

# Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide

The Complete Illustrated Guide  
with Online Maps



2/18/2018

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# Preface

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Hikers and bikers are fortunate to have access to the 3,400 acres of open space and the established trails in the Crafton Hills Preserve. Here are a myriad of trails in a natural environment, protected in perpetuity by the Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy (CHOSC) members and volunteers. This guide identifies and details the designated trails, thereby helping to promote both recreation and conservation of the natural open space environment.



This eBook can be printed or viewed on a computer or portable device. It was compiled and edited by Rob Richmond (Executive Director of the Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy). Your comments are welcomed. Please email any comments to [rob@chosc.org](mailto:rob@chosc.org).



Hikers and equestrians enjoy meandering through Crafton Hill's canyon trails.



Mountain biking in Crafton Hills provides views of Yucaipa Regional Park.



# Introduction

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This is a reference guide for all users of the Crafton Hills Preserve trails. These walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian trails provide inspirational views in a natural hill and canyon environment.

This guide provides a satellite map, a GPS recording, and a description of each trail. The table of contents lists the trails by name in alphabetical order for easy reference. (When viewing this directory on a computer or smartphone, selecting the desired entry in the Table of Contents will directly access the chapter of the trail of interest.)



## Using this Guide Online

A web browser or pdf viewer is required to view online or download this guide. (The latest online guide version is at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/00guv8qm44kmd7w/Crafton%20Hills%20Trail%20Guide.pdf?dl=0>.) Links are provided to online interactive maps and also to the other chapters within this guide. The table of contents lists the trails by name in alphabetical order for easy reference. Best results with all the link and viewing features will be obtained with a pdf viewing application. When viewing this with a pdf viewer, selecting the desired entry in the Table of Contents will directly access the chapter of the trail of interest.

## Finding the Trailhead

Each trail in this guide has been surveyed and mapped using GPS. These maps are provided in each description. Each GPS trail map and its elevations are also posted on the AllTrails trail map website, which may be viewed interactively online with a PC using the Map Link provided in each description. A map of the desired trail can also be downloaded and printed if you sign up for an AllTrails account. The Map Links can also be used to determine how to get to the trailhead. (At this time the individual Map Links in this guide do not show the interactive maps on a smartphone.)

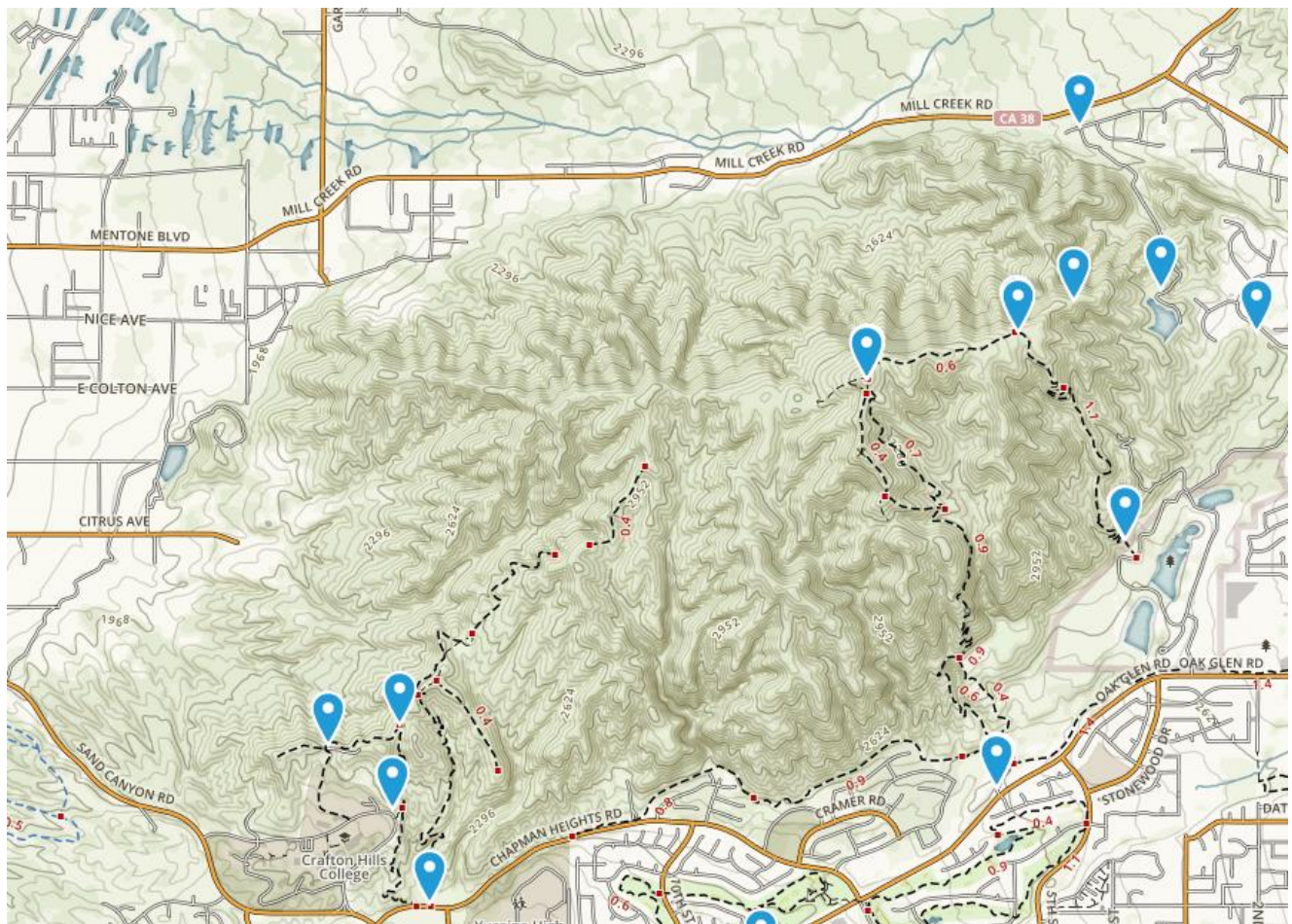
An online listing of all the individual trail maps with a link to each map is at [Trailhead Online Map](#). An interactive map showing the locations of all the Crafton Hills trailheads (and also the Yucaipa City trailheads) can be viewed here. Yucaipa's city trails are described in the Yucaipa City Trail Guide at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ttahs1ij5b0jndg/Yucaipa%20City%20Trail%20Guide.pdf?dl=0>.

## Trail Names

Before this guide, there was some inconsistency of trail names or even where a trail begins or ends. For easier and less confusing reference, this guide attempts to break trails into appropriate segments and give them meaningful names, while preserving past usage as much as possible.

## Trail Ratings

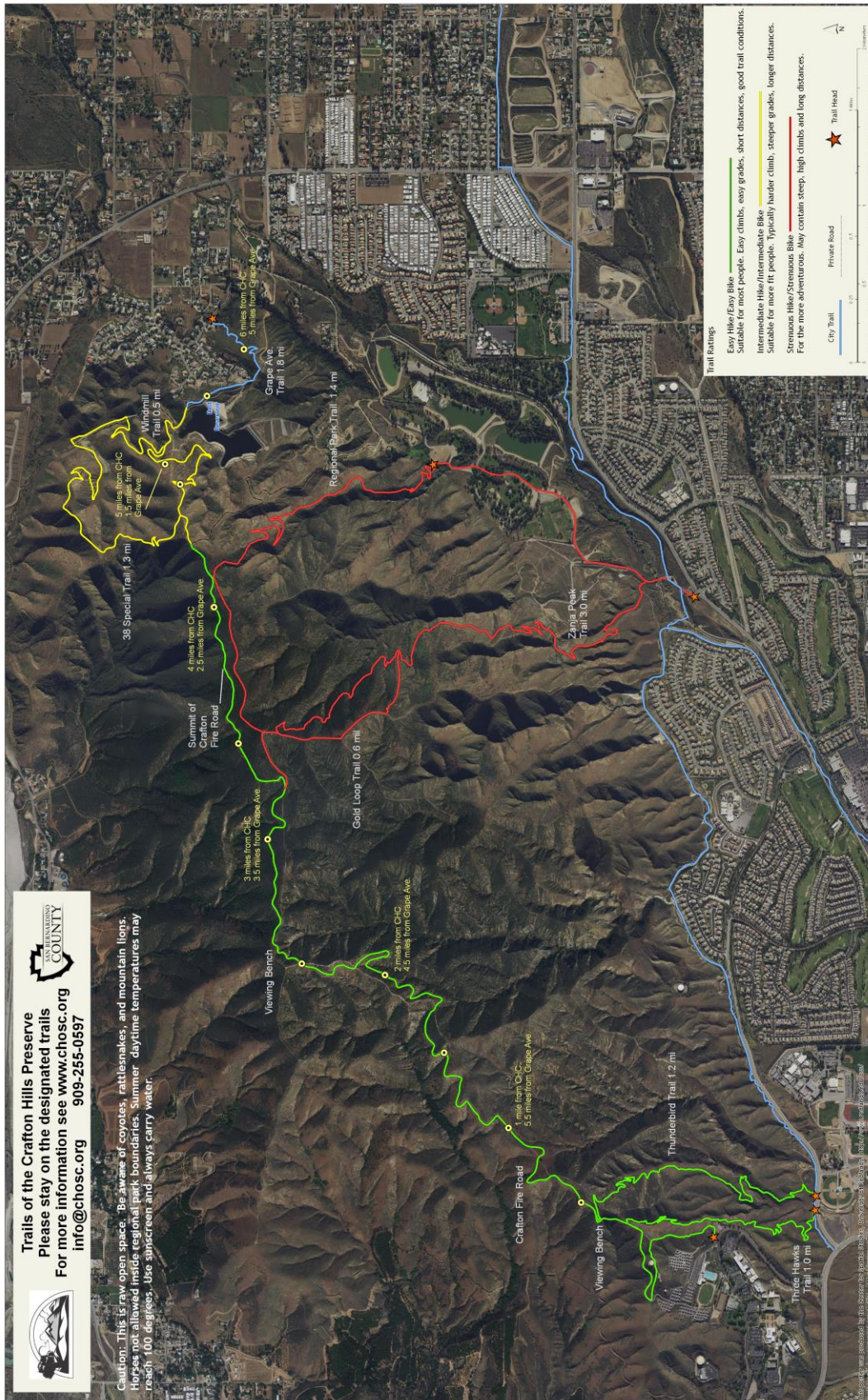
- **Easy**, suitable for most active people. Easy climbs, easy grades, short distances, good trail conditions.
- **Intermediate**, suitable for more physically fit people. Typically harder climb, steeper grades, longer distances.
- **Strenuous**, for the more adventurous, with good cardiovascular ability. May contain steep, high climbs and long distances.



**This online interactive map shows the location of each trailhead.**  
The Yucaipa city trails are described separately in "The Yucaipa City Trail Guide".



# Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



Trails of the Crafton Hills Preserve



## The Crafton Hills

The Crafton Hills are an island of low hills tucked between Yucaipa and Mentone, completely surrounded by highways. This is a great place to hike or mountain bike, particularly in cooler weather. Unlike the nearby mountains, the Crafton Hills rarely get ice or snow. In the early springtime, after Southern California has received a few good winter rains, the Crafton Hills turn a brilliant shade of green and wildflowers are abundant. A number of trails wind through oak-filled canyons, along chaparral-covered ridgelines, and over a fire road which traverses the hills from end to end. There are excellent views of the higher San Bernardino Mountain peaks. The Crafton Hills are also home to Crafton Hills College (at the west end) and the Crafton Hills Reservoir (at the east end).



**A panoramic view of the Crafton Hills from Yucaipa City Hall after a wet winter**



**The hills are transformed in the summertime.**

## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide

The Crafton Hills are a defining feature of Yucaipa and surrounding areas, providing beautiful vistas and habitat for over 500 species of plants and animals. Trails are used by hikers, mountain bikers, runners, horseback riders, and birders for recreation and to access Yucaipa Regional Park, Zanja Peak, and the north slopes. During spring wildflower walks, volunteer leaders share their knowledge about the hills, plants, animals, and natural history.

No permits are needed to hike in the Crafton Hills Preserve on the trails described here. Use of trails not described here is prohibited for the reasons described below. Campfires and camping are not allowed. Pets are allowed only on a leash. Please practice Leave No Trace ethics. You can camp at adjacent Yucaipa Regional Park, where there are a wide variety of facilities.

Some trails are heavily used, so trail courtesy and yielding right of way is important. In order to preserve the integrity of the trails and the natural appearance, please don't cut the switchbacks.

### Crafton Hills' History

The Crafton Hills have a colorful history that dates back to the early 1800s and the Gold Rush era. The Crafton Hills were named after Crafts Ranch which was established in the area around 1861 by George Crafts. Early Mexican colonists were the first to mine gold in the Crafton Hills and build arrastras for processing the ore. Beginning in 1839, gold claims were staked and gold mines were dug, California's first gold rush. Mining peaked here in the late 1800s. Some remnants of the now forgotten mines remain today. Mostly these are just adits (horizontal holes in the ground), unsafe to crawl into. Their names are remembered only as the street names of nearby housing developments, and they are protected only by rattlesnakes. Many of the Crafton Hills trails follow old wagon roads which were cut into the hillsides during the gold rush era.

### The Crafton Hills Reservoir

The Crafton Hills Reservoir (formerly called the East Reservoir) supplies water from northern sources to the Yucaipa Valley. It provides a water source in case of a break in the incoming supply line due to earthquake or other event. Imported surface water from northern California travels over 400 miles in the California Aqueduct before arriving at the Crafton Hills Reservoir for groundwater recharge and treatment at the Yucaipa Valley Regional Water Filtration Facility. The original 5 acre dam and reservoir was completed in 2003.

The reservoir was part of the State Water Project's East Branch Extension, which delivers water from the Devil



**The Crafton Hills Reservoir**

The reservoir is full as water is pumped in during a wet year.

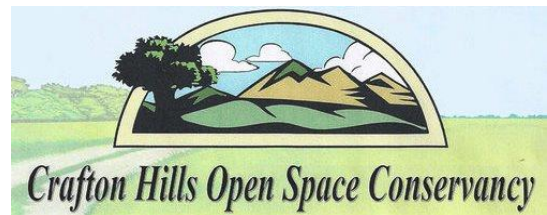


Canyon power plant's afterbay to Yucaipa Valley and the Cherry Valley area. The project, which consisted of 13 miles of buried pipeline, three pump stations, and the 90 acre-foot reservoir, will meet the region's water needs for the next 40 years. The water is also used to recharge overdrafted groundwater basins and allow more flexibility for local water systems. The California Department of Water Resources purchased and conveyed to the Conservancy approximately 140 acres of habitat as compensation for direct impacts of the pipeline project and reservoir.

The reservoir was tripled in size with a second dam, 100 feet high, in operation since 2014, and now provides 50 to 60% of Yucaipa's water supply. Because the expansion resulted in the loss of some oak trees, the DWR (California Department of Water Resources) paid for 103 replacement oak trees. These were planted by Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy volunteers in 2017. Irrigation systems for the oak trees were also installed with DWR funds.

### The Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy

From its inception in 1989 and formal incorporation as a non-profit, tax exempt corporation in 1992, the Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy (CHOSC) has protected and preserved the natural open space of the Crafton Hills. CHOSC strives to protect in perpetuity the natural environment of the Preserve for its significant watershed, ecological and aesthetic values, and other benefits to the public interest. CHOSC has preserved more than two thirds of the 4500 acres through acquisition and cooperative management with San Bernardino County, Crafton Hills College, and the Cities of Yucaipa and Redlands. The conservancy is "dedicated to working together to save a beautiful area for education, recreation, and wildlife habitat preservation."



The CHOSC is chartered to oversee more than five and one-half square miles of natural open space in the hills. Straddling the jurisdictions of the cities of Yucaipa and Redlands, San Bernardino County and Crafton Hills College, the CHOSC is the only organization that represents the entire hills. Ex-officio members on the Board of Directors represent the cities, County and College, as well as active members from the community.

The Crafton Hills trails are maintained by CHOSC members and volunteers. See the website at <http://www.chosc.org/> for membership, volunteer, and donation opportunities. You can be a Facebook follower at [www.facebook.com/craftonhillscosc](http://www.facebook.com/craftonhillscosc). Email the Conservancy at [info@chosc.org](mailto:info@chosc.org).

### Designated Trails

Only the trails described in this guide are designated for use. While there are many undesigned trails in the hills, use of those trails is prohibited for the reasons given here. As a visitor to the nature pre-

serve, please be a responsible trail user and help preserve the natural environment. Use this guide to help you stay on the designated trails and allow the other areas to be restored to their natural state.

**Why use only designated trails?**

1. Designated trails allow you to access the natural environment.
2. Designated trails are designed for safer travel.
3. Designated trails and roads provide environmental protection by keeping impacts localized.
4. Designated trails are patrolled and can be found on maps, decreasing response time in the event of an emergency.
5. Trail maintenance is easier when all trails are identified because volunteers can ensure that all trails are maintained.

**Why not use undesignated trails?**

1. They destroy the natural environment.
2. Undesignated trails may be risky and have unexpected dangers.
3. The hills have many steep and slippery slopes.
4. Animals tend to inhabit the less-travelled areas.
5. It is easy to get lost on undesignated trails.
6. Some trails are on private property.
7. When we venture off designated trails, we inflict impacts on the environment.
8. Vegetation is reduced by increased usage.
9. Soil erosion can result from continued use.
10. Restoration of old trails requires that they are not used.
11. Trail maintenance is primarily accomplished on designated trails, but difficult to perform on trails that are located in dangerous, out-of-reach places, such as steep hillsides.
12. People can cause damage to native plant communities, which in turn can affect the creatures that rely on this vegetation for food and shelter.
13. Those species higher up in the food chain, such as the raptors and carnivores, may also be affected by the loss of the smaller, vegetation-dependent creatures.
14. Sensitive species, such as migratory songbirds, do not have a tolerance for human disturbance.
15. People can unknowingly transport exotic plant seeds from adjacent areas on their clothing or shoes, thereby increasing the severity of the impact on plant species. Eventually, this type of impact can affect native habitat communities, compounding the effect on wildlife species.

# Natural Resources

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## Natural Land

Natural land resources are community assets that occur naturally in the environment or are derived from the environment with little disturbance. Adjacent to the Crafton Hills are the San Bernardino National Forest, and rolling hills to the south. Natural land resources include vast open space, biological resources, and hillsides. These open spaces provide visual relief, preserve unique flora and fauna, and offer opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The San Bernardino National Forest, an expansive area of more than 1,000 square miles, frames the northern side of the region. The forest supports both passive and active recreational activities – hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing, camping, scenic drives, outdoor education, and skiing and other winter sports. Trails and recreational areas provide active recreational opportunities, and prominent peaks (such as the 11,503 foot San Gorgonio Peak) offer unparalleled views of the Yucaipa Valley below.

## Crafton Hills' Geology

The Crafton Hills were created by about ten active faults collectively called the Crafton Hills fault zone (or the Crafton Hills “Horst-and-Graben Complex” of higher and lower fault blocks) which stretches between the San Jacinto fault and the San Andreas fault. When you look to the north from the northern side of the hills you can see where the San Andreas cuts a line between the hills in the San Bernardino Mountains and then follow the line southeast out towards Oak Glen or northwest out towards Highland and Cajon Pass.

## Biological Resources

### Regional Habitat

The Crafton Hills and its surrounding region are home to diverse vegetation and wildlife communities. These include developed and disturbed lands as well as a variety of grassland, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, deciduous woodland, and riparian plant communities. Some of the more common habitats are:

Chaparral. This includes southern mixed chaparral, chamise chaparral, and scrub oak chaparral. These plants are along lower slopes of the mountains.

Coastal Sage Scrub. Coastal sage scrub is classified as riversidean sage scrub. This habitat grows on steep slopes with severely drained soils.

Oak Woodlands. Oak woodland is in various areas at lower elevations (1,000 to 2,500 feet) and canyon bottoms.

Disturbed Grasslands. Disturbed grasslands are shrubs or trees that are altered by development, grazing, or fire. They include a wide range of nonnative species.

Wetlands. The many stream channels that flow from the mountains through the valley region are populated with a year-round riparian scrub community.

### **Crafton Hills Habitat**

The Crafton Hills are comprised of chaparral scrub vegetation, characterized by a winter wet-summer dry climate. This “Mediterranean” climate pattern is unique to its namesake region in southern Europe, California, southwest Australia, South Africa, and a small region of central Chile. These are regions of low-to-moderate rainfall of about 15 inches annual precipitation.

Recent years have proved to be some of the driest on record, with rainfall far less than average annual rainfall. Even the typically drought-adapted shrubs become shriveled and desiccated compared to usual. How do they survive such hardships?

There are several strategies for survival. The predominant adaptation is sclerophylly; plants with thick, leathery leaves. The upper surface is often evergreen and stiff, with leaves curled under and fuzzy undersides to retain moisture lost during transpiration (air exchange during photosynthesis). Examples of sclerophyllous plants are the live oak and thick-leaved California lilac.

Another means of survival is to be drought deciduous; losing one’s leaves in the late summer. Poison oak is a prime example of this, becoming difficult to identify in the fall when its leaves turn red and drop to the ground.

Some plants go through their entire lifecycles in a brief flourish during the winter and spring months, then drop seed and persist until the next year, or even wait several years, until rainfall is enough to trigger a new flush of annual seedlings. These are the “therophytes”, and include many species that follow fires in the chaparral. Annual plant species include whispering bells, California poppy, and many species of lupine.

Finally, some plants store water in their stems or leaves. These are the succulents. Many succulents also have special metabolic processes that store solar energy during the day and undergo photosynthesis and transpiration at night. The coastal beavertail cactus and stonecrops are examples of this strategy for survival.

### **Crafton Hills Wildlife and Plant Life**

The Crafton Hills habitat is home to desert cottontail rabbits, squirrels, gophers, deer mice, endangered San Bernardino kangaroo rats, rattlesnakes, bobcats, coyotes, and possibly even mule deer and mountain lions. Birds include red-tailed hawks, roadrunners, ravens, songbirds, California quail, western meadowlark, Bewick’s wren, Bullock’s oriole, white-tailed kite, towhee, and phainopepla. The Crafton Hills Reservoir attracts waterfowl, including wood ducks and killdeer.

Plants include the Woolly Leaf Lilac (*Ceanothus tomentosus olivaceus*), recognizable in spring by its bright blue blooms. It reaches its northernmost location in the world on the north-facing Crafton Hills. Another plant with blue blooms is the “fuzzy caterpillar” (*Phacelia cicutaria*). White California Buckwheat blossoms dominate in the summer.

The habitats are traversed by wildlife moving between the San Bernardino National Forest and the Badlands mountain range in Riverside County. Crafton Hills is an important wildlife corridor that connects the Live Oak-San Timoteo Canyons to the San Bernardino National Forest. The Mill Creek region on Yucaipa’s northern boundary is also a wildlife corridor into the San Bernardino National Forest. The Yucaipa valley is also home to coyotes, mountain lions, and bears.

To reduce potential conflicts with wildlife, the Yucaipa Animal Placement Society works with surrounding agencies to implement the Yucaipa Wildlife Corridor Program. A broad range of organizations assist in preserving the natural terrain and wildlife.

### Coast Live Oak Tree Restoration Project

In early 2017 Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy (CHOSC) volunteers planted 103 Coast Live Oak trees in three areas: the Oak Glen trailhead area (53 trees), adjacent to the Crafton Fire Road (15 trees), and near Highway 38 (34 trees). An irrigation system was installed at each site. The CHOSC continues to maintain the irrigation systems and refill the water tanks. Should you come across any of these sites, please do not disturb them. We hope this legacy will endure for all, now and into the future.



Oak tree being irrigated



# Sharing Our Trails

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The Crafton Hills trails are designated as multi-use. To help reduce conflicts, ensure safety, and maximize enjoyment, please follow these rules.

## For everyone

- Use only the trails that are designated for use in this guide.
- Remember that common courtesy can go a long way in reducing conflict and ensuring everyone has fun.
- Leave the trails in good shape for the next person.



## For cyclists

- Yield the right-of-way to walkers, runners, and equestrians.
- Yielding to others means stopping or slowing – never pass others over 10 mph on roads and 5 mph on single-track trails. Stop on narrow trails. Stop for horses.
- Gently alert those you approach from behind. Don't startle them (also known as the involuntary "amygdala response") with a sudden loud noise. Some walkers do not have the agility to jump out of your way.
- Always ride under control.
- Don't cut the switchbacks. The destruction may be permanent and encourages others.



Trail damage caused by cutting a switchback  
Fences were installed for restoration.

## For hikers and runners

- Yield the right-of-way to equestrians.
- Be careful not to spook horses. Greet them with a soft hello so they know you are a person.
- Stay on the downhill side of horses.
- Hold children's hands when a horse approaches.

## For equestrians

- Don't bring a skittish horse to these multi-use and often narrow trails.
- Avoid damaging dirt trails by keeping off them when they are wet.

## For dog walkers

## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide

- All dogs must be leashed (6' leash) or physically restrained at all times.
- All dogs, with or without a chip implant, must wear a license tag at all times.
- Pick up and dispose of your dog's poop.
- Don't let your dog approach others too closely. Others don't always know your dog's intentions and may be frightened.

### **For motorized vehicles**

- Stay off the trails! Yucaipa ORDINANCE NO. 166 forbids "off-road operation of licensed and unlicensed motorcycles and other motor-driven vehicles on private property and public property in the City". This applies even to 4WD vehicles, unless on public streets.

# Crafton Hills Preserve Trails

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## 1. Canyon Loop

This popular canyon loop (with a few ridges) can be accessed from the Campus Drive trailhead at Crafton Hills College, or from Chapman Heights Road at 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The trail runs mostly in the canyons, which are well shaded in the late afternoon hours.

The Canyon Loop is comprised of these trails:

Three Hawks Trail 1.0 mile

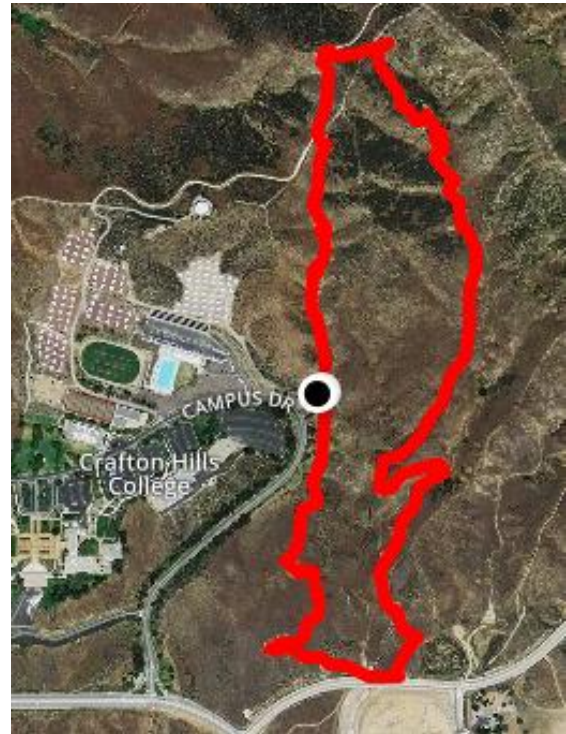
Thunderbird Trail 1.2 miles

**Total Length:** 2.3 miles

**Trail Rating:** Moderate

**Elevation Gain:** 374 feet

**Map Link:** [Canyon Loop Map Link](#)



The Canyon Loop

## 2. College Loop

**Length:** 1.2 mile loop

**Trailhead:** Campus Drive trailhead, elevation 2459 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 210 feet

**Trail Rating:** Moderate

**Map Link:** [College Loop Online Map](#)

This loop trail provides a tour of the solar panels, swimming pool, and water tank at the Crafton Hills College. You also get some exercise getting to the top of a hill which overlooks it all. Most of the trail is paved. This is an old trail, constructed when the swimming pool was still a golf course. Most of the trail traffic has

since shifted to the newer [Three Hawks Trail](#), which also connects to the Campus Drive trailhead parking area. Half-way around the loop you come to the gate at Mile 0.0 of the [Crafton Fire Road](#).



The College Loop



The trail from Campus Drive starts as paved and signed.



You climb to a hilltop and the water tank.



The only remains of the college golf course



The CHOSC kiosk on the paved end of the Crafton Fire Road



### 3. Crafton Fire Road

**Length:** 4.0 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Crafton Fire Road entrance gate, elevation 2464 ft.

**Trailhead:** Regional Park Trail junction, elevation 3361 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 1037 feet

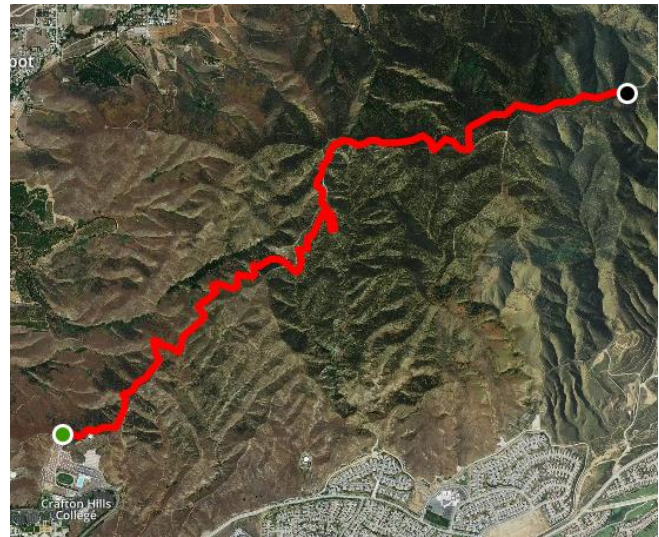
**Trail Rating:** Easy, but distance is long

**Map Link:** [Crafton Fire Road Online Map](#)

The Crafton Fire Road traverses most of the length of the Crafton Hills. It is wide and smooth, ideal for mountain bikes. It runs from the college all the way to the [Regional Park Trail](#) Junction.

Here you can continue on via the [Reservoir Trail](#), or perhaps loop back through Chapman Heights

via the Regional Park Trail. The road slopes gradually uphill from the college until it passes by Zanja Peak, and then heads down to the trail junction. If the road is too easy for you, you can use the ridge trail that follows just above for much of the road (very strenuous). You can use the [College Loop](#) to get to the entrance gate.



**Crafton Fire Road**

The road becomes single track soon after the Regional Park Trail junction.



**The ancient "Love Tree"**

About .8 mile from the college gate you pass an area where 15 oak trees were planted in March 2017. Here you see the irrigation tank being refilled.



**Zanja Peak viewed from the Fire Road**



**Rest area over Mill Creek Wash**



## 4. Gold Loop Trail

**Length:** .7 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Zanja Peak, elevation 3543 ft.

**Trailhead:** Zanja Peak Trail, elevation 3153 ft.

**Elevation Gain:** 390 feet

**Trail Rating:** Strenuous and very steep

**Map Link:** [Gold Loop Trail Online Map](#)

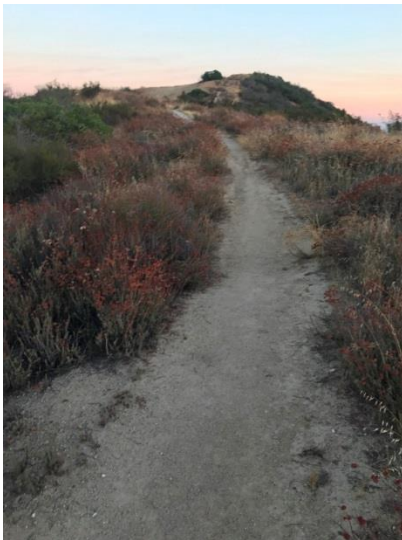
The Gold Loop Trail provides an alternative route to Zanja Peak from the [Zanja Peak Trail](#). It runs along the ridge above the Zanja Peak Trail, traversing Zanja's adjacent sister peak (which is only six feet lower than Zanja Peak), and then loops back to the Zanja Peak Trail. This trail provides views not seen from the canyon trail below, at the expense of a steep and treacherous connection between the ridge and the canyon trails. To the west is Gold Gulch, where gold was mined in the 1800s. This trail bypasses most of the continuing ridge trail with a steep connection back to the Zanja Peak Trail.



**The Gold Loop Trail**

It runs parallel to and above the Zanja Peak Trail from the junction to the peak.

From the junction with the lower Zanja Peak Trail, the connector to the ridge trail goes straight up. There are no switchbacks. Coming down, it is difficult not to slip or fall in this section. Because it is so steep, this section of trail is not recommended as an alternative to the Zanja Peak Trail.



From Zanja Peak, the trail leads to the adjacent peak, nearly as high.



**The Gold Loop Trail turns left and sharply down hill here.**

The ridge trail continuing straight ahead along Gold Gulch is bypassed.



**Sections of the trail are very steep.**



## 5. Grape Avenue Trail

**Length:** 1.6 miles out-and-back

**Trailhead:** Grape Ave., elevation 2834 ft.

**Trailhead:** Crafton Hills Reservoir, elevation 2935 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 174 feet

**Map Link:** [Grape Avenue Trail Online Map](#)

The Grape Avenue Trail goes up into the Crafton Hills to the Crafton Hills Reservoir. The trailhead is found along an open stretch of Grape Avenue, ½ mile west of Bryant Street. From here you can travel 6 ½ miles all the way to the Crafton Hills College at the other end of the hills. But this section takes us only as far as the reservoir. We stop at the Windmill trailhead, an entry point into the Crafton Hills. This trail has varied views and gets less traffic than some of the other Crafton Hills trails. It is used for bike access into the hills. There is adequate parking space for a horse trailer on the street.



**Grape Avenue to the Reservoir**

The reservoir is half way to Highway 38.

From Grape Avenue, you pass through the bushes and up a ridge, then down to cross a paved road. Continue on the dirt trail (to the right of the paved road) along the reservoir, until you rejoin the paved road. There you see the kiosk for the Windmill trailhead. This is a junction point to several other trails, either into the hills or down to Highway 38 via the [Reservoir Road Trail](#).



The Grape Avenue trailhead on Grape Ave.



The trail provides access to Crafton Hills trails.



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



**View of the Regional Park lakes**



**Cross the paved road, stay on the dirt trail to the right.**



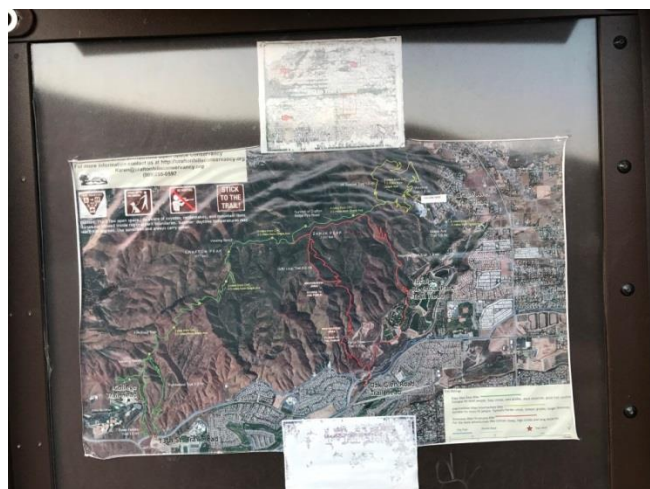
**The original dam**

A newer dam, added in 2014, is not visible from the trail.



**The kiosk at the Windmill trailhead**

This is the end of this trail section, and a major trail junction.



**The kiosk has a map of all the Crafton Hills trails.**  
Here you can find opportunities to extend your hike.



**View of the North Bench, the Yucaipa Ridge, and San Bernardino Peak**



## 6. Highway 38 Loop

The Highway 38 Loop Trail is a little-used tour through hillsides and canyons on old wagon roads. It offers solitude, aerobic exercise, and reservoir views. It can be accessed from three different points: Highway 38, the Grape Avenue Trail, or the Crafton Fire Road.

The Highway 38 Loop is comprised of these trails:

[38 Special Trail](#)

[Reservoir Trail](#)

[Windmill Trail](#)

[Reservoir Road Trail](#)

**Loop Length:** 2.6 miles

**Elevation Gain:** 564 feet

**Trail Rating:** Moderate

**Map Link:** [Highway 38 Loop Online Map](#)

**Highway 38 Access:** Add .8 miles (Parking on Highway 38 is .4 miles away and 80 feet below the trail-head.)

**Grape Avenue Trail Access:** Add 3.2 miles

**Crafton Fire Road Access:** Additional distance depends on where you enter the Fire Road.



**The Highway 38 Loop**

It can be accessed from three different points.



## 7. Oak Tree Trail

**Length:** 2.0 miles out-and-back

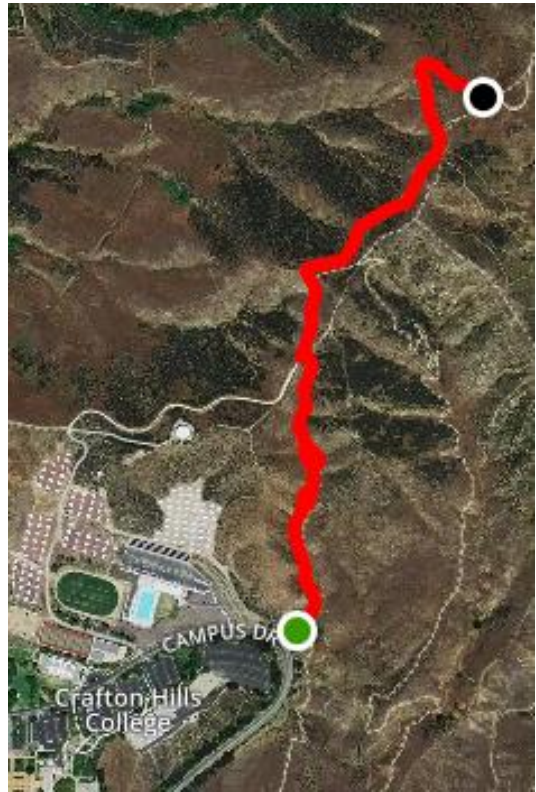
**Trailhead:** Campus Drive trailhead, elevation 2459 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 220 feet

**Trail Rating:** Easy

**Map Link:** [Oak Tree Trail Online Map](#)

This trail takes you to the majestic lone oak tree known as the “Love Tree”. It is also the site of the Coast Live Oak Tree Restoration Project, where 15 oak trees were planted in March 2017. You begin and end at the Crafton Hills College Campus Drive trailhead. Head uphill on the [Three Hawks Trail](#) to the Crafton Fire Road, then bear right and follow the [Crafton Fire Road](#) until you arrive at the lone oak tree.



The Oak Tree Trail



The “Love Tree”



Volunteers planting oak trees



## 8. Regional Park Trail

**Length:** 1.3 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Regional Park, elevation 2756 ft.

**Trailhead:** Crafton Ridge Road, elevation 3352 ft.

**Elevation Gain:** 633 feet

**Trail Rating:** Strenuous (up), moderate (down)

**Map Link:** [Regional Park Trail Online Map](#)

This is one several ways to access the [Crafton Fire Road](#) or Zanja Peak. The Regional Park trailhead can be accessed by car from within the Yucaipa Regional Park by paying a \$10 entrance fee and crossing over to the back side of the park. (Or join the [CHOSC](#) and receive a free one-time pass!) Alternatively, the [Soccer Field Trail](#) allows access from the popular Oak Glen Road trailhead.

The trail ascends steeply, and stays on the slopes and ridges all the way to the Crafton Fire Road junction. The Crafton Fire Road allows access to both ends of the hills. The [Zanja Peak Connector](#) can be picked up here for access to the peak (as a “Park-to-Peak” trail).

This trail is popular with campers at the Regional Park, as well as hikers and bikers. It can be used as part of a [Zanja Peak loop](#) from the Oak Glen Road trailhead. This is a ridge trail; there is little shade.



The Regional Park Trail provides access to the Fire Road and Zanja Peak.



The Regional Park trailhead

It is at the boundary of the Crafton Hills and the Park.



A nearby memorial, hidden in a secluded spot



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



Well-designed switchbacks ascend the slopes.



The Regional Park can be seen below.



**Baby Blue Eyes** appear in March.  
(*Nemophila Menziesii*)



The trail winds around the hillsides.



It's less steep at the upper end.



**Purple Owl's Clover**  
(*Castilleja Exserta*)



The junction on the Fire Road



**Junction view of Mill Creek and Morton Peak**  
The fire lookout tower is visible on top.



## 9. Reservoir Road Trail

**Length:** 1.6 miles out-and-back

**Trailhead:** Highway 38, elevation 2594 ft.

**Trailhead:** Crafton Hills Reservoir, elevation 2935 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 325 feet

**Map Link:** [Reservoir Road Trail Online Map](#)

This section of the designated Grape Avenue Trail goes up into the Crafton Hills to the Crafton Hills Reservoir from busy Highway 38. The trail is a paved and gated access road to the reservoir. The underground pipeline supplying water to the reservoir follows along the side of the road. The road is the same length as the connecting [Grape Avenue Trail](#), but has more than twice the elevation gain (or loss). It joins the segment down to Grape Avenue at the Windmill trailhead, adjacent to the reservoir.

This eastern end of the Crafton Hills is much less frequented than the western (college) and central (Oak Glen Road) sections. You pass quiet side canyons with oak-forested hillsides. Ancient switchbacks used for gold mining can be seen engraved on some hillsides. The paved trail ascends continuously from Highway 38, and steepens considerably as you near the top (be prepared for an aerobic workout). It may be paved, but you do feel immersed in the ambience of the hills.

The Windmill Trail provides a longer, less steep way up to the reservoir. The trailhead is on the right about half way (.4 miles) up.



**The Reservoir Road Trail**

Park in the unfinished development on Highway 38, .4 miles away and 80 feet below.



**Trailhead access may be gated.**

The unfinished housing development has been awaiting completion since the recession of 2008.



**This gate restricts vehicle access to the trail.**  
The trail is paved all the way to the top.



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



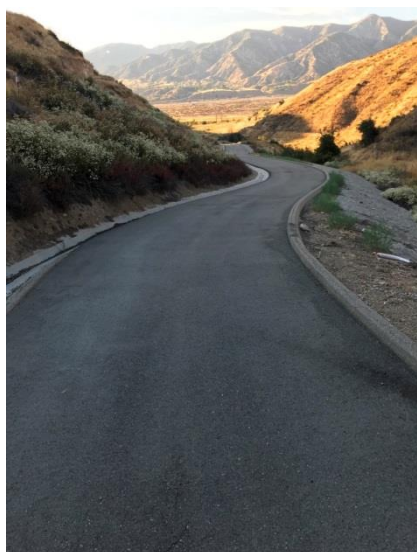
**You pass the start of the 38 Special Trail into the Crafton Hills.**  
See the "Crafton Hills Trail Guide" for a description.



**Next you pass the Windmill trailhead.**  
It rejoins the paved trail at the reservoir, and is less steep.



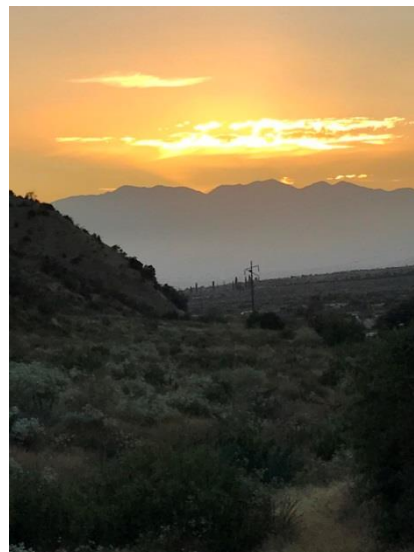
**Near the top is a hillside oak forest.**  
Many trees have been stressed by drought.



**The trail parallels a narrow side canyon and becomes quite steep near the top.**



**A spillway dumps water into the side canyon if the reservoir overflows.**



**Sunset over the San Bernardino Mountains provides a grand finale on the return.**



## 10. Reservoir Trail

**Length:** 1.1 mile each way

**Trailhead:** Windmill trailhead, elevation 2926 ft.

**Trailhead:** Regional Park trailhead, elevation 3342 ft.

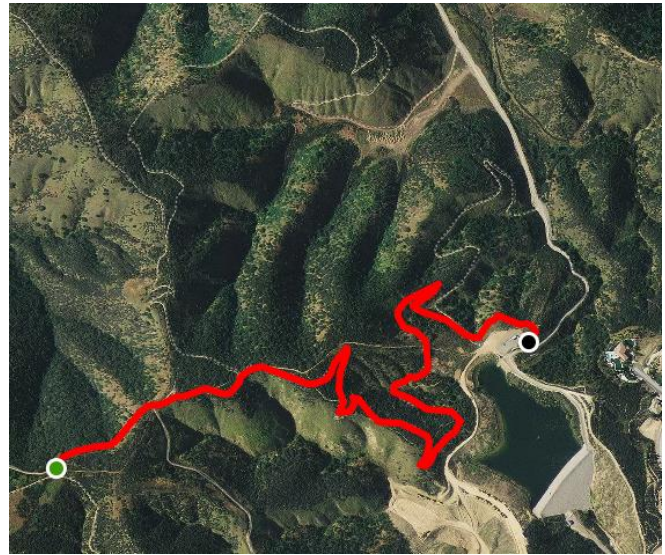
**Elevation Gain:** 416 feet

**Trail Rating:** Moderate (up), easy (down)

**Map Link:** [Reservoir Trail Online Map](#)

This trail offers many views of the Crafton Hills Reservoir and beyond as you traverse a series of zig-zags and switchbacks. It connects a main trail junction at the reservoir with another main trail junction up on the Crafton Fire Road.

The more accessible lower trailhead is at the reservoir. It also connects to the [Windmill](#), Grape Avenue, and Reservoir Road trails. The upper trailhead also connects with the [Regional Park](#), [Zanja Peak Connector](#), and [Crafton Fire Road](#) trails. With all these connections, there are multiple possibilities for longer trips. The easiest access is via the Grape Avenue city trail (see the Yucaipa City Trail Guide).



**The Reservoir Trail**

It overlaps the Windmill Trail from the reservoir.



**The scenery is unique for Crafton Hills.**



**The trailhead on the Crafton Fire Road**



**A great place for a trail run, but watch for rough spots.**



**The Windmill Trail turns down the hill, the Reservoir Trail continues straight.**



## 11. Soccer Field Trail

**Length:** 1.1 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Oak Glen Road trailhead, elevation 2459 ft.

**Trailhead:** Regional Park, elevation 2680 ft.

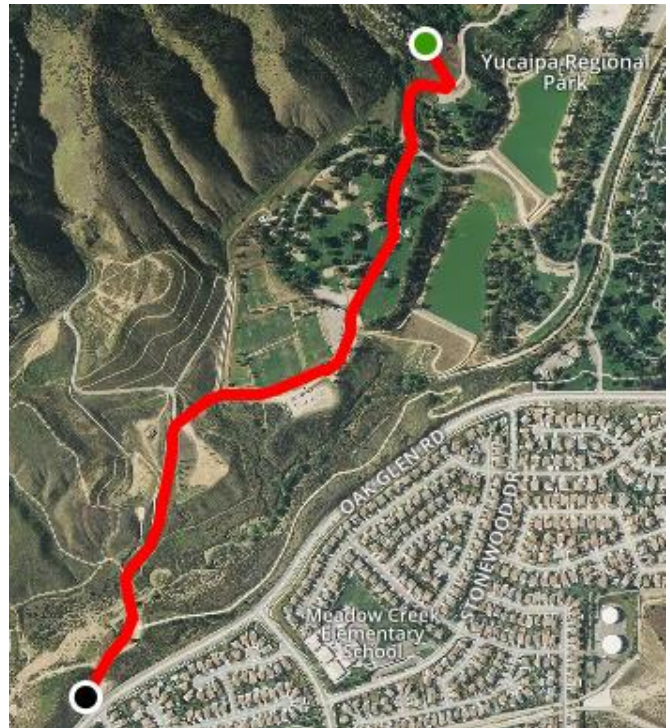
**Elevation Gain:** 221 feet

**Trail Rating:** Easy

**Map Link:** [Soccer Field Trail Online Map](#)

The Soccer Field Trail connects the Oak Glen trailhead with the Regional Park trailhead. This is not within the Crafton Hills boundary, but is useful as part of a [Zanja Peak Loop](#) when combined with other trails.

It is paved all the way, following the access road to the soccer field, than passing through shady areas of the Yucaipa Regional Park. The first section of road, from Oak Glen Road trailhead, is quite steep, sure to provide an aerobic workout going up or extra speed going down. After passing the soccer field, the paved road continues through the Regional Park. Beware of the traffic hazard to the soccer field in the evening hours. Horses are not allowed in the Regional Park.



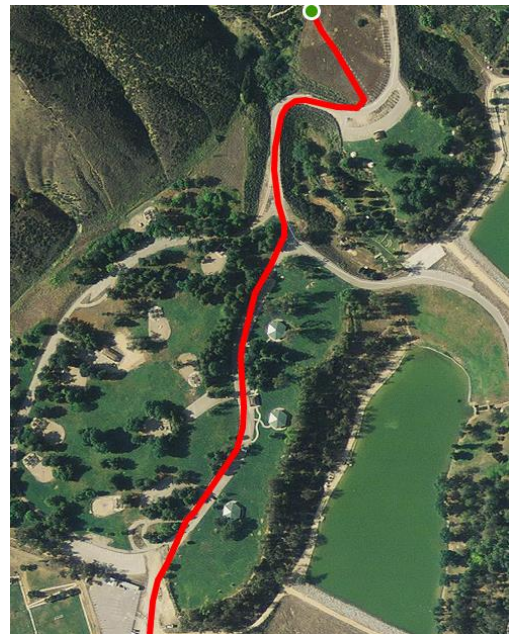
**The Soccer Field Trail**

Its main use is as part of a Zanja Peak loop trail.



**The soccer field**

A new restroom facility has been built.



Cross the Regional Park in a generally straight line to or from the Regional Park trailhead.



## 12. Three Hawks Trail

**Length:** 1.0 mile each way

**Trailhead:** Chapman Heights Road, elevation 2217 ft.

**Trailhead:** Fire Road, elevation 2521 ft.

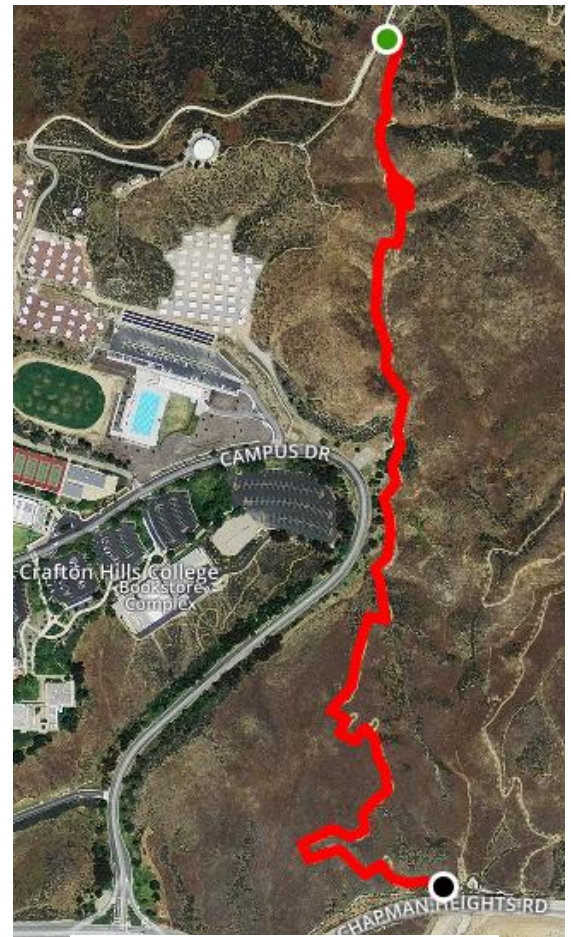
**Elevation Gain:** 304 feet

**Trail Rating:** Easy

**Map Link:** [Three Hawks Trail Online Map](#)

Three Hawks Trail provides a nice uphill walk or ride to the Crafton Fire Road. It parallels the Crafton Hills College and Campus Drive on one side and the Thunderbird Trail on the other side. The lower half traverses a hillside, and the upper half dips down into a canyon. This is a single track trail with steep canyons.

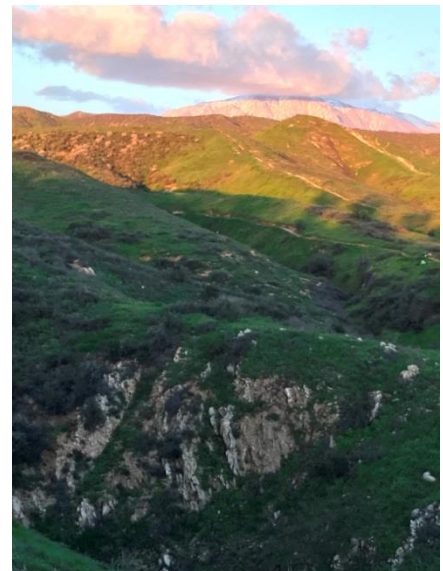
There is access to the trail at the midpoint from the Campus Drive trailhead parking area. The bottom of the trail, on Chapman Heights Road, is near the Yucaipa High School, the 13<sup>th</sup> Street Park Complex, and the Yucaipa BMX Complex. As a result, this trail is heavily used by both hikers and bikers. The Yucaipa High School bike team frequently rides here. While most bikers exercise caution and courtesy, hikers should be on guard for speeding bikes around blind corners. Parking is available on 13<sup>th</sup> Street.



Three Hawks Trail



The lower trailhead is on Chapman Heights Road.



Limestone outcroppings reveal an underwater past geology.



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



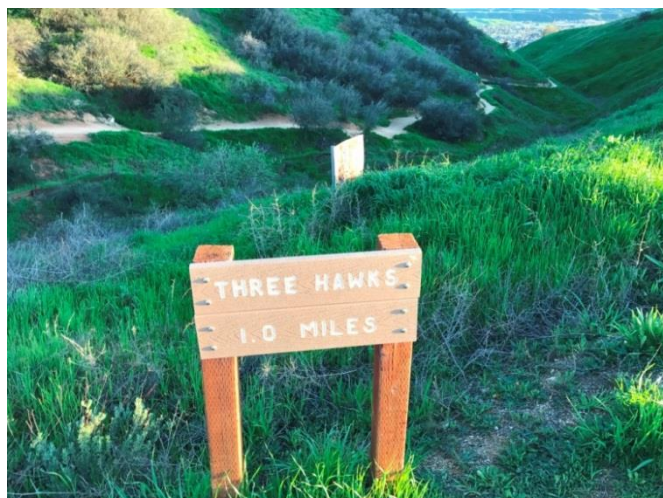
Looking down the trail toward the High School



A side trail leads to the Campus Drive trail-head parking area.



Fences have been installed to discourage shortcutting of the switchbacks.



The upper trailhead is on the Fire Road.



The Crafton Hills trails are maintained by Conservancy volunteers.



### 13. Thunderbird Trail

**Length:** 1.2 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Chapman Heights Rd., elevation 2241 ft.

**Trailhead:** Crafton Fire Road, elevation 2577 ft.

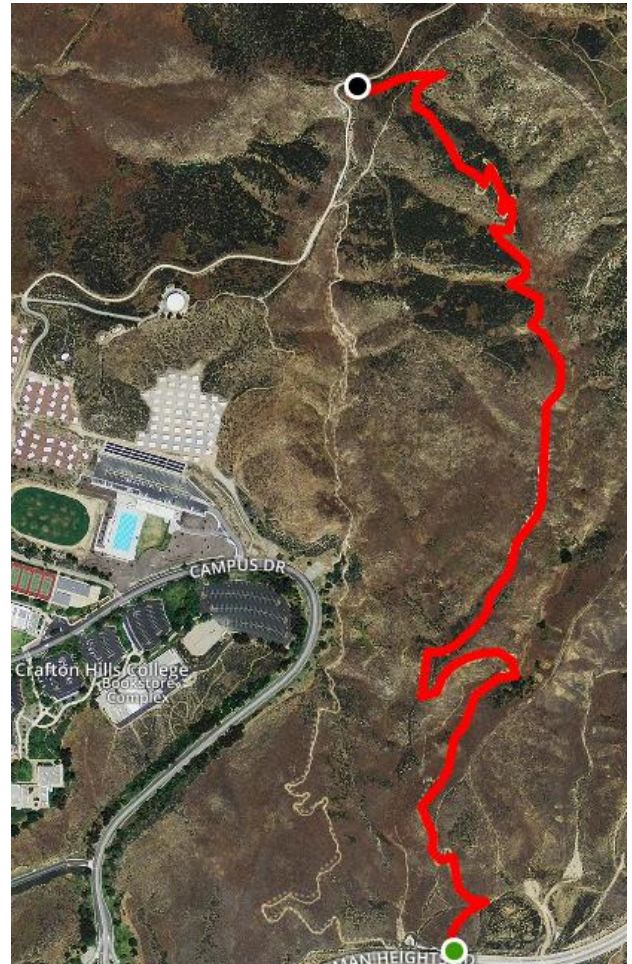
**Elevation Gain:** 400 feet

**Trail Rating:** Easy

**Map Link:** [Thunderbird Trail Online Map](#)

Thunderbird Trail is similar to and parallels the [Three Hawks Trail](#), so the description of Three Hawks mostly applies to Thunderbird as well. The two trails are frequently used together as a loop. They are connected at the top by a short section of the Fire Road and at the bottom by a short stretch of sidewalk. The Thunderbird Trail is the somewhat more secluded and quiet of the two. Both have shaded canyons early and late in the day. This is a single track trail with steep canyons.

There is parking on 13<sup>th</sup> Street. When both trails are used as a [Canyon Loop](#), it becomes feasible to park in the Campus Drive trailhead parking area.



**Thunderbird Trail**

Three Hawks Trail is visible to the left.



**Trailhead kiosk on Chapman Heights Road**



**The lower trail entrance**



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



**Hikers heading down the trail**



**Bikers sharing the same narrow trail**



**It's also popular with runners.**



**A coyote lair under an Oak tree**



**View to the north from the upper trailhead**



**The upper trailhead on the Crafton Ridge fire road**



## 14. Windmill Trail

**Length:** .7 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Crafton Hills Reservoir, elevation 2926 ft.

**Trailhead:** Reservoir Road Trail at 38 Special trailhead, elevation 2675 ft.

**Elevation Gain:** 251 feet

**Trail Rating:** Intermediate (up), easy (down)

**Map Link:** [Windmill Trail Online Map](#)

The Windmill trailhead is the major access point to the east end of the Crafton Hills. It is adjacent to the Crafton Hills Reservoir. From here are connections to the Reservoir Trail, [38 Special Trail](#), the Grape Avenue Trail, and the Reservoir Road Trail. The nearest road access is via the Reservoir Road Trail, which is described in the Yucaipa City Trail Guide.

It is downhill all the way from the trailhead to the paved Reservoir Road Trail. This description ends at the lower [38 Special](#) trailhead. A loop can be constructed with this trail and the [38 Special Trail](#) (the [Highway 38 Loop](#)).



**The Windmill Trail**

It is shown as connecting to the 38 Special trailhead.



**The trail down begins to the right of the kiosk.**  
The windmill is long gone.



**You can see the paved Reservoir Road Trail to Highway 38.**



**Bear right at the fork in the distance.**  
Take the trail going down.



**The trail joins the paved Reservoir Road at this point.**



## 15. Zanja Peak Lakes Loop

The Zanja Peak Lakes Loop is a longer version of the [Zanja Peak Loop](#), and offers close-up views of the lakes in the Regional Park. Both trails start and end at the convenient and popular Oak Glen trailhead. This trail connects with a section of the city's Oak Glen Road Trail, instead of using the [Soccer Field Trail](#).

From the CHOSC kiosk in the Regional Park, continue straight to the Park entrance via the road which passes between the two lakes. Turn west on the dirt trail which runs along Yucaipa Blvd.

The Zanja Peak Lakes Loop is comprised of these trails:

[Zanja Peak Trail](#) 2.4 miles

[Zanja Peak Connector](#) .6 mile

[Regional Park Trail](#) 1.3 miles

Oak Glen Road Trail



**Trailhead:** Oak Glen Road trailhead, elevation 2459 ft.

**Total Distance:** 6.1 miles

**Total Elevation Gain:** 1200 ft.

**Trail Rating:** Strenuous

**Map Link:** [Zanja Peak Lakes Loop Online Map](#)

## 16. Zanja Peak Loop

The Zanja Peak Loop gets you up to Zanja Peak and back in the shortest distance with diversity of scenery and environment. You start and end at the convenient and popular Oak Glen trailhead.

The Zanja Peak Loop is comprised of these trails:

Zanja Peak Trail 2.4 miles

Zanja Peak Connector .6 mile

Regional Park Trail 1.3 miles

Soccer Field Trail 1.1 miles

**Trailhead:** Oak Glen Road trailhead, elevation 2459 ft.

**Total Distance:** 5.4 miles

**Total Elevation Gain:** 1132 ft.

**Trail Rating:** Strenuous

**Map Link:** [Zanja Peak Loop Online Map](#)





## 17. Zanja Peak Trail

**Length:** 2.4 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Oak Glen Road trailhead, elevation 2459 ft.

**Trailhead:** Zanja Peak, elevation 3543 ft.

**Elevation Gain:** 1086 feet

**Trail Rating:** Strenuous (up), easy (down)

**Map Link:** [Zanja Peak Trail Online Map](#)

Zanja Peak is the highest peak in the Crafton Hills at 3,543 feet. There are several trails leading to its summit. This direct trail begins at the Oak Glen Road trailhead. The first section ascends steeply from the parking area along a ridge to an earthen dam. It continues across the dam to a viewpoint with chairs for viewing the city below. This is a busy trail, but most of the trail foot traffic does not go far beyond this point.

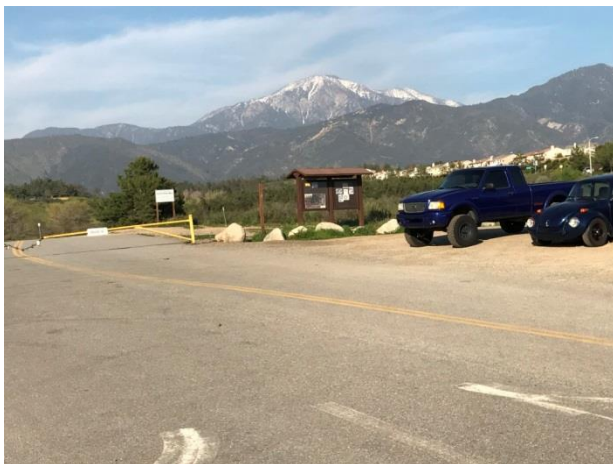
The character of the trail changes as it becomes narrow and passes through a steep canyon. An encounter here between bikers and hikers (or horses) could be hazardous due to the precipice below the single track trail. Soon the highway noises diminish and the feel of a natural environment emerges.

The route remains sheltered in the canyon until the final approach to the peak is reached. Then it ascends steeply to the summit. From here there are good views in all direction.

The canyon offers shelter from the sun during early morning or late afternoon hours. This can make a big difference during the hot weather.



**Zanja Peak Trail**



**The popular Oak Glen Road trailhead**  
Several trails begin here.



**The trail goes up the ridge on the left, over the dam, and into the canyon on the right.**



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide



The soccer field and a portion of Chapman Heights (and wildflowers) are visible below.



Chairs at the view point provide a destination for many hikers.



Entering the canyon through fragrant flowering bushes.



The canyon is steep and the trail is narrow.



The ambience changes to a quiet, natural environment.



Zanja Peak can be seen ahead.



## Crafton Hills Preserve Trail Guide

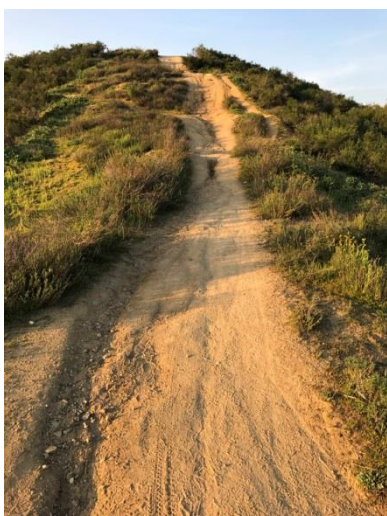


**Spring brings many flowering bushes which attract swarms of bees.**



**Bear right at this junction.**

The left fork, called the Gold Trail, also goes to the peak via a ridge, but is quite steep (and not recommended).

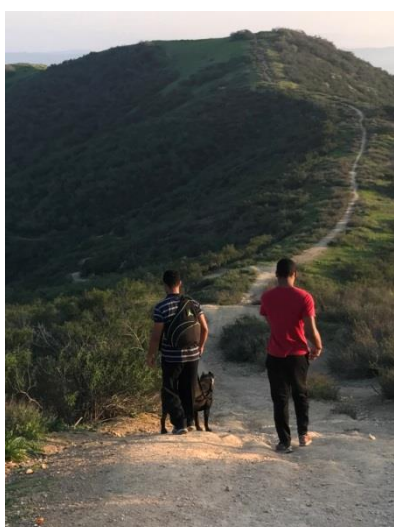


**The final approach rises steeply to the summit.**

Switchbacks are on the left.



**Weary backpackers summit the peak.**



**It is best to use the adjacent switchbacks when descending by foot from the peak to avoid slipping. The nearby summit is almost as high as Zanja Peak.**



**Moonrise over the trailhead**



## 18. Zanja Peak Connector

**Length:** .6 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Regional Park trailhead, elevation 3359 ft.

**Trailhead:** Zanja Peak, elevation 3543 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 200 feet

**Trail Rating:** Strenuous

**Map Link:** [Zanja Peak Connector Trail](#)

[Online Map](#)



**The Zanja Peak Connector**

It connects Zanja Peak to the Crafton Ridge Road

This trail allows access to Zanja Peak from the Crafton Fire Road, and can be used to create a longer loop trail. It's an up-and-down trail, with some nice scenic vistas along the way. Heading up from the road, there are some steep sections and overall a significant elevation gain. You join the [Zanja Peak Trail](#) at the top. Heading down from the peak, you arrive at a major junction with the road and the [Regional Park Trail](#).



**Heading down from the peak**



**Scenic mountain and valley views**



**The trail ends at Crafton Fire Road.**

The road leads west to the college and east to Grape Avenue.



**The Regional Park Trail also terminates here.**

It is 1.3 miles down to the Regional Park.



## 19. 38 Special Trail

**Length:** 1.2 miles each way

**Trailhead:** Reservoir Road Trail, elevation 2674 ft.

**Trailhead:** Reservoir Trail, elevation 3221 ft.

**Total Elevation Gain:** 571 feet

**Trail Rating:** Moderate (up), easy (down)

**Map Link:** [38 Special Trail Online Map](#)

This trail lives up to its name. It is “special” because it is the only trail on the northern ridges of the Crafton Hills. It provides great views of Highway 38, Mill Creek Wash, and points west. Due to its remoteness, this is a quiet trail, used mostly by long-distance mountain bikers. It follows an old wagon road over gentle switch-backs with great canyon vistas.

The most accessible trailhead is on the paved Reservoir Road Trail (described in the Yucaipa City Trail Guide). Parking on Highway 38 is .4 miles away and 80 feet below the trailhead. The other end terminates at the [Reservoir Trail](#). From here you could catch the [Windmill Trail](#) and loop back down (the [Highway 38 Loop](#)).



The 38 Special Trail



The lower trailhead on Reservoir Road



You pass an oak tree irrigation system maintained by the Crafton Hills Open Space Conservancy.



The trail provides little shade.



Continue straight across the firebreaks.



The upper trailhead at the Reservoir Trail  
The trail is entirely within a 2013 fire area.

### **Revision History**

1. All trails surveyed, 8/27/2017
2. Added Highway 38 Loop, Grape Avenue, and Reservoir Road trails. 9/18/2017
3. Added Oak Tree Trail. 10/2/2017