

Mission Creek Preserve Hike

- 3.4 miles (Easy Effort) 1-2 Hrs (Total) 340 feet altitude change

The Mission Creek Preserve hike is a great family-friendly adventure that offers a little bit of everything in an easy package. You'll be able to visit the ruins of an old "glamping" resort, follow a creek that started high in the mountains and is now irrigating the desert, pass a rare wetland, enjoy views of the high peaks, and then visit an old stone ranch house. The trail is wide, the climbs gradual, and it's easy to follow. Even if you're an experienced hiker, there's enough beauty here to warrant at least one visit.

Quick Links: [Mission Creek Preserve](#) - [NOAA Weather Report](#)

When planning, always check the park website and social media to make sure the trails are open. Similarly, check the weather and road conditions.

How to Get to Mission Creek Preserve

The Mission Creek Preserve hike is located off of Rt-62, which connects Palm Springs with Joshua Tree. Once you pull off Rt-62, it's a 2.5 mile drive down a sandy, unpaved road to the trailhead. The good news is that the road is sandy and smooth, and is doable by low-clearance vehicles. Just don't plan on going over 20mph.

Use this trailhead address:

[Mission Creek Preserve, 60550 Mission Creek Rd, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240](#)



The 2.5 miles from Rt-62 to the hike start are on this sand road. It's wide and doable with regular cars.

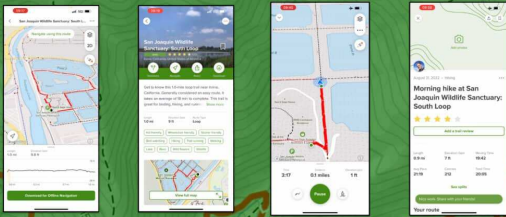


Sign for the Preserve as you drive in. Keep driving past this until the road dead-ends at the parking area. If the parking lot is full, you can park along the side of the road.

Free Nav Tools: [GaiaGPS](#) - [AllTrails](#)

GUIDES TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE - Ctrl+Click on the photos (Word Doc only!)

AllTrails FOR BEGINNERS

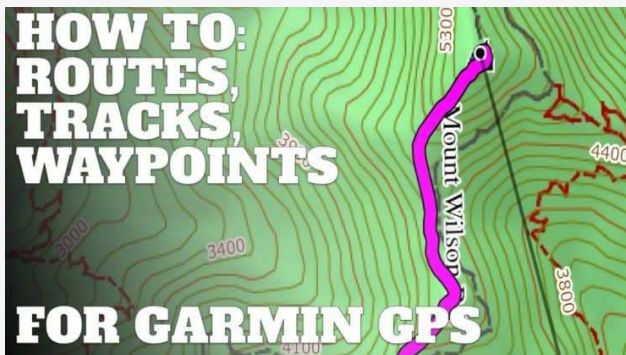


HIKING WITH GAIA GPS FOR BEGINNERS

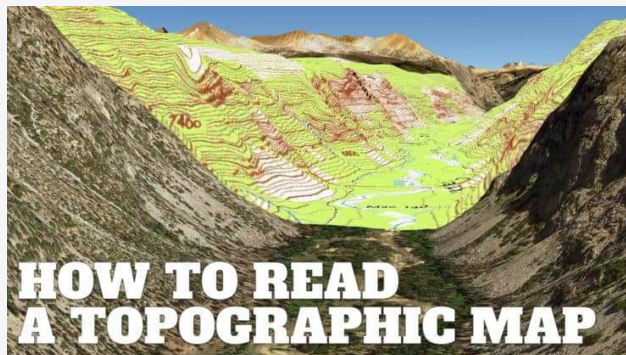


HOW TO: ROUTES, TRACKS, WAYPOINTS

FOR GARMIN GPS



HOW TO READ A TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

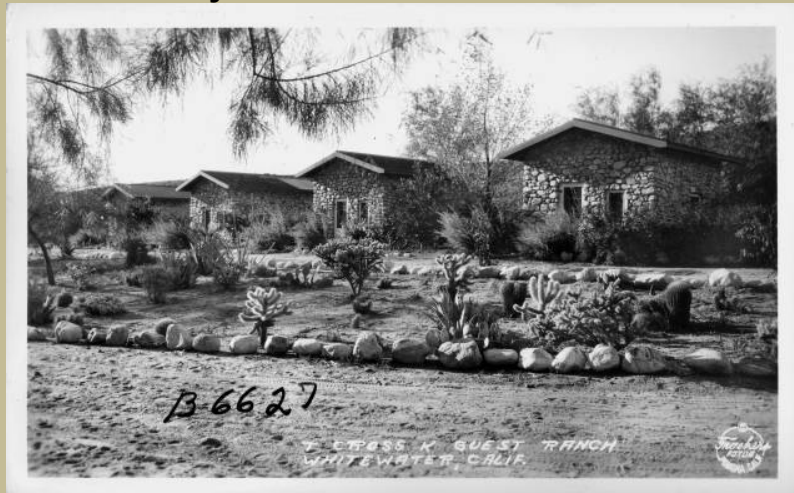


If you can walk down a dirt road, you can do this hike. Basically you'll be walking up the road to the old stone house, and then back.



The trail makes its way up along Mission Creek then turns off at the end for the stone house.

Mission Creek Preserve History



The stone buildings at the start of the hike used to be a dude ranch called the *T Cross K Guest Ranch*. Think of it as an early form of glamping. Photo from Calisphere / University of California.

- The area that you are hiking through is geologically unique. Similar to nearby Joshua Tree National Park, you are in a transition zone between the Sonoran and Mojave deserts. Unlike Joshua Tree, here you have Mission Creek providing a water source, attracting animals and providing plants the moisture to grow. You'll even pass an area designated as wetlands, right here in the desert!
- As I mentioned earlier, the first stone huts used to be part of a larger complex called *T Cross K Guest Ranch*. The ranch offered horseback riding, hiking, barbecues, a pool, and "mother's good home cooking." Rates were \$5 a night, or about \$100 in today's money. Not bad. The ranch fizzled out in the 1950s.



"No fog or dew." Ad from the LA Times, 4 Dec 1934.

Today the Mission Creek Preserve is in the care of the Wildlands Conservancy, and is part of the Sand to Snow National Monument, created by President Obama in 2016.

There's another great Wildlands Conservancy hike just down the road at Whitewater Preserve. You can do both hikes in one day if you want.

Mission Creek Preserve Hike



You can't miss the start! Head through the huge ranch gate.



Head straight past the trail sign. We're hiking to the Stone House Picnic Area.



You'll pass a trail board shortly after that. Check out the board for any trail updates or notices.



There's also an old hiker logbook here. The log is long gone unfortunately.



After the trail board you'll see the old ranch houses to your right. You can climb over and explore them now or on the way back. You'll also find an old pool and stone chimney, the only thing left of the main house where guests dined.



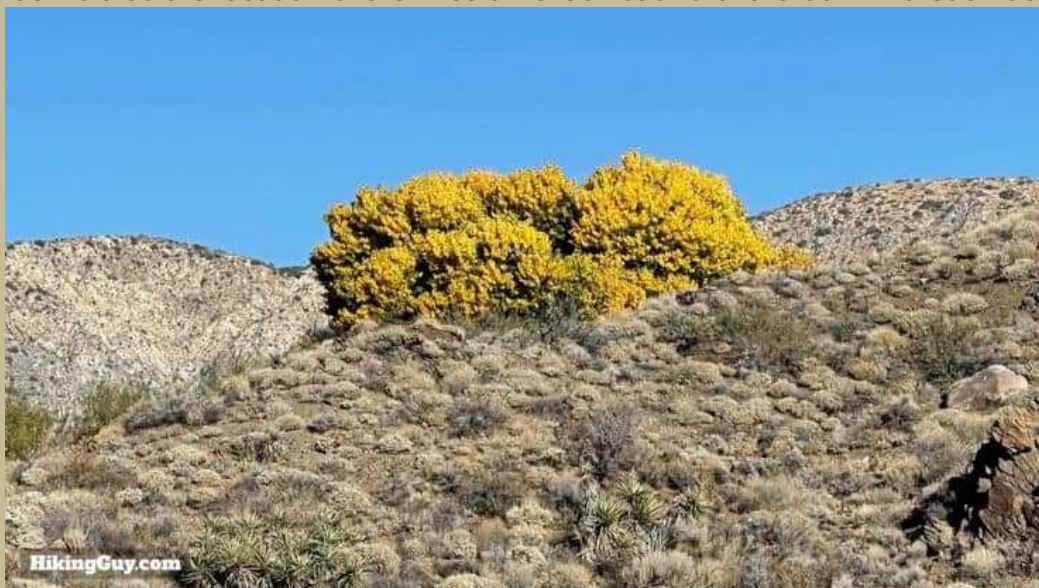
Each cabin has a stone picnic table with some shade. Great place for a rest when the sun is cooking!



After the cabins, you're going to hike up the dirt road. Pretty much like this the whole way to the end.



On your left will be Mission Creek, which comes down from the high mountains and flows all year. The creek is also the location of the Mission Creek strand of the San Andreas Fault.



About a mile into the hike, you'll see the tall cottonwood tree poking out of the Painted Hills Wetlands.



Soon the wetlands will be on your right. It's amazing to think that you have a wet, marshy area in the middle of such a dry landscape. The wetlands attracts many bird watchers. Try to spot a [Bell's vireo](#) and [southwestern willow flycatcher](#). Both endangered species that call this wetland home.



When you pass the wetlands, the trail curves sharply to the right. Avoid the side trail on the left.



You'll have a short uphill section as the trail skirts around the wetlands.



You'll pass an old stone wall and foundation to the right.



Nice views of Mount San Geronio to your left. It's the highest point in Southern California at 11,503 feet. In the winter there's often snow, which is a great contrast with the brown desert and heat!



Soon you'll arrive at a big parking lot. Head to the corner of the other side.



You'll see the stone house, another remanent of the ranch days.
There are doors on either side, just head in either one.



The interior is in great shape and includes picnic tables and informational displays.



There's also a great old hearth that serves as a good photo background.
There are restrooms around the back of the stone house.



Once you're finished, you just hike back the way you came. If you'd like to drive to the stone house without the hike, or would like to camp here, you can contact Mission Preserve (use the website link at the beginning of the guide) and request access.

Ctrl+Click on the photos only if you are viewing the Word Doc file ☹ Sorry!

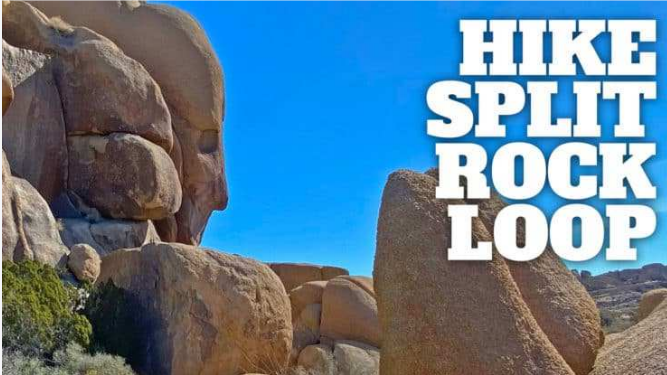
WHITEWATER PRESERVE HIKE



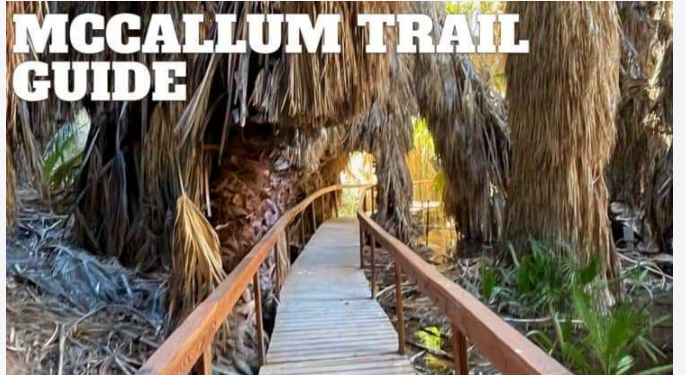
HIKE PINE CITY



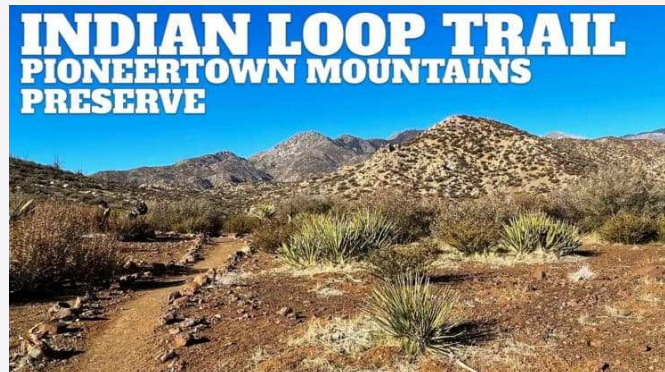
HIKE SPLIT ROCK LOOP



MCCALLUM TRAIL GUIDE



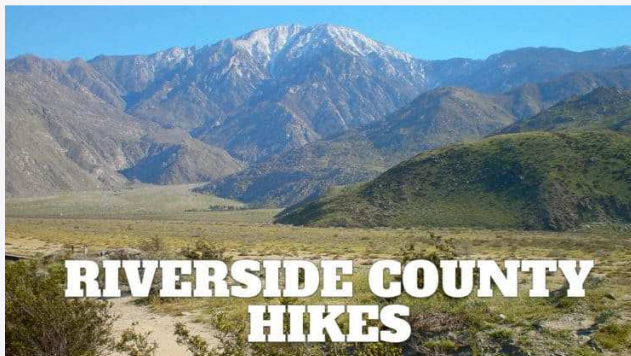
INDIAN LOOP TRAIL PIONEERTOWN MOUNTAINS PRESERVE



PALM SPRINGS HIKING TRAILS



RIVERSIDE COUNTY HIKES



THE WILDLANDS
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TRAIL GUIDES



Hi, I'm [Cris Hazzard](#), aka Hiking Guy, a professional outdoors guide, hiking expert, and author based in Southern California. I created this website to share [all the great hikes I do](#) with everyone else out there. This site is different because it gives detailed directions that even the beginning hiker can follow. I also share what hiking gear works and doesn't so you don't waste money.

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*Thank You, Cris!