

Trails at Camp Whispering Oaks



Girls, leaders, and camp staff are invited to explore the camps owned and operated by Girl Scouts San Diego! The trails at Camps Winacka and Whispering Oaks are outstanding opportunities for camp orientation, physical activity, and nature learning. Leaders can pick up a map at camp, and look at the map online as they plan the days at camp. These trails are not open to the public. Camp trail information is posted at sdgirlscouts.org/camphikes. There are three trail guide documents: one for Camp Winacka, one for Whispering Oaks, and one for the two trails connecting the camps.

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Hiking at Camp

TRAIL TRAVEL. First explore camp on the trails that start at or near the units or Lodge. Some of the trails at camp are short, but are a long way away from the units. You need to add up the distances for each trail you will be walking, on to get your total distance. All distances and coordinates are approximate.

- Hiking with girls takes approximately double the time a walk the same distance would take at home or by yourself. Most adults have a 20 minute/mile pace. At camp, this same mile may take 40 minutes.
- Have one adult at the beginning and one adult at the end of your group to prevent losing stragglers. Always stay in sight of the person behind and ahead you. Do **not** let the strongest hiker set the pace; they will exhaust the others.
- Stop at trail intersections to make sure that everyone in the group makes the turn. When climbing over rocks or challenging surfaces, give the person behind you a hand once you've gotten up.
- Put those with asthma up front to decrease the likelihood of inhaling dust. If start sweating (or complaining) or get red faces, stop to remove clothing layers and to take a break.

TRAIL SAFETY. Sign out a walkie-talkie from the ranger while hiking to report emergencies. Phones will lose signal on **all** trails. Even if you don't think anything will happen, there have been fire-related evacuations in the past, at these camps, and though rare, you would want a walkie-talkie to learn about one.

Poison oak is common off the trail and away from the units. Stay on the trails, which are usually kept clear of poison oak by our Rangers. In the summer, plants have clusters of three shiny leaves; in the fall the leaves are bright red; and in the winter, there are no leaves but the stems still have the irritating oil that causes the rash.

Snakes live at camp, but they try to avoid us, so a sighting can be considered a privilege rather than something to fear. Watch where you put your hands (when climbing or picking up sticks), your feet (when walking), and your seat (when sitting). Stay on trails and out of tall grass, wear closed-toed shoes. If you see a snake, call out “Freeze!” and let the snake move off the trail or under the rock.

TRAIL GEAR. Always bring water and snack. Wear closed-toed shoes, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, and long-sleeved shirt. In colder weather, dress in layers.

Bring a first aid kit. Divide it up between the girls if one person doesn’t want to carry it all. Bring toilet paper and a baggie to put used paper, in case someone needs ‘to go’ and there are no toilets nearby.

TRAIL ACTIVITIES. Take time to “smell the sage,” feel the wind, hear the birds, and slow down. Leave all rocks, plants and flowers on the trail, so the next hiking group can enjoy this nature.

The trail guides provide ‘home prep keywords’. You can assign one to each girl before the trip. Have them report back on the trail when the topic comes up. This method of learning is called “The Jig-Saw Puzzle” and helps to involve everyone to create stronger memories and learning.

TRAIL MAP. Start by orienting the Camp Trails map. Walk to a road or an open area where you can see at least one of the units. Stand facing north—that is, with the sun at your right (east) in the morning, your back to the sun at noon, or with the sun at your left (west) in the evening. Hold the map with the North arrow in front of you. Look at the map and identify where you are standing. Pick a nearby unit on the map, predict where it will be from your current direction, and check that you can see the unit. Now choose a trail, start walking and follow the trails!

You can also orient the map with the roads and buildings. Try this. Stand on the porch at the lodge and hold the map flat in front of you. Turn the map so that the direction of the playfield is the same as the playfield marked on the map. Now the map is oriented. Look to the left side and below the porch. What unit is this? (Engelman Oak)

If you have a compass, hold the compass on the map so that the painted arrow on the compass aligns with the north arrow at the lower left corner of the map. Now turn your body until the red part of the movable arrow in the compass aligns with the painted north arrow on the compass. Now your map is correctly oriented.

You may want to repeat this at trail intersections. You can match the direction of the trail(s) or any linear feature with map. When you come to a road or trail, you can match the real direction with the map direction to choose which direction to turn or which trail to take.

Troops need to contact Council, if they want to visit either camp for a “day hike.” To correct these trail guides, which are prepared by volunteers, **contact** gchiker@san.rr.com. We appreciate your help to continually improve the ways that girls and adults can enjoy the trails and nature at camp.

See also detailed hiking instructions from Girl Scouts.org:

http://www.sdgirlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-sdgirlscouts/documents/volunteer/Training/safety-activity-checkpoints/TR-1519W_Hiking_SAC.pdf

Chaparral Trail (CHT)

Distance in Miles	Approximate Time	Difficulty	Attributes	Approximate GPS Coordinates Start/End	Altitude in Ft. Start/End
0.6 miles each way	30 min. each way	Beginner	This trail is a wide jeep trail around the south edge of Whispering Oaks. It acts as a fire break.	N 33'2.173 W116'37.606 N33'2.188 W16'37.849	At parking lot 4069' At service road 3987'

Home Prep Keywords: Chaparral, Regrowth after wildfire, White sage

Most Common Starting Point: L Corner of Whispering Oaks Parking Lot on the unpaved service road.

Hiking Safety: Have one adult at the beginning and one adult at the end. Put those with asthma up front to decrease the likelihood of inhaling dust. Do **not** let the strongest hiker set the pace; they will exhaust the others. When climbing over rocks or challenging surfaces give the person behind you a hand once you've gotten up. Always stay in sight of the person behind and ahead. Always bring water and snack. Phones will lose signal on all trails. Sign out a walkie-talkie from the ranger while hiking to report emergencies.

Description:

Start at the L hand corner of the WO parking lot on what looks like an unpaved service road.

Go up this service road. Stay L at the fork. There is a broken tree and Inspiration Trail to Tent Site 1 to R. Keep going straight instead.

At about ¼ mile take the next R up the hill. There are burnt tree stumps at the base of this turn and chaparral (little bushes) trying to take over the trail.

Trail activity: Look at the shrubs and other plants in the Chaparral habitat. These plants are adapted to our local climate of summer drought and mild, wet winters. They resprout and reseed after wildfires, which would naturally burn only every 30 to 100 years.

Cross over the rocks in the middle of the trail. Look up and you can see the observatory that is part of the Inspiration Point trail. You will go past a tree that has fallen across the trail.

Trail activity: Notice the little oak trees growing back from burned stumps. Talk about the cleansing effect of fire, and notice both the damage and the beautiful regrowth. Notice the white sage plants used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes.

There is another false trail to the R. Stay on the service road climbing gently uphill.

When it forks, you can choose to go R to see Observation Plateau which is part of Inspiration Point trail, or continue on Chaparral trail straight ahead.

You will go downhill for a short distance and land at the 4 corners on the gravel service road. A R will bring you back to camp.

Trail activity: Chocolate pond visible across the service road is a good place to look for wildlife tracks (footprints) after a rain. Elevation 4001

If starting at the other end note: More difficult in this direction due to climb from the gravel service road to the top of the hill.

Dehr Creek (DCT)

Distance in Miles	Approximate time	Difficulty	Attributes	Approximate GPS Coordinates Start/End	Altitude in Ft. Start/End
0.96 miles total	1-2 hrs. total	Moderate to Advanced	Uphill, rocky, long, loop trail	W33'02.127 N116'37.962	3917

Home Prep Keywords: Manzanita, Live Oak, Black Oak,

Starting Point: Whispering Oaks Service Road near High Ropes.

Hiking Safety: Have one adult at the beginning and one adult at the end. Put those with asthma up front to decrease the likelihood of inhaling dust. Do **not** let the strongest hiker set the pace; they will exhaust the others. When climbing over rocks or challenging surfaces give the person behind you a hand once you've gotten up. Always stay in sight of the person behind and ahead. Always bring water and snack. Phones will lose signal on all trails. Sign out a walkie-talkie from the ranger while hiking to report emergencies.

There are definitely spots in this trail where you might need to give a hand-up to someone behind you.

Description:

This trail was mapped by GS Troop 5119. There are 22 planned stops. Their work should be available on a nail in laminated copies. If you do not do the stops the trail is about 1 hour. If you do the stops it will take approximately double the time, but is very inspiring.

Most of the trail signs burned down in the Cedar Fire in 2003, and the vegetation has regrown. We are looking for a troop (or volunteers) that might want to redo the work of making and placing the trail signs.

This is the only true loop trail in the two Girl Scout camps. Other trails can be linked to make a loop, but this one starts and ends at the same place and moves in a large circle.

This trail is NOT advised for brownies or hikers who cannot follow directions.

There are steep areas with no guardrails.

Trail Activity: Talk about the safety of loop trails because you cannot get lost. Talk about the difference between point-to-point trails where you see the same scenery twice but in different directions vs. loop trails where you see everything only once. The first time you do a loop trail it seems longer because you don't know where you are going. With point-to-point the way home seems faster because you know what to expect. Which do you prefer?

Camp History Note: When starting to the R side of the loop, 0.7 miles into the trip you will come across a space where there is no evidence of it, but in 1966 a movie was filmed here called "Texas Across the River". Prepare for this trail by trying to find evidence of the movie prior to hiking. Imagine being a movie star and coming to this site to do the filming.

Hobbit's Turn Trail (HTT)

Distance in Miles	Approximate time	Difficulty	Attributes	Approximate GPS Coordinates Start/End	Altitude in Ft. Start/End
0.3 miles	15 minutes	M uphill B from other direction	Uphill from WWT Steep downhill from Coulter	N33'02.172 W 116'37.973 N33'02.409 W116'37.969	WWT Intersection 3923 Coulter intersect: 4072

Home Prep Keywords: Book: The Hobbit, Movie: Trilogy, Hobbit(s), Uphill/downhill hiking, Hiking songs

Common Starting Point: End of WWT trail on the WO property service road.

Hiking Safety: Have one adult at the beginning and one adult at the end. Put those with asthma up front to decrease the likelihood of inhaling dust. Do **not** let the strongest hiker set the pace; they will exhaust the others. When climbing over rocks or challenging surfaces give the person behind you a hand once you've gotten up. Always stay in sight of the person behind and ahead. Always bring water and snack. Phones will lose signal on all trails. Sign out a walkie-talkie from the ranger while hiking to report emergencies.

Description:

To get to the trail head start at the end of WWT trail on the WO property service road. End of WWT: N33'02.196 W116'37.895 Go down the stairs and follow WWT until you get to a 4 way stop. It takes about 5 minutes to get to the trail head. Take a R to start the trail. This is a short connecting trail.

Go uphill along the rocky trail. At the end you will intersect Coulter Trail. L will take you to Archery and Winacka, R will take you to the Whispering Oaks ball field.

Trail Activity:

Prepare for using this trail at home by looking up the term Hobbit so you can talk about it (and the series of children's book series "Lord of the Rings" from "The Trilogy" on the trail.

Trail Activity: Count the number of different types of rocks you can find while walking up the trail.

Trail Activity: Notice the difference when you try to walk straight up hill vs. walking in a zigzag pattern.

Trail Activity: Can you walk and sing a camp song while hiking uphill? If not, slow down your pace or walk zigzag. If anyone stops singing, consider slowing the group down.

If starting at the other end note: It is straight downhill and faster.

Trail activity: Notice how much more steady you are walking zigzag vs. straight downhill.

Inspiration Point Trail (IPT)

Distance in Miles	Approximate time	Difficulty	Attributes	Approximate GPS Coordinates Start/End	Altitude in Ft. Start/End
0.62 miles	45 min.	Beginner	Short, some uphill	N33' 2.199 W116' 37.742 N33'2.173 W116'37.606	Circle 4009 ft CHT intersect 4069 ft

Home Prep Keywords: Scouts Own, false trail signs, night vision, season-appropriate constellations (search by the date you are hiking).

Note: The white domed building contains a telescope often used during summer camp. If you are a skilled astronomer, contact Girl Scouts San Diego to ask about using Observatory equipment.

Most Common Starting Point: Start at the circle in the Whispering Oaks service road, just west of Live Oak unit.

Hiking Safety: Have one adult at the beginning and one adult at the end. Always stay in sight of the person behind and ahead. Do **not** let the strongest hiker set the pace; they will exhaust the others. When climbing over rocks or challenging surfaces give the person behind you a hand once you've gotten up. Always bring water and snack. Phones will lose signal on all trails. Sign out a walkie-talkie from the ranger while hiking to report emergencies.

Description:

It is ¼ mile uphill to Inspiration Point, from the circle. The trail is narrow and a little rocky. At the top there are beautiful views of the surrounding mountains.

Once at the Inspiration Point look to the L to find the rest of the trail. Where it forks, the left fork is a false trail. There may be rocks in a straight line or branches to signify a false trail.

Trail Activity: If the false trail signs have been moved, you can teach the girls how to do this to warn other campers in the future. Rocks or branches work equally well.

Go downhill. The trail curves to the L. You may come across a fallen tree. If it is still there, crawl under it. Look at the surrounding shrubs; do you see evidence of fire damage such as blackened tree stumps and branches?

Soon you will come out to a clearing that is a tent site. At this point you have come ½ miles. To the far right of the clearing there is another stargazing point and platforms. This can also be used for role-playing or skit performing. Deer often frequent this tent site and if you tent camp here, you might hear them walking through in the early morning.

There are two ways out of the clearing. Look for the water fountain. Now gaze right. The map takes you out on this very wide trail near the shepherd stove. The trail curves to the left, intersects with the start of Chaparral Trail, and then continues to curve left to end in the Whispering Oaks parking lot. Another option (not on the map) is to go straight ahead to a little connecting path edged by rail road ties. In 0.15 miles you will get to the end of the parking lot.

If starting at the other end note: When walking from the end of the trail that comes off Chaparral Trail you will get to the tent site and have to look for the trail marker behind the big tree. You will notice the edged pathway out to the program decks. A little farther clockwise around the tent site will reveal the trail marker that was hidden from view.

Girl Scout program suggestions on Inspiration Trail:

Discovery Hike: Use your senses to explore a new place. **Walk** uphill on the trail. This trail goes uphill through a **chaparral ecosystem** with manzanita shrubs and some undergrowth.

Manzanita. *Large shrub that has smooth dull red bark and grey-green leaves. Manzanita means “little apple” in Spanish. It is one of the best food sources for birds and animals in this habitat.*

Stop at Inspiration Point. Look around and enjoy the view.

Look for the three mountain peaks to the south. From the left, they are North Peak (5,993 ft), on the Cleveland National Forest and named because it is north of the others; Middle Peak (5,883 ft), named because it’s in the middle; and Cuyamaca Peak (6,512 ft). Middle and Cuyamaca Peaks are both in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.

If there are clouds in the sky, can you tell which way the wind is blowing by watching them? If you can see big birds soaring in the sky, what are they looking for? What do you see, smell, hear, feel?

Invite girls to stand in the wind, close their eyes, and move their bodies. Read this slowly.

Pretend you are a hawk in the sky. Flap your wings twice and then glide on the wind currents, glide some more, flap your wings, glide, glide. Now you see a mouse in the field and swoop down to pick it up with your strong beak. Flap, flap, gliiiiiide. Flap, flap, gliiiiiide.

Now stand up and you are a blade of grass. Keep your feet together and don’t move them. The wind blows your body to one side, then another, round and round.

Stand straight and you are a tree with deep roots. The wind blows but you don’t move.

Now dance with the wind by creating a dance with another girl. One pretends to be the wind, the other girl is an eagle flying in the wind. Now trade places, the wind becomes the eagle.

Scouts Own. Inspiration point at the top of the hill is a good place for a Scout’s own traditionally done Sunday morning after breakfast. Have the girls make two lines at the beginning of the hike and raise their arms, clasping each other’s hands to make a human bridge. The two at the bottom go through the bridge of arms, and then next follow, and so on until everyone is through the bridge. Prepare the girls that they should be completely silent after they go through the bridge and hike the short distance to the top of the hill.

When they come upon the clearing they should find a quiet place to reflect on the weekend. After 5 minutes (or until they can’t be quiet any longer) form a circle holding hands and have them reflect verbally on their favorite experiences, sights, sounds, smells, foods, activities.

Stargazing: Inspiration point (the plateau) is the perfect place for stargazing. Have the girls form a circle and turn off the flashlights. Lay down and stretch out arms and hold hands lying down if you’d like. Holding hands might bring comfort to those who aren’t use to the darkness. Explain how the eyes will get used to the dark. Ask them to let you know when their eyes have adjusted. Talk about the stars. Make up stories about the formations or spot true formations if you have the skill. Prepare for the activity in advance by looking up the formations that might be visible given the date of your camping weekend. When you reach the Inspiration Point observation plateau, some troops turn around and go back on the same path.