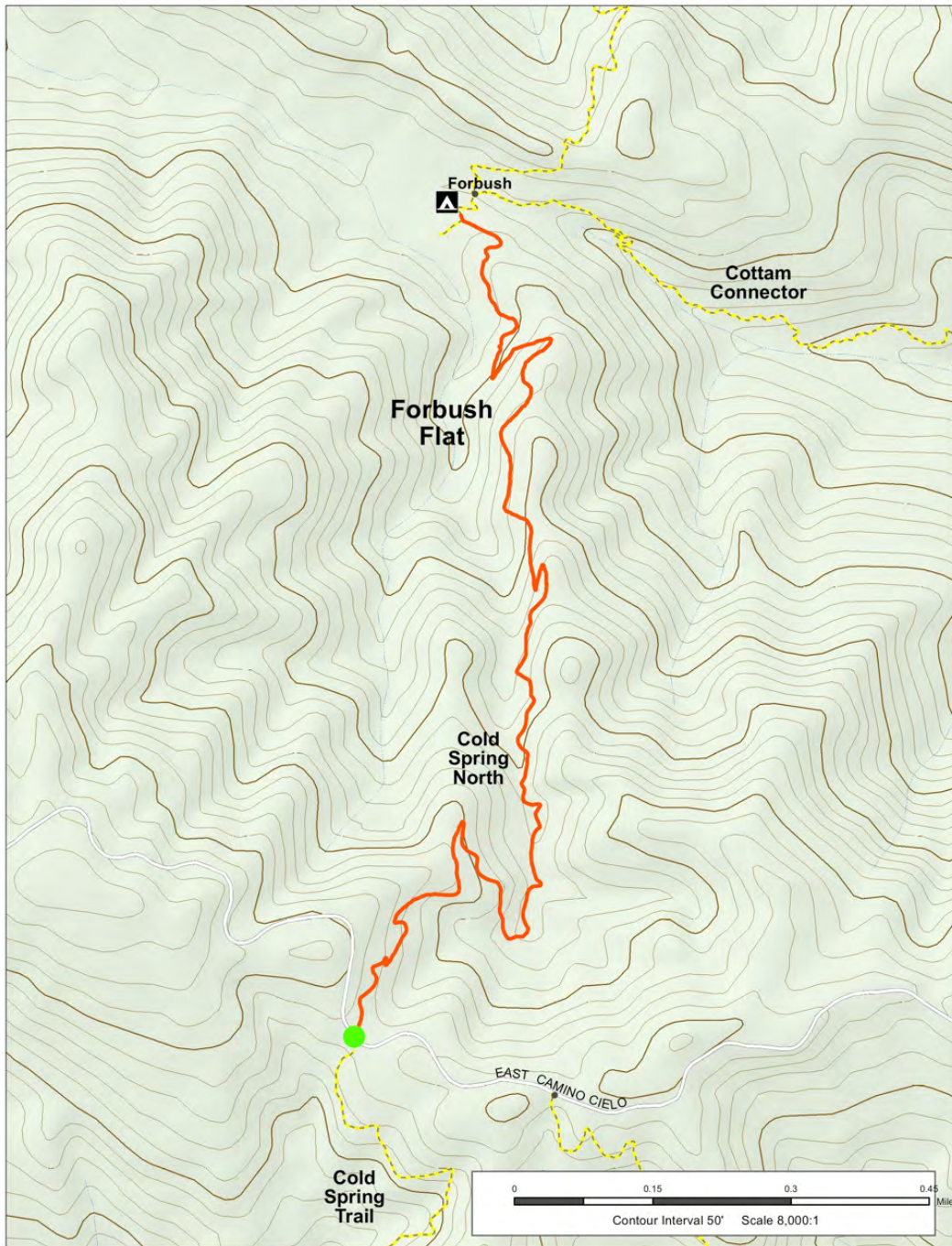
The camp is situated on top of the Santa Ynez Fault, which cuts directly through it, forming the crease along which Gidney Creek flows. Due to the uplifting which has occurred here, numerous layers of bedrock rich in fossil life are exposed here, making this an amateur geologist's paradise. A wonderful afternoon can be spent here, either meandering down the creek checking out the exposed layers of bedrock or continuing down the trail toward the Santa Ynez River.

A trail intersection lies just north of the meadow. The main trail continues north, up over a 50' high ridge and then down another 1000' in elevation loss over 1.5 miles to the Santa Ynez River. Along the way are more fossils and a pool or two for refreshment.

The right trail leads 2 miles east down through the Santa Ynez Fault and rugged chaparral to Cottam Camp which is located at the bottom end of Blue Canyon. Following this trail downstream from Cottam Camp also leads to the Santa Ynez River. A long but extremely rewarding day hike can be made by staying on the left side of the river

Forbush Flats

and continuing downstream for a mile to the Cold Springs Trail and then back up it to Forbush Flats and eventually your car on East Camino Cielo.



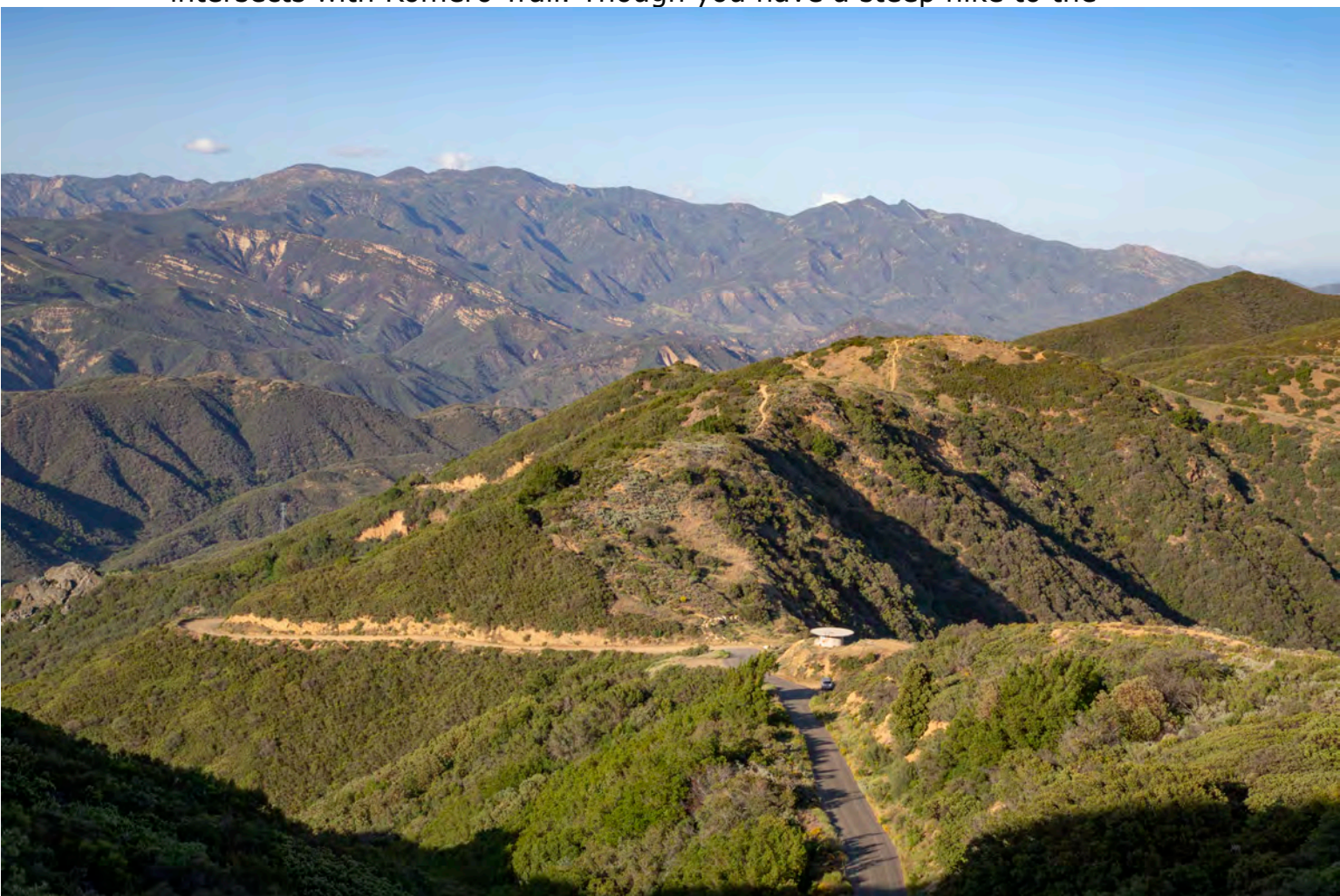
12. UPPER ROMERO LOOP

TRAIL INFORMATION: Length—5 loop hike

ELEVATION GAIN/LOSS: 500' descent along Old Romero Road to the start of the upper trail; 600' climb up to the top of the saddle

Difficulty—Moderate Topo—Carpinteria Path: Rough jeep road down. Use: Multi-use. You may encounter mountain bikes.

HIGHLIGHTS: If you like the best views in town, you'll like this trail. The route follows Romero Road for 1.5 miles down towards town, then intersects with Romero Trail. Though you have a steep hike to the



Upper Romero Loop

crest, once there you'll feel like you are on top of the world. The trail across the mountain crest was once known as the Island View Trail, though it has been scarred by motorcycle use.

DIRECTIONS: To reach the upper end of Romero Road follow Gibraltar Road 6.5 miles to East Camino Cielo, then turn right and drive another 6.5 miles to Romero Saddle where the road begins. The saddle is just after a downhill section and marks the end of the paved section of road and the beginning of Pendola Road which leads into the upper



Santa Ynez Recreation Area. A cement water tank on the right side of the road marks the beginning of Romero Road and is easy to spot.

Hike Description

Prior to 1978, what is now known as the Old Romero Road was the last remaining vestige of the primitive system of roads built in the

Too expensive to repair, the road was closed for public use soon thereafter.

During the 2007 Zaca Fire an attempt to re-open it was made when it was feared the fire would reach the crest near the top of it. That attempt was successful—at least to the next winter when storms closed it again.

Today it is overgrown enough that it is almost impossible to imagine that it ever could have been used for automobile travel, but it is still in service, used by hikers and mountain bikers.

Downhill to the Canyon Trail Crossing

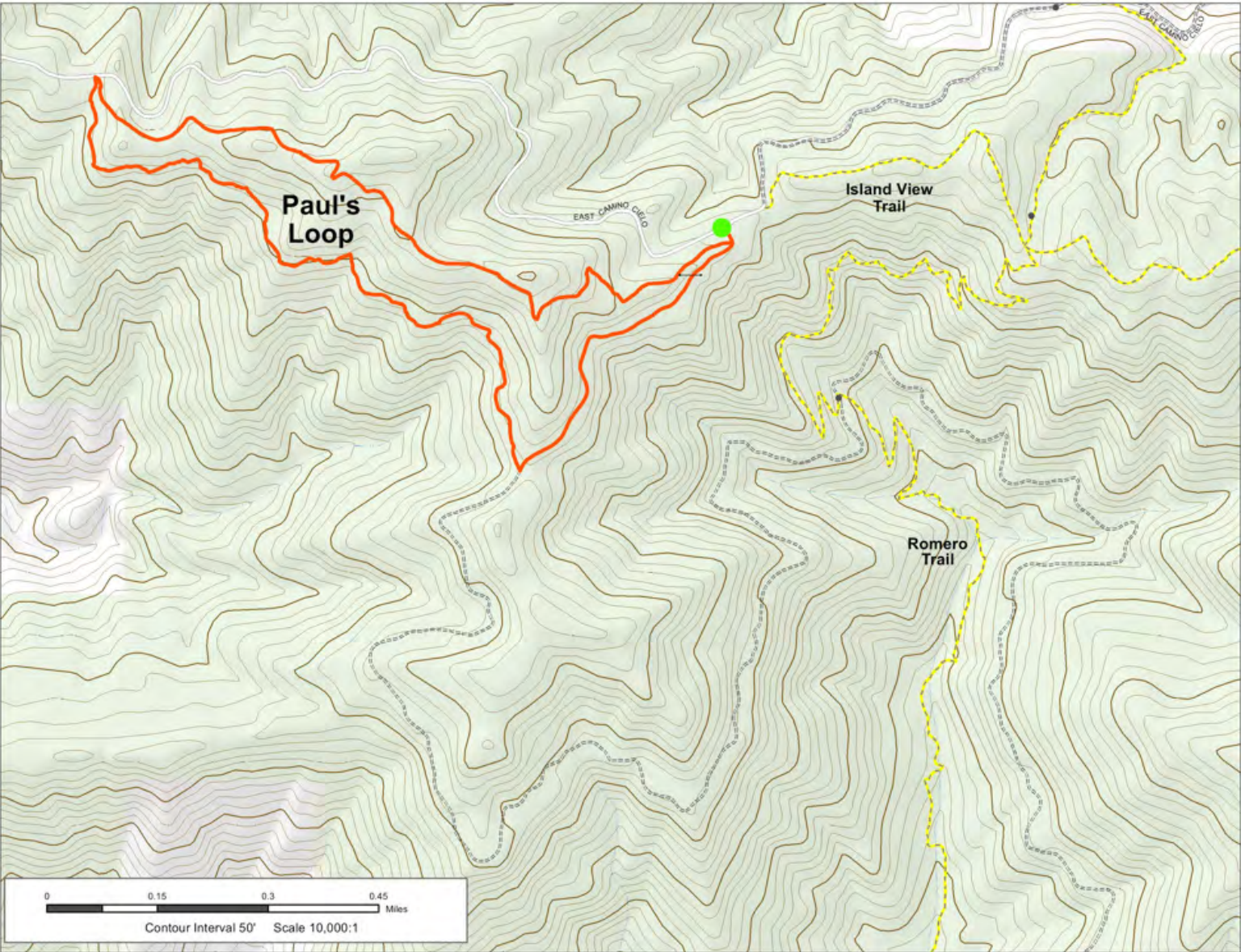
From the saddle, follow Old Romero Road downhill for 1.5 miles to its intersection with the Romero Trail. At this point turn left and head up to the crest. At the crest are remnants of an old trail—the Ocean View Trail—which once yo-yo'ed across the eastern part of the crest towards Carpinteria. Some of it has been lost due to the construction of a fuel break along the top of the Santa Ynez Mountains and partly because of the encroachment of motorcycles.

Yet the view is still magnificent, the trail name still appropriate, and the feeling is one of almost being able to float over the land like a hang glider soaring on the currents.

Head West to the Saddle

From the crest go left (west) along a fairly poor trail and follow the ridgeline as it bobs up and down to the point you are looking directly down to the Saddle and your vehicle..

Upper Romero Loop



early part of the century, the only route to the mountain crest that hadn't been paved.

A reminder of what travel over the mountain wall was like fifty years ago, this rugged and extremely narrow dirt road was still open to the public. But 42" of rain that year caused massive mud and rock slides.