

Tips for Hiking at Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve

Wear Suitable Clothing and Footwear

Sturdy shoes and a hat are encouraged, and sunglasses, sunscreen, and insect repellent are highly recommended. Weather conditions can change rapidly, so be prepared for extremes.

Carry Water

Hellhole Canyon can be very hot and dry, and the only drinking water available is located at the staging area. For a full day's hike, you should bring at least one gallon of water in moderate temperatures, and more in heat. Do not drink from the streams.

Carry Light Trail Snacks

For longer hikes, a supply of trail snacks will help you maintain your energy level.

Tell a Friend or Family Member

Inform someone about your route and what time you should return. Hike with a companion.

Stay on the Trails

The natural resources of Hellhole Canyon are fragile. Their survival, and your safety, depend on correct trail etiquette. Don't cut switchbacks – proper trail maintenance depends on proper trail use.

Carry a First Aid Kit

A first aid kit can make the difference between an enjoyable hike and a potentially serious situation.

Hellhole is a Wilderness Area

Poison oak, bees, ticks and rattlesnakes are present.

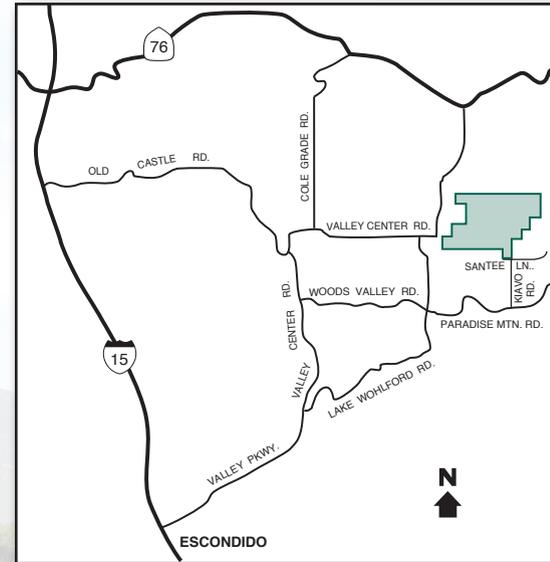
Enjoy Your Outdoor Experience

Binoculars will help you observe the plants and animals as you walk quietly along the trails. A camera will preserve your memories.

Preserve hours: 8 a.m. to sunset
Open Friday – Monday
Closed the month of August

Hellhole Canyon Preserve

19324 Santee Lane
 Valley Center, CA 92082
 Ranger Office: 760-742-1631



Other County Preserves

Wilderness Gardens Preserve: Located at 14209 Highway 76, 10 miles east of I-15, Wilderness Gardens is a 735-acre preserve located in the Pala. The preserve has 4 miles of hiking trail, picnic tables, and the Pala Mill Historic Site. The preserve is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Tuesday. The preserve is closed every Wednesday and closed the month of August. Dogs are not permitted.

Del Dios Highlands Preserve: Located at 9860 Del Dios Highway in Escondido, this 774-acre preserve straddles both San Dieguito and Escondido Creek watersheds, joining the communities of Del Dios and Harmony Grove. Trail use is open for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian use. The preserve is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to sunset.

Santa Margarita County Preserve: Located on De Luz Road, in the community of Fallbrook, this 220-acre preserve offers visitors views of the picturesque Santa Margarita Valley. The trails accommodate horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking. The preserve is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to sunset.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- ACCIDENTS:** The County of San Diego shall not be responsible for loss or accidents.
- ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:** Alcoholic beverages are permitted providing the alcohol content does not exceed 20%.
- DEFAACEMENT PROHIBITED:** No person shall remove, deface, or destroy trail markers, monuments, fences, trees, camp or picnic structures, or other preserve facilities.
- DRONES:** Remotely piloted aircraft and drones are prohibited.
- FIRE HAZARDS & SMOKING:** No smoking. Campfires are prohibited. Stoves allowed only in primitive group camping area.
- HORSES AND OTHER ANIMALS:** No horse or other animal shall be hitched to any tree, shrub, or structure in a manner may cause damage to preserve property. No person shall ride, drive, lead, or keep a horse, except in areas specifically designated for such use.
- MOTOR VEHICLES:** The unauthorized operation of motor vehicles is prohibited.
- PETS:** Dogs are allowed on a maximum six-foot leash. Please clean up after your dog.
- PRESERVATION OF TRAIL FEATURES:** All wildlife, plant, and geologic features are protected and are not to be damaged or removed. All historical artifacts and cultural resources are to be left in place.
- LITTERING:** Littering is prohibited.
- NO HUNTING:** No person shall use, transport, carry, fire, or discharge any firearm, air gun, archery device, slingshot, fireworks, or explosive device of any kind in a preserve.

INFORMATION



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
Department of Parks and Recreation
 5500 Overland Avenue, Suite 410
 San Diego, CA 92123

Reservations & Information:
 Toll Free • (877) 565-3600
 Local • (858) 565-3600

Visit us at sdparks.org

HELLHOLE CANYON PRESERVE

A San Diego County Open Space Preserve



Welcome to Hellhole Canyon Open Space Preserve

Hellhole Canyon is located approximately four miles east of Valley Center in northern San Diego County. For those seeking to explore a wilderness in transition, Hellhole offers a variety of outdoor experiences. Wildfires in 2003 and 2007 changed this natural landscape, providing hikers and horseback riders with a unique view of the canyon's reemerging plant and animal communities.

Facilities in this 2,000-acre County preserve include a staging area, restrooms, parking for horse trailers, drinking water, an amphitheater and a primitive group camping area (available by reservation, only). The preserve has 8.5 miles of hiking and equestrian trails. Benches and interpretive signs are placed along the trails.

Though Native Americans did not live in this canyon permanently, they did come here regularly to collect and grind acorns, and gather other plant and animal resources. Settlers to the area around the turn of the century gave colorful names to features within the canyon, such as Hell and Paradise Creeks, Horsethief Canyon and Paradise Mountain.

Hell Creek Trail

Hell Creek Trail from the staging area heads downhill to Hell Creek. Flowing much of the year, the creek supports oak woodland and riparian habitats. A diversity of wildlife depends on this water source. As visitors continue past the creek, the topography opens up to reveal the watershed aspects of this large canyon. Evident on both sides of the canyon is the historic Escondido Canal. Constructed by hand in the late 1800s, it provided water from the San Luis Rey River to Lake Wohlford.

The trail continues to the west on the same route that the historic canal once took. Remember that your downhill descent also means a steep uphill hike on the way out.

Canyon View Trail and Horsethief Trail

These trails consist of two loop sections with a moderate elevation gain. Hikers and equestrians on this trail will discover hillside grasslands and open chaparral habitat. Hikers can choose either of these loops to observe the canyon from a higher vantage point. Wildlife, such as coyotes, raccoons, bobcats, and snakes are commonly observed in this area. The average hiker should have no problems on these trails.

Paradise Mountain Trail and Rodriguez Peak Trail

Both trails are for the more advanced hiker. To minimize the severe change in elevation, we recommend hiking this loop in a counterclockwise direction. The south-facing slope is drier and more exposed to the sun than Hell Creek Trail, which is evident in the different vegetation community, chamise chaparral. There are two viewpoints near the summit, with **V1** offering a magnificent view of the San Luis Rey River Valley, and **V2** with a great view down into Hellhole Canyon.

A special note to preserve visitors: We ask that hikers and equestrians stay on the designated trails and obey posted signs. The habitat, plant and animal life have shown resilience and have recovered from the wildfires.

