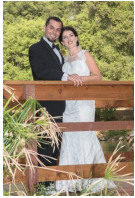




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A Hiker's Paradise: Hiking Clevenger Canyon South

By Angela McLaughlin – Ramona Home Journal • Thu, Sep 22, 2016

As we move into cooler weather, many people look for new outdoor experiences to enjoy. A great way to spend time outdoors, appreciate nature, explore and get a little exercise is by trying new hiking trails.

While winding down High-way 78 toward Escondido, you will encounter a small parking lot on the left side of the road. This is the trailhead for Clevenger Canyon South, a scenic hike with a pleasantly surprising end. A bit more popular than its northern counterpart — due to differences in length and complexity — this trail is nevertheless often considered "moderate" in terms of difficulty. As an intermediate-level hiker, I agree with this assessment.

After departing from the parking lot, hikers will take a gradually sloping footpath surrounded by a variety of plants. California lilacs and an assortment of other wildflowers line the trail, offering beauty for visitors and shelter for numerous animals.

Long pants are recommended for this hike due to thorny plants and areas where the trail is slightly overgrown, though it is well-maintained overall. The density of the plants has aided in preventing excessive erosion on this trail, making for a smoother trek.

The trail will lead you into a beautiful, shaded area complete with a small, flowing creek — active during seasons of heavier rainfall. Shaded by tall oak trees, a wooden pathway leads hikers to the other side of the creek. This area makes for a great resting spot before returning to the trail, which steadily rises from this point on.

After leaving the shady grove, hikers will be exposed to full sun for much of the remainder of the trip. Unlike the tough, steep inclines of Clevenger Canyon North, this route has a gentler grade. Large granite boulders cover the hillside, creating an interesting landscape and providing nice places to rest. Partway through the hike, you will encounter a grouping of these large boulders on the right side of the trail — this is a popular place for hikers to recuperate and rehydrate before they continue their journey.

This hike has two different trail options. You will encounter a split in the trail about a half a mile from the parking lot. For this particular excursion, we headed east, or following the trail to the left, which is a shorter version of the hike but one with a rewarding end.

Winding up the side of the incline, with an elevation gain of more than 1,000 feet, you are treated to stunning views of the valley below. As the path guides you along the top of a ridge, you will eventually encounter a large boulder with two metal chairs bolted to the top. A small stairway leads to these chairs, where you may rest before your descent and enjoy a beautiful view of San Pasqual Valley and the surrounding mountains. The breathtaking scenery from atop these chairs is worth all the sweat and exertion you put out along the way.

After a nice rest, take your time to slowly descend back down the trail toward the trailhead.

Though more trafficked than the north trail, this path is still not frequently traveled and offers visitors a chance to get away



A view of San Pasqual Valley and the surrounding mountains rewards hikers who reach the top of the ridge. Photo by Angela McLaughlin

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from the hustle and bustle of their busy lives and get in touch with nature. Hawks are commonly sighted here, as well as a variety of songbirds and lizards eagerly enjoying the flora of the area.

As with any hike, be aware of your surroundings. Watch out for rattlesnakes along the trail and in the boulders, along with other animals that may pose a risk to you or your canine hiking companion. This trail welcomes both humans and dogs but is not meant for bicycle or equestrian use.

A small backpack with a first-aid kit, plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen and a camera are recommended. The water and sunscreen are essential for this hike, as it mostly takes place in full sun.

Remember to always let someone know when and where you will be hiking, especially if it is a trail that is not regularly traveled. Most importantly, remember to enjoy yourself on the trail and appreciate the peaceful nature surrounding you as you hike Clevenger Canyon South.

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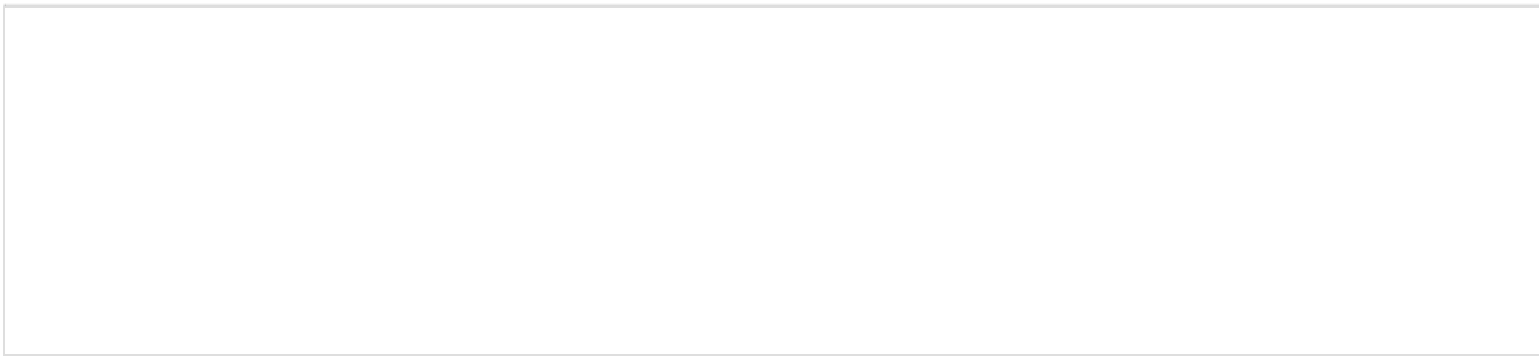
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