



### Hiking the Trails at the Nature Center

The larger trail system at Idyllwild Nature Center is currently being re-signed & re-routed. It is easy to get turned around on some of these trails, most notably along the Summit & Hillside trails, where a variety of social trails have branched off from the intended routes. Check with park staff for up-to-date info about trail conditions.

### The Viewpoint & Perimeter Trails

The viewpoint, located just 0.2 miles uphill behind the nature center, affords a lovely view of Tahquitz Peak & Lily Rock. At the main trail-head just past the cross section of the tree in front of the Nature Center, follow the signs left to the Viewpoint. Once there, you can follow the Perimeter Trail to the next junction where you can continue down to the campground, or follow the loop back up towards the Nature Trail.

### Hillside & Summit Trails

This steep 2 mile loop traverses a hillside above the county campground. It is densely wooded in some areas and open and grassy in others. To hike either the Hillside or Summit Trails- or to follow the loop created by hiking both- turn left at the main trailhead just past the cross section of the tree in front of the Nature Center. Turn right towards the Perimeter Trail soon thereafter, then left towards the Perimeter Trail at the following junction. Less than one-quarter mile down the trail, a sign points right to the "Summit Loop." Another quarter mile from there, across Lily Creek, the trail splits. The Summit Trail is straight ahead, while the Hillside Trail branches to the left. Hikers who follow the whole loop usually find it easier to start in the direction marked "Summit Trail." The loop, including both trails, climbs about 200 feet and then de-scends almost 500 through a fire-break, some-times falling steeply down the rocky hillside. At the bottom, the Hillside section of this loop turns sharply to the north, climbs almost 300 feet, and returns to the creek at the beginning of the loop.

# Exploring the Trails at Idyllwild Nature Center

## Map & Trail Guide



**Open Wednesday through Sunday  
9:00AM - 4:00PM**

Nature Programs, Special Events, Picnic Areas (no fires allowed),  
Museum Displays & Nature Store Available Throughout the Year



Dogs Allowed on Leash

(951) 659-3850

P0 Box 341

Idyllwild, CA 92549



[www.IdyllwildNatureCenter.org](http://www.IdyllwildNatureCenter.org)

## Exploring the Trails at Idyllwild Nature Center

The term “Yellow Pine Forest” describe diverse flora including Pines, Oaks, Incense Cedar, and a Chaparral plant community. These varieties tolerate both extremes of dry heat and bitter cold. A variety of wildlife can be found around every bend, including birds, lizards, snakes, squirrels, chipmunks, deer, coyotes, bobcats, and even mountain lions. These trails are perhaps best explored with John Muir’s famous words in mind: “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings, Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.”



### Nature Trail

The half-mile trail that begins near the front door of the Nature Center is an easy one, mostly flat with gentle inclines that meander through the forest. Along the way you’ll find brown numbered posts which correspond with this pamphlet.

1 This is one of the four species of pine that grow in the park: Ponderosa, Jeffrey, Coulter, and Sugar. You may also find Fir and Cedar trees, albeit with less frequency. Ponderosas looks similar to Jeffrey pines, but they have smaller prickly cones and a less inviting smell. Jeffrey pines give off a warm vanilla scent. Coulter bears very large, heavy cones. Sugar, the tallest of the pines, has blue-green, short needles and very long slender cones. **So, which kind of pine tree is this? Go on—give it a whiff.** That warm vanilla scent tells us this tree is a Jeffrey Pine- the second most common in this forest, after Ponderosa!



Jeffrey 5”-7”



Coulter 9”-12”



Ponderosa 2”-5”



Sugar 12”-16”

2 This large cedar stump reminds us that over 100 years ago the largest, straightest of the trees were felled by loggers. The wood was valued

for railroad ties, orange crates, pencils, and lumber. The forest you are walking through is a comparatively young, second-growth forest, no more than 75-100 years old. Look closely at the stump. **Do you see where loggers would have braced their feet while sawing this tree down?**

There are two small notches which represent “spring board” holds, where lumberjacks wedged a long board which they would stand on as they sawed down a tree.



3 Thousands of trees in the Idyllwild area have died from drought within the last ten years. The pines, weakened by lack of water and left unable to produce enough sap to ward off parasites, ultimately succumbed to bark beetle attacks. In this small clearing, foresters removed trees that had died or overly crowded others, allowing sun to reach the forest floor through the canopy. **Look around, which plants do you see growing here that wouldn’t be able to if the thick canopy were still intact?** If you said grass, you’re right! These native bunch grasses are called “Deer Grass” *Muhlenbergia rigens*. This grass is frequently used to form the base around which other plants are coiled to make traditional baskets.

**Veer left at the next trail sign for #4 & #5**

4 Incense cedar has always been a valued lumber tree. This tree is fire resistant, repels insects, and resists decay. **Can you figure out what the white letters “WL” painted on this tree stand for?** Within the past 20 years, foresters have been thinning the forest, eliminating competition for water and nutrients amongst healthier trees. This ancient “snag” had been marked for cutting but was ultimately saved. Big, dead snag trees create important habitat for the Wild Life that calls this forest home, thus the letters WL stand for “wildlife, do not cut.”

5 Lily creek flows in spring and early summer as the snow melts in the high country. California sycamore, alder, and willow trees grow next to the creek in moist soil, along with bunch grasses, juncus, azaleas, wild roses, and lemon lilies. Here you can see one of several restoration plots where native lemon lilies have been planted in an effort to restore their numbers in the wild.

**Turn back towards the last trail sign and continue uphill to number 6.**

6 Look carefully at the surface of this granite boulder. Notice the colorful Moss and Lichens growing here, spreading with time? Mosses belong to a special group of plants which lack specially designated vascular tissues to help transport water and nutrients between plant parts. Instead, mosses simply absorb water and nutrients directly into their leaves and stems. **You can observe this patch of moss in action by pouring a bit of water directly onto it.** Notice how bright green it turns as the plant’s cells absorb the water directly? Lichen also absorb everything through their outer layers, from beneficial nutrients to harmful toxins. A lichen isn’t a plant, however, but rather a special relationship between a fungus and an algae, each relying on the other to survive. Lichens need clean, fresh air to survive, which is why scientists use them to test the overall health of an ecosystem.

7 The trunk of this old Black Oak has naturally grown hollow with age, providing great habitat for everything from honeybees to coyotes. Mistletoe hangs from the tree’s limbs, tapping root-like structures into the its branches which steal water and nutrients therefrom. Because of its parasitic nature, mistletoe is able to stay green all winter long whilst the leaves of deciduous trees, like this oak, will dry out and eventually fall.

8 Here on a granite rock above Lily Creek are the bedrock mortars. These bowl-shaped indentations in the rock are evidence of where the Cahuilla processed raw acorns into a highly

nutritious food staple. **How do you think these bedrock mortars were used in this process?**

If you look closely, you can see shallow indentations amongst the deeper mortars. With enough time and use, shallow depressions became large mortars. These holes were ground into the rock by Cahuilla women preparing food for their families. This large kitchen site, along with the pictographs found by Idyllwild Park’s campsite #74, indicate that this area was once a seasonal village. The ancestors of modern Cahuilla people were one of the several groups who came here-generation after generation-to store food for winter, hunt animals, and practice important cultural rites. *This photo, ca1900, shows a Cahuilla woman- possibly Maria Los Angeles- using a mortar & pestle.*



9 Throughout the park you may spot remnants of Camp Tahquitz, home of the Long Beach Boy Scouts Council from 1926 to 1958, when it was relocated to its current location in the nearby San Bernardino mountain range. This foundation is one such example.

10 One of the most important shrubs in the chaparral areas of the park is the Manzanita. This plant grows in sunny areas between the taller pines and oaks. The reddish brown branches turn gray with age, dropping off in times of drought. The name “manzanita” means little apple in Spanish- so called because of the tree’s small berries. In the spring, the very thin brown bark sheds, exposing bright green new growth underneath. The seeds of many varieties of manzanita require scarification- mechanical damage of the seed’s outer layer- in order to germinate, which usually happens with the help of fire in the wild.

**Please return pamphlet at the End of the Trail**