



FRIENDS OF
LOS PEÑASQUITOS
CANYON PRESERVE

DEL MAR MESA “TUNNELS”



Wisdom in the Trees

Distance: 3.6 miles. 344 feet of elevation gain

Trailhead GPS: 32.958270, -117.159066

Getting there: The trailhead is not very obvious. It begins between two houses on the corner of Arroyo Grande Rd. and Serra Mesa Ct.

Follow this trail to a kiosk. About 0.1 mile beyond the kiosk there will be an intersection with a small “trail” sign. Turn right, this trail will take you down into the valley. Stay left when crossing the first intersection down in the canyon.

Difficulty: Moderate.

Disclaimer. No restrooms on site. The weekends may be busy with bikers. Hikers: please step off the trail for bikes. Bikers: please be courteous to hikers and go slow as you pass them, mention how many are in your group, and wear a bell to not surprise hikers.

Highlights:

- Scrub oaks are normally 8-10 feet tall. Many in this canyon are towering up to 40 feet! Enjoy the mythical feeling of walking through the “tunnel” in the trees
- Seasonal stream flow and ocean moisture made the perfect conditions for these oaks to grow to their large stature.





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- Large scrub oaks used to be more common in California. Now, because of too-frequent fires and housing development, this is the last big stand in San Diego County.
- The flora here teaches us a lesson about adaptation. Many chaparral plants are not closely related but they share similar features that help them through the dry season. Look for the different variations of spikey, thick, waxy, and curled leaves.
- Once you've reached the top of the hill, enjoy the view of many vernal pools. These pools are full of interesting and endangered species. Please respect them and do not disturb or walk through them.
- Learn more about some plants and animals you may see when the pools are filled with water.
<https://go.sandiegouniontribune.com/howto-3/p/1>



Remember to Leave No Trace – Stay on the Trails. Trails are built and maintained so hikers can avoid trampling plants and prevent erosion. Don't take shortcuts. Walk in the center of the trail, so the trails don't widen and so you don't brush up against poison oak. Remember that rangers and volunteers work hard to maintain these trails. Learn more at <https://lnt.org/>.

More info. Visit the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve website at <https://www.penasquitos.org/>.

The hike can also be started at the end of Rancho Toyon Place. Hike described at <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2018/jun/27/roam-del-mar-mesa-preserve/>.

