

TOP TRAILS™

Los Angeles

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Mount Lukens



WILDERNESS PRESS

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Trails.com

Mount Lukens

This grueling climb up the north slope of Mount Lukens is surely a walk on L.A.'s wild side. At the top you stand on the pinnacle (in elevation) of the City of Los Angeles, and peer over a vast urban plain.

Best Time

The cooler and clearer the weather, the better. December through February is usually best. Be aware that the hike begins and ends with a crossing of Big Tujunga Canyon's creek, which may swell to a dangerous width and depth after heavy rainfall, most likely during the winter. Save your lungs and avoid this hike during smoggy weather!

Finding the Trail

From the foothill community of Sunland, off I-210, take either Oro Vista Ave. or Mt. Gleason Ave. north to Big Tujunga Canyon Road. Turn right and drive east into the canyon. Some 7 miles up the canyon, look for the well-marked turnoff for Vogel Flat. Turn right, drive to the bottom of the hill, and park at **Vogel Flat Picnic Area**, open from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. A short distance east is Stonyvale Picnic Area, open 6 A.M. to 10 P.M.—useful if you arrive early or will be returning late. A National Forest Adventure Pass is needed for parking.

Trail Description

On foot, head west down a narrow, paved road (private, but with public easement)►1 through the cabin

TRAIL USE

Hike

LENGTH

8.4 miles, 5 hours

ELEVATION GAIN/LOSS

3300'/3300'

DIFFICULTY

- 1 2 3 **4** 5 +

TRAIL TYPE

Out & Back

SURFACE TYPE

Dirt

FEATURES

Permits Required

Dogs Allowed

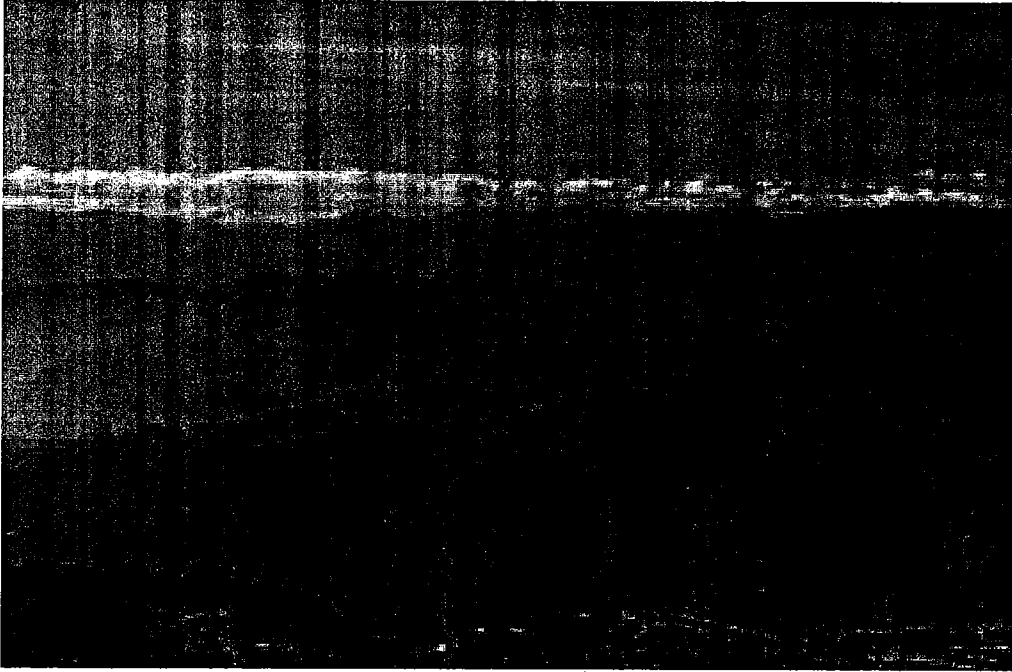
Mountain

Summit

Wildflowers

Great Views

Steep



View from Mount Lukens *across the ridges and peaks of the San Gabriels*

community of **Stonyvale**. When the pavement ends after 0.7 mile, continue on dirt for another .25 mile or so. Choose a place to ford Big Tujunga creek, ►2 step or wade across, and find the **Stone Canyon Trail** on the far bank. From afar you can spot this trail going straight up the sloping terrace just left (east) of Stone Canyon's wide, boulder-filled mouth. Once you're on the terrace, settle into a pace that will allow you to persevere over the next 3 miles and 3200 feet of vertical ascent.

 **Mountain**

From the vantage point of the first switchback, you can look down on the thousands of storm-tossed granitic boulders filling Stone Canyon from wall to wall. Ahead, there are many twists and turns along precipitous slopes covered by a thick blanket

of chaparral. At or near ground level, a profusion of ferns, mosses, and herbaceous plants forms its own pygmy understory. Wildflowers scent the air during March and April.

Between 1.8 and 2.6 miles (from Vogel Flat), the trail hovers above an unnamed canyon to the east, nearly equal in drainage to Stone Canyon, but very steep and narrow. Down below you can often hear, and barely glimpse, an inaccessible waterfall. Long and short switchback segments take you rapidly higher to a steep, bulldozed track▶3 leading to the bald summit ridge of Mount Lukens. Go 0.5 mile farther, to the highest point on the ridge (4.2 miles),▶4 which is occupied by several antenna structures.

The summit lies within the city limit of Los Angeles, and is the highest point in any incorporated city in the county. The view, north and east across the various ridges and peaks of the San Gabriels, and south and west across the endlessly spreading city, can be fabulous—but only on a clear day.



Great Views



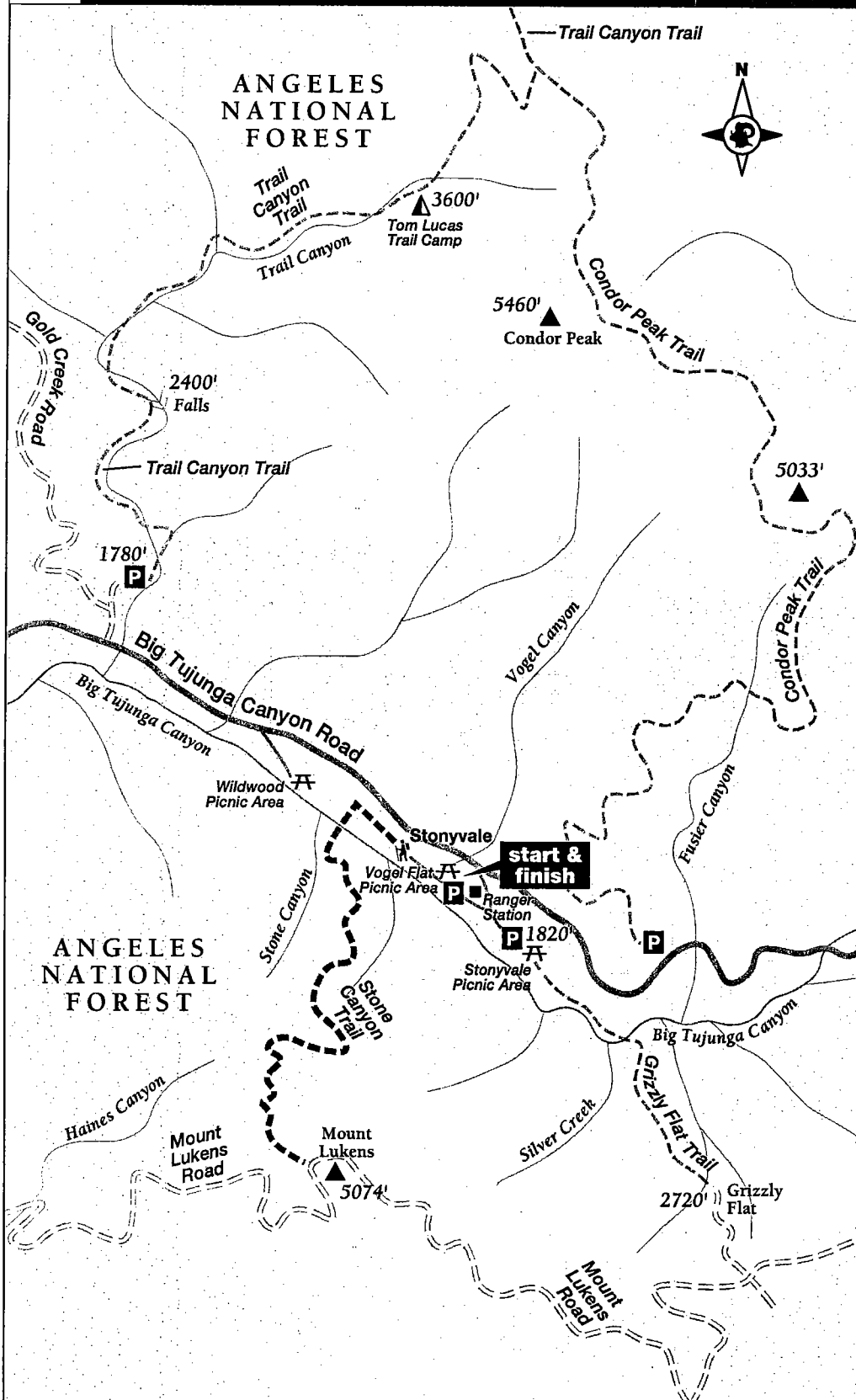
MILESTONES

- ▶1 0.0 From Vogel Flat, head west on road through Stonyvale community
- ▶2 1.0 Ford Big Tujunga Canyon's creek; find lower end of Stone Canyon Trail
- ▶3 3.7 Narrow trail joins wider bulldozed path
- ▶4 4.2 Reach summit of Mount Lukens; return by the same route



Mount Lukens

TRAIL 21





Top Trails Difficulty Ratings

- 1 A short trail, generally level, that can be completed in one hour or less.
- 2 A route of 1 to 3 miles, with some up and down, that can be completed in one to two hours.
- 3 A longer route, up to 5 miles, with uphill and/or downhill sections.
- 4 A long or steep route, perhaps more than 5 miles or climbs of more than 1000 vertical feet.
- 5 The most severe, both long and steep, more than 5 miles long with climbs of more than 1000 vertical feet.



Map Legend

Trail		River	
Other Trail		Stream	
Freeway		Seasonal Stream	
Major Road		Body of Water	
Minor Road		Dam	
Tunnel		Marsh/Swamp	
Gate		Park/Forest	
Building		Boundary	
Bridge		North Arrow	
Peak		Start/Finish	
Trailhead Parking			
Picnic			
Camping			

AREA OVERVIEW

San Gabriel Mountains

Rising to a maximum elevation of 10,000 feet, the San Gabriel Mountains cover a patch of territory stretching 60 miles long (measured east-west), and up to 25 miles wide (north-south). Unlike the Santa Monica Mountains, civilization has made comparatively smaller inroads into the San Gabriels—though this has not been for lack of trying. With periodic fires, floods, and landslides, the mountains beckon visitors to explore and enjoy, but not necessarily to stay and put down roots.

The abrupt ascent of the San Gabriel Mountains from the floor of L.A. Basin is astonishing. Even more amazing is the sharpness of the boundary between city and wilderness—the so-called urban-wildland interface. House pets living on the city side of the boundary routinely get snatched up in the jaws of patrolling coyotes, while black bears have been known to cross the line to enjoy a cooling dip in suburban backyard pools.

For wilderness explorers this abrupt boundary means one thing: you don't have to drive very far to reach lots of rugged, beautiful country. Several of the trails in this chapter originate right on or very near the urban-wildland interface, and many others involve a drive up into the San Gabriels via the view-rich Angeles Crest Highway. Sometimes half the fun of exploring these mountains is seeing the sights along the way to the trailhead.

Permits and Maps

Nearly all the recreational resources of the San Gabriel Mountains are under the jurisdiction of Angeles National Forest. Nearly all of the trails described in this chapter originate on forest-service land.

The immediate consequence for you as a recreating visitor is that, with few exceptions, you must display a "National Forest Adventure Pass"—basically a parking permit—on your car. Ticket-writing staff aggressively patrol the roadsides and picnic grounds of the San Gabriel Mountains, especially on weekends, looking for violators.

The adventure passes sold in Southern California are valid for all four national forests in the state's southern region: the Angeles, San Bernardino,

Cleveland, and Los Padres national forests. The passes are sold at forest-service offices, visitor centers and ranger stations, and through hundreds of independent vendors (mostly outdoor-related businesses). The cost is \$5 for a one-day pass, and \$30 for an annual pass. Choosing the yearly option gives you a lot more opportunity to make spontaneous trips into the mountains without having to worry about collecting a citation on the windshield of your parked car.

Wilderness permits for day or overnight use must be obtained for two trails described in this chapter: East Fork San Gabriel River and Cucamonga Peak. No other permits, aside from the Adventure Pass, are required for the other trails.

The comprehensive Angeles National Forest recreation map, showing roads and trails, and property boundaries between public and private lands in the San Gabriels, is available for sale at forest-service offices, visitor centers, and ranger stations. Tom Harrison Cartography publishes topographic maps of the San Gabriel Mountains as a whole, plus detail maps of the "Front Range" and "High Country" areas. Free sketch maps of the trail systems in selected areas of the San Gabriel Mountains are also available from the Forest Service, but these are of limited use. For driving purposes, the Automobile Club of Southern California's "Los Angeles and Orange Counties and Vicinity" map can't be beat.

The Angeles National Forest Supervisor's Office, along with a visitor information center, is located at 701 North Santa Anita Avenue in Arcadia. Phone is (626) 574-5200.

The Trails

The basic building block of the Top Trails guide is the Trail Entry. Each one is arranged to make finding and following the trail as simple as possible, with all pertinent information presented in this easy-to-follow format:

- A Trail Map
- Trail Descriptors covering difficulty, length and other essential data
- A written Trail Description
- Trail Milestones providing easy-to follow, turn-by-turn trail directions

Some Trail Descriptions offer additional information:

- An Elevation Profile
- Trail Options
- Trail Highlights
- Trail Teasers

In the margins of the Trail Entries, keep your eyes open for graphic icons that signal passages in the text.

Features

This guide describes the Top Trails of the Los Angeles region. Each trail is chosen because it offers one or more features that make it interesting. Using the trail descriptors, summaries, and tables, you can quickly examine all the trails for the features they offer, or seek a particular feature among the list of trails.

Season and Condition

Time of year and current conditions can be important factors in selecting the best trail. For example, an exposed desert trail may be a riot of color in early spring, but an oven-baked taste of hell in midsummer. Wherever relevant, Top Trails identifies the best and worst conditions for the trails you plan to hike.

Length and Elevation Change

Every trail description contains the approximate trail length and the overall elevation gain and loss. It's important to use both figures when considering a hike. The estimated time for each trail is based on this rule of thumb: allow one hour for every 2 miles, and add an hour for every 1000 feet you climb.

Difficulty

Each trail has an overall difficulty rating on a scale of 1 to 5, which takes into consideration length, elevation change, exposure, trail quality, etc., to create one (admittedly subjective) rating.

The ratings assume you are an able-bodied adult in reasonably good shape using the trail for hiking. The ratings also assume normal weather conditions—clear and dry.

Readers should make an honest assessment of their own abilities and adjust time estimates accordingly. Also, rain, snow, heat, and poor visibility can all affect the pace on even the easiest of trails.

Elevation Gain/Loss

This important measurement is often underestimated by hikers and bikers when gauging the difficulty of a trail. The Top Trails measurement accounts for all elevation change, not simply the difference between the highest and lowest points, so that rolling terrain with lots of up and down will be identifiable. It's also possible to gauge the steepness of a trail by comparing its Elevation Gain/Loss to its length.

Some Trail Entries will have an **Elevation Profile**, which provides a quick means for visualizing the topography of the route. The sample profile shows a typical trail; the elevation is in feet while the distance along the trail is in miles.

Surface Type

Each Trail Entry provides information about the surface of the trail. This is useful in determining what type of footwear or bicycle is appropriate. Surface Type should also be considered when checking the weather — on a rainy day a dirt surface can be a muddy slog; an asphalt surface might be a better choice (although asphalt can be slick when wet).

Top Trails Los Angeles

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