

The Royce's Canyon Hike

by Hike-LosAngeles



# Royce's Canyon Trail Guide

DISTANCE: 5.8 Miles (roundtrip)  
ELEVATION: 1330'  
ELEVATION GAIN: 610'  
TYPE: Out-and-Back with loop option  
HIKING TIME: 3 hours  
RATING: Moderate

## Directions to Trailhead

Griffith Park  
5400 Griffith Park Drive, across from the Griffith Park Composting Facility  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Exit the 134 at Forest Lawn Drive and proceed .3 mile.  
Turn right at the light onto Zoo Drive and proceed .2 mile.  
Turn left at the stop sign onto Griffith Park Drive and proceed .8 mile.  
Turn right into the dirt parking lot across from the composting facility.

Trailhead is the dirt fire road located on the west side of the parking area. Do not cross Griffith Park Drive to the fire road opposite the parking lot next to the composting facility. That is a different trailhead.



Park in the dirt lot opposite the compost facility. Rest Rooms and water are available in the Mineral Wells Picnic Area just around the bend.



## Trailhead

Opposite the parking area is a dirt fire road that begins the trail. For parents pushing strollers, exit the parking area onto Griffith Park Drive and turn left. The pavement and the fire road parallel each other so you may take either. The pavement is an easier climb and descent than the dirt fire road. Proceed about .25 mile to the next trail junctions.



## Trail Junction 1

At the fork, bear right and descend back toward Griffith Park Drive.



### Trail Junction 2

As you reach the three-way stop on Griffith Park Drive, cross around the white gate and onto Mt. Hollywood Drive. Mt. Hollywood Drive is closed to vehicular traffic and as such is a favorite for hikers, joggers and cyclists. You will stay on Mt. Hollywood Drive for approximately 2.5 miles until it intersects with Vista del Valle Drive. The hike is mostly moderate with a few easy flat sections. The last .5 mile becomes steeper.



### Travel Town Water Tank

In about a .5 mile you will reach the Travel Town Water Tank. A short retaining wall on the western side of the tank makes for a nice resting area. Views to the northeast include the Verdugo Mountains. The stark white firebreak of the Mt. Thom Trail can be clearly seen climbing its way to the summit of Mt. Thom.



### Trail Junction 3 - Royce's Canyon Descent

In roughly .75 mile you will reach a sign marking the beginning of a dirt fire road which veers off the pavement and descends into the depths of Royce's Canyon. It's an interesting side trip with a small pocket cave at the end. Bear in mind as you hike this wooded trail that it came very close to being covered by landfill. You can learn more about the preservation efforts led by Royce Neuschatz at: <http://articles.latimes.com/1999/nov/07/local/me-31120>.

When you're ready, continue along Mt. Hollywood drive.



### Pocket Cave

Should you elect to venture down into the canyon, the fire road winds its way to the very bottom. When the road ends, continue on the single-track trail through the trees and underbrush. Scan the slope directly in front of you for the black slit-like entrance to a small cave. Use caution when approaching the cave as park coyotes and even Puma-22 could be using it as a den. Retrace your steps to return to Mt. Hollywood Drive.



### Hiker's Rest

As you round the next sharp curve you will come upon a few outbuildings and the backside of the Toyon Landfill. At around .2 mile from the last junction, and, opposite an entrance to the landfill, you

will pass a small chair cut from a log on your right. It's not a lot to see, but it's an interesting spot to sit for a second and reflect on the landfill directly in front of you and the beautiful canyon behind you.



#### Scenic View

After a nice stretch of relatively flat walking, you have begun to climb again in a series of wide switchbacks, leaving the Toyon Landfill behind. The road will become increasingly steep, but a number of vistas open up for views of the Verdugo Mountains and the San Fernando Valley. This marks one of the first good views.



#### Scenic View

The last and best of the views on this side of the mountains, this viewing spot has a nice rock outcropping from which to view the canyon and the valley beyond. From here it is steep uphill push for about .33 mile to Vista del Valle Road.



#### Haunted Picnic Table # 29

Just before you reach the intersection with Vista del Valle Drive, you will pass a picnic table with a large tree resting on top of it to your right. Legend has it a young couple was killed by the tree on Halloween Night many years ago. Their ghosts have reportedly prevented anyone from disturbing the tree. A park maintenance worker scoffed at the stories and went out late one afternoon to cut the tree away. His body was found the next morning after having died of apparent fright. The park service has left the tree alone ever since.



#### Trail Junction 4

As you pass through a white gate, Vista del Valle Drive will come in on your left. Continue straight on Mt. Hollywood Drive, angling slightly to your right and through a second gate on the other side of the intersection.



#### End of Trail

About 120' past the second gate you will reach the end of the trail with a nice view across Los Feliz and into Hollywood. A dirt fire road angling up to your right will take you to the summit of Mt. Chapel should you desire to bag a peak on this hike.

When you're ready to head back, retrace your steps down Mt. Hollywood Drive to the parking area. If, however, you would like to complete a loop hike, the following directions will take you across the Toyon Landfill for a different perspective on what Royce's Canyon could have become. The loop trail will make for a slightly shorter and quicker return to the parking lot, but travels mostly over dirt and gravel fire road. If you came up the trail on a bike or with a stroller, return the same way you came.

Otherwise, return to the intersection with Vista del Valle Drive and turn right, proceeding .33 mile to the next junction.



#### Trail Junction 5

At the electrical tower, leave Vista del Valle Drive and take the dirt road past the tower for .45 mile, passing a water tank on your right at approximately .3 mile.



#### Bluff Cave

A short distance from the trail junction you will pass a weathered cave-like structure some claim is the fossilized remains of a pre-historic whale. If you look closely, you can make out the creature's eye and ribs. Park Rangers and geologists say no, it's just a weathered rock.



#### Trail Junction 6

As you approach the tiered levels of the Toyon Landfill, veer off the main path to your left and take one of the dirt roads across the landfill for .5 mile.



#### Picnic and Horse Hitching Area

There is a picnic area with table and horse hitches located here. There are better places to picnic, but the benches do provide a nice resting spot.



#### Trail Junction 7

As you leave the landfill you will intersect with a paved road. Continue straight on the road for about 40 yards. If you turn right, you will find yourself on an incredibly steep and possibly dangerous descent. Make sure you continue straight toward the water tank and outbuildings.



#### Trail Junction 8

At the intersection just before the water tank turn right and head for the dirt fire road, traveling approximately 30 yards.



#### Trail Junction 9

Turn right at the fire road and begin your final descent toward the parking lot. If you turn left at the fire road, you will reach a back country water fountain in approximately .12 mile.



#### Trail Junction 10

You will reach this junction in about .4 mile. Continue straight on the dirt road for another .2 mile to reach the parking lot.