

# Parker Ranch Trail

**The Trail:** The trail begins off of Hidden Ranch Drive on the southern side of the street just to the west of the arches into the single-family detached home area. The trail follows an old ranch road, which rises steadily for more than a 300-foot increase in elevation to the west. It extends 0.7 miles to the top of the ridge, which provides excellent views over much of Simi Valley. The width of the road, i.e., the old dirt road, is sufficient to provide safety for hikers, although one must still watch out for rattlesnakes and other wildlife. From its terminus hikers must return the way they came. A more civilized trail, with white rail fencing on both sides, extend closely along the back yards of the residential homes for about another quarter of a mile to the east.

**Geology:** Most of the bedrock under the trail is made up of the “Santa Susana Formation,” which is of marine origin and is of Paleocene age - that was deposited 56-65 million years ago. It is made up of dark gray micaceous clay shale, including thin sandstone strata. The last 200-300 feet of the trail is underlain by the Las Lajas Formation, which constitutes a marine clastic of middle Eocene age, of roughly 40-50 years of age, and which is made up of a cobble conglomerate, with the cobbles composed of granitic, metavolcanic and quartzite rocks in a sandy matrix.

The Santa Susana Formation extend under the alluvial overburden to the northeast and is responsible for the high-water table at the eastern end of Simi Valley.

**Plant Life:** The plants along the trail can be classified as typical of the “Coastal Sage Scrub” plant association, even though the mountain hillsides are mostly north facing. Because of that aspect the vegetation is dense and not at all open until you transition into the Las Lajas Formation, which is dominated by grasses and annual shrubs. This difference may result from the effects of fire.

Plants encountered during the author’s survey, i.e., April 29, 2020, included two native grass species: purple needle grass and giant rye, and nonnative grasses - primarily wild oats, red and ripgut brome, among others. Other plants, as they were encountered, included: coast live and valley oaks, purple sage, California sagebrush, branching phacelia, blue elderberry, laurel sumac, Mediterranean and black mustards, cliff aster, Santa Barbara locoweed, milk, yellow star and Italian thistles, encrypt, wild cucumber, deerweed, tree tobacco, bush mallow, common fiddleneck, California buckwheat, blue dicks, elegant clarkia, purple nightshade, datura, bush monkey flower, red-stem filagree, California everlasting, arroyo lupine, owls clovers, bush sunflower, and wishbone bush. No federally endangered or threatened nor California endangered or rare species were noted.

**Animal Life:** Animals that may be encountered along the trail include:, birds, such as turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, great-horned owls, common crows, common ravens, California quail, golden eagles (only one seen in the Simi Valley area at this time), mourning doves, scrub jays, California towhees, and white crowned sparrows - among many others;

reptiles, such as Great Basin fence and alligator lizards, southern Pacific rattlesnakes, San Diego gopher snakes, common king snake; and mammals, such as mountain lions, bobcats, brush rabbits, desert cottontails, California ground squirrels, Botta's pocket gophers, voles, agile kangaroo rats, deer mice, dusky woodrats, coyotes, gray foxes, ringtail cats, southern California weasels, striped skunks, and mule deer. Certainly, there are several species of bats.

While mountain lions are present in the hills around Simi Valley, encounters are unlikely, but you should always be alert. It is best that you do not hike alone, and that you keep small children close at hand. Rattlesnakes may be encountered — Stay on the trail and avoid them when they are encountered — Be observant and never try to handle them. Do not handle any wildlife, including bats, even if they appear to be injured or sick. Remember, you are visitors to their homes.

**Mike Kuhn,  
Executive Chair,  
Rancho Simi Trail Blazers**

*Please see **Trail Safety Tips** at this trail's main page for more info.*