

Canyon View Trail

THE TRAIL: The Canyon View Trail extends for 1.7 miles along the top of the ridge south of Long Canyon Village in Wood Ranch. The trailhead is located on the northern side of Long Canyon Road a few hundred feet east of Wood Ranch Parkway. The trail ends where it joins the eastern end of Long Canyon Road. The trail enjoys magnificent vistas of both Simi Valley and Wood Ranch. The trail was cut by New Urban West, the developer of Long Canyon Village, in 1999 using, in part, an old firebreak that ran along the top of the ridge. A loop route may be created by returning along Long Canyon Road, approximately another 1.25 miles.

GEOLOGY: The entire trail is underlain by the Las Lajas Formation, an Eocene Epoch marine formation that was deposited between 48 to 45 million years ago in a warm ocean. At the time, the earth was going through the last true greenhouse effect. The polar areas were ice-free and warm current bathed the continental margins. Rare occurrences of the nautiloid *Aturia myrlae* with coral are indicators of the tropical water conditions that existed during the time of deposit. The Lajas Formation is considered one of the most important geological formations in North America due to its diverse assemblage of middle Eocene Epoch marine and terrestrial fossils that were preserved in near-shore sediments.

During the grading for the Long Canyon residential project, a small crab (*Plagiolophus weaveri*) fossil was found. Also found was a small insect fossil with striped abdomen and extended legs. A cheek tooth of a brototherium (*Metarhinus* sp.), a large rhino-like animal, was discovered. The tooth of this non-marine mammal was washed out to sea and deposited by turbidity flows. Plant fossils laminated in siltstone include petrified wood and the carbon impressions of “matted” reeds, leaf fragments, and seed pods that appear to have been washed from the shore into shallow marine sediments.

The Canyon is filled with old alluvium. The rapid rise, 300-400 feet, in sea level that accompanied the end of the Ice Ages resulted in an equally rapid filling of Long Canyon with alluvium. That rapid filling was conducive to preservation of terrestrial vertebrate remains. Discovered in Long Canyon were the bones and teeth of a small Ice Age horse and an extinct bison and the partial tusk of a mammoth. Those animals roamed this area as recently as 10,000-11,000 years ago.

Where the trail begins east of the intersection of Wood Ranch Parkway and Long Canyon Road, a low pass into Long Canyon is formed by the presence of gray silty claystone and siltstone. This material weathers into high clay soils - so don't go hiking after a rain or when the ground is very wet. The mud- and siltstone abruptly transitions into a tan sandstone, which was deposited in shallow water as storm-influenced sands. The sandstone forms picturesque outcroppings. The sandstone is bounded on the north by mud- and siltstone that was deposited in deep water. The top of the ridge directly north of Long Canyon is defined by another stratum of shallow marine sandstone. The sandstone is more resistant to weathering and erosion than the siltstone. As a result, it is responsible for the presence of the high ridge between Long Canyon and Simi Valley.

All of the bedrock units dip by 35-42 degrees to the north-northwest. Because the siltstone is structurally weak and poorly drained, the north side of the ridge is given to some instability. Approximately 1,000 feet west of where First Street enters Long Canyon, there is a large old, perhaps tens of thousands of years old, landslide that can be seen if you know what to look for.

As the Simi Hills are uplifted by compressional forces associated with the collision of the North American and the North Pacific plates, Oak Creek has maintained a water gap through the high ridge by the process of water erosion that has kept up with the effects of uplift. The results is a "water gap" similar to that formed where Malibu Creek cuts completely through the Santa Monica Mountains.

HISTORY: Wood Ranch was heavily used by the Chumash Indians. One site, now buried to protect it from vandalism, was occupied for over 4,000 years. Another site is thought to have been used several thousand years ago. Some very significant ceremonial sites have been identified on the old ranch.

During the Mexican period of settlement, the area where the golf course is today was known as *Canada Verde*, i.e., "*Green Canyon*." Later Anglo-American settlers referred to the area as "the Verde." Long Canyon is shown on the Stow and Power survey of 1887-1888 as *Canada de la Leha*. *Leha* does not seem to have any meaning in Spanish and may, therefore, be an error. Wood Ranch, which included the area now occupied by Mt. McCoy and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, was acquired by C.B. McCoy from the Simi Land and Water Company. Eventually, it passed into the hands of the Wood family, which named it "Rancho Madera" (*Madera* means, "wood" in Spanish.). Later, it simply was referred to as the Wood Ranch.

The names Long, Sycamore and Oak canyons seem simply to be descriptive and appear on the U.S. Geological Survey maps. Montgomery Canyon is probably named for the Montgomery family, which owned the Montgomery Ranch to the north and east of the Canyon View Trail.

An old Indian trail seems to have run along the western margins of the Wood Ranch and extended through the saddle southwestward into what is now the City of Thousand Oaks. That trail was apparently referred to by the Indians as the *Simí* Trail, because it was the route between the Conejo Valley and the Chumash village of *Simi*. It continued to be used as a route during the Spanish and Mexican periods and was referred to the “Simi Road” during the Anglo-American period.

PLANT LIFE: The Canyon View Trail is characterized by degraded grasslands and coastal sage scrub on south facing slopes. Grasses include primarily Mediterranean species: rip-gut brome, foxtail barley, red brome, and wild oats. Other introduced species include black mustard, yellow star thistle, red stemmed filaree, prickly lettuce, sweet fennel, horehound and tree tobacco. Other plants include California sagebrush, yucca, prickly pear cactus, gourd, wishbone bush (by the rocks), golden fleece, California everlasting, curly dock, bindweed, western ragweed, narrow leaved milkweed, coyote brush, California fuchsia, bajada lupine, purple sage, cliff aster and bush sunflower.

The north facing slopes, i.e., north of the top of the ridge, is shaded, so vegetative cover is more dense with the same amount of rainfall. Plant types include purple, white and black sages, Mexican elderberry, horehound, California sagebrush, bull thistle, caterpillar phacelia, giant rye, California buckwheat, yucca, bush monkey flower, deerweed, laurel sumac, bush mallow, blow wives, white nightshade, soft chess and milk thistle.

Just west of the western trailhead, by the rocks, can be found the red bush monkey flower - an unusual variety of the yellow bush monkey flower that is found in a very limited geographical range.

The local yucca gives us the word “Tapo.” The *Ventureño* Chumash word for yucca was *ta’apu*. The local Chumash Indians named the big village in Tapo Canyon after the plant. So, the name Tapo Canyon (the trail to the village), Tapo Street and Tapo Canyon Road comes down to us today.

ANIMAL LIFE: On my first walk, I observed, among other animals, a pair of white-tailed kites, turkey vultures, a doe and two fawns, and a coyote. A great variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and other critters may be seen along and from the trail.

While mountain lions are present in the hills around Simi Valley, encounters are unlikely, but you should always be alert. It is best that you do not hike alone, and that you keep small children close at hand. Rattlesnakes may be encountered — Stay on the trail and avoid them when they are encountered — Be observant and never try to handle them. Do not handle any wildlife, including bats, even if they appear to be injured or sick. Remember, you are visitors to their homes.

**Mike Kuhn,
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Rancho Simi Trail Blazers**

*Please see **Trail Safety Tips** at this trail's main page for more info.*