





FISH CREEK MEADOW

- Hike Length:** 5 miles round trip; 650' elevation gain
Difficulty: Easy
Season: June–October
Topo map: *Moonridge (7.5'), San Gorgonio Wilderness (Tom Harrison)*
Permit: San Gorgonio Wilderness Permit required

Features

Fish Creek rises high on the massive slopes of Grinnell Mountain and Ten Thousand Foot Ridge, and cuts a deep swath before joining the Santa Ana River 2 miles east of Barton Flats. This all-year stream is shaded most of the way by a mixed forest of conifers and the largest grove of aspens in the San Bernardino Mountains. Verdant grasses carpet the creekside, particularly at Lower Fish Creek Meadow, an oval clearing where the canyon elbows from northeast to northwest.

This pleasant streamside trip follows the canyon through its middle reaches, where aspens quake in the cool mountain breeze and monkey flowers add a dash of color in early summer. In early autumn, the aspen leaves turn a brilliant golden yellow, in sharp contrast with the surrounding forest.

Description

From Redlands drive east on State Highway 38 to the entrance road to Heart Bar Campground and Fish Creek (1N02) just past the 038 SBD 33.48 mileage marker. Turn right on 1N02, passing the campground entrance to a junction in 1.3 miles. Go right, up 1N05, a fair dirt road, to the signed ASPEN GROVE TRAIL parking area, 2.7 miles from the highway (**GPS SB36**).

Follow the old dirt road that leads southeast down to Fish Creek, 250 yards. You cross the creek and immediately reach the San Gorgonio Wilderness boundary. There are a few aspens here, but to see more of these lovely trees, take the side trail that goes right (northwest) 0.5 mile to Aspen Grove. The main trail passes the wilderness boundary sign and follows a sloping bench paralleling the creek on its west side. You climb gently through a beautiful forest of white fir, interspaced here and there with tall Jeffrey pines and incense-cedar. You pass the small clearing known as Monkey Flower Flat, then climb over a low ridge before dropping down to the creek. In 1.5 miles your trail crosses Fish Creek to the east bank and, 0.75 mile beyond, reaches the grassy clearing of Lower Fish Creek Meadow and a junction with the Upper Fish Creek Trail (see Hike 37).

Return the same way. An option, requiring a car shuttle, is to go left at the junction to the Upper Fish Creek road-head, 0.3 mile (Hike 37).



FISH CREEK

- Hike Length:** 11 miles round trip; 1900' elevation gain
Difficulty: Moderate
Season: June–October
Topo maps: *Moonridge, San Gorgonio Mtn. (both 7.5'), San Gorgonio Wilderness (Tom Harrison)*
Permit: San Gorgonio Wilderness Permit required

Features

This trip enters the “back door” of the San Gorgonio Wilderness, climbing up Fish Creek and over Fish Creek Divide into the northeastern corner of the wild area. Because driving access is difficult, few hikers use this route. But the forest of pine and fir is rich and green, the waters of Fish Creek are cold and sweet, and the high mountain air is thin and invigorating. For those who wish to linger awhile in upper Fish Creek, there is Fish Creek Trail Camp, with primitive facilities. With a car shuttle, many enjoyable options are available (see below).

Description

From Redlands drive east on State Highway 38 to the entrance road to Heart Bar Campground and Fish Creek (1N02) just past the 038 SBD 33.48 mileage marker. Turn right on 1N02, passing the campground entrance (on your right in 0.2 mile), to a junction in 1.3 miles. Go right, up the fair dirt road 1N05, bearing right at all road forks, to the signed Fish Creek Trail (1W07) parking area, 7.8 miles from the highway (**GPS SB37**).

Walk westward for 0.6 mile on the well-defined trail (avoiding several other less defined paths that lead in other directions), gradually descending, to a new junction with the upper terminus of the Aspen Grove Trail, to your right (see Hike 36). Continue straight ahead as your trail curves southwest into upper Fish Creek. Down to your right, as you near the creek, is a small, inviting trail camp shaded by Jeffrey pine and white fir. The trail then passes through an area of verdant growth, crosses two small side creeks, and climbs along the left (southeast) slope above the main creek, through a rich forest of Jeffrey pine and white fir. After several switchbacks to gain elevation, the pathway contours over into the main draw and reaches Fish Creek Trail Camp, 1.25 miles. The camp consists of several cleared flats amid rocky terrain, shaded by white fir. Water flows year-round in the stream just west of camp.

Beyond the camp, the trail starts climbing the broad slopes of Grinnell Mountain. As it rises above 9000', the view opens to the north and east, over the rugged east-end country of the San Bernardinians and out into the desert.