

EATON SADDLE to MARKHAM SADDLE, TOM SLOAN SADDLE, BEAR CANYON, ARROYO SECO, SWITZER CAMPGROUND, and SWITZER PICNIC AREA to ANGELES CREST HIGHWAY

Leader: Mike (Death March) Gessner
Distance: 10 miles one way
Elevation change: 2500' loss, 700' gain plus the climb from the picnic area to the parking lot
Classification: Vigorous
Street Map: AAA Los Angeles County & Vicinity
Topo maps: Mt. Wilson, Pasadena, Condor Peak

FEATURES

This trip is a long walk through some of the most scenic parts of the front-range country. The first eight miles are mostly downhill, the last two uphill. One may especially enjoy the descent of Bear Canyon to the middle gorge of the Arroyo Seco via the remnant of the old Tom Sloan Trail, an historic footpath that once joined two of the most popular resorts in the mountains, Mt. Lowe Tavern and Switzer's. With the demise of the Tavern in 1936, the trail fell into disuse and now much of it is overgrown, but the stretch through Bear Canyon remains passable, although partly washed out. A car shuttle between Eaton Saddle and Switzer Picnic Area, six miles apart on the Angeles Crest highway, is required.

THE DRIVE

Drive up the Angeles Crest, Highway 10 ½ miles from La Canada, to the parking area above Switzer's Picnic Area, ½ mile past the junction of the Angeles Crest and Angeles Forest highway. The road down to the Picnic Area is closed. We will meet at the upper parking area and arrange our car shuttle. We will then drive the other 4 miles up the Angeles Crest to Red Box, then go right 2 ½ miles on the Mt. Wilson road to Eaton Saddle.

THE HIKE

We will walk past the locked gate, following the Mt. Lowe fire road across the face of San Gabriel Peak to Markham Saddle, then on down the road until it reaches the top of Mt. Lowe's long west ridge, 1 ¾ miles from the start. Here the road switches back eastward. Leave the road here and proceed down the obvious but unmarked trail on the right (north) side of the ridge to Tom Sloan Saddle, ¾ mile. From the saddle, follow the old Tom Sloan Trail as it drops northwest down into Bear Canyon. We reach the canyon floor in ½ mile, a beautiful spot shaded by big cone spruce.

The foundations we see are all that remain of several old cabins, abandoned after a fire many years ago. Continue down Bear Canyon, following the streamside trail, or boulder-hopping where the trail has been washed out, to Bear Canyon Trail Camp, located on a spruce-shaded bench on the south side of the creek, about two miles from Tom Sloan Saddle. Here is a perfect lunch stop, as it lies about halfway on our trip. After lunch, we continue down-canyon, partly on trail, partly boulder-hopping, to the junction with the Arroyo Seco, 2 more miles. Turn right (north) up the Arroyo Seco and follow the trail past the delightful pools and cascades of the middle gorge to a difficult-to-spot junction where the trail climbs out of the canyon to the main Arroyo Seco Trail above Switzer Falls. If we reach the foot of Switzer Falls, we've gone ¼ mile too far up the canyon. (Under no circumstances try to climb over the falls. Death may ensue.) When we reach the main Arroyo Seco Trail high on the ridge, turn right (north) and follow the well-beaten footpath through Commodore Switzer Trail Camp and on to Switzer Picnic Area. Then we proceed up the terrible hill to the parking area and to the refreshments.

The Hike for
October 12, 1994
will be:

Eaton Saddle to Markham Saddle, Tom Sloan Saddle, Bear Canyon, Arroyo Seco, Switzer's Campground and Switzer's Picnic Area . No, George, not that Bear Canyon. This is the good Bear Canyon.

We will meet at Switzer's upper parking area **before 9:00AM**. We will arrange a car shuttle to Eaton Saddle and we will depart to Eaton Saddle at 9:10AM. We expect to start hiking at 9:30AM.

Those who arrive late can stay at Switzer's and do the hike in reverse to meet us midway and hike out with us.

Jim Carlin

Mike Gessner

OTP
&
OTHERS
Hiking and
Debating Society

