

# Figueroa Mountain Recreation Area

## Santa Lucia Ranger District

### Los Padres National Forest



The Figueroa Mountain Recreation Area lies thirty minutes north of Los Olivos and can be reached by the Figueroa Mountain Road or Happy Canyon Road. Both roads are paved, but not recommended for large trailers. Happy Canyon Road is occasionally closed in the winter due to earthslides. Most of this recreation area is covered by heavy chaparral. Large big cone Douglas fir, ponderosa pine and Jeffrey pine occur at the higher elevations on Figueroa and Ranger Peaks. Blue oak and impressive gray pine occur throughout the lower elevations. Fir Canyon, Davy Brown and Manzana Creeks all have water, and the attraction associated with lush vegetation and diverse wildlife. The Figueroa area is a fascinating place where recreation opportunities vary with the seasons.

**Winter** months can find occasional snow during January and February when winter storms sweep through. The snow seldom lasts for more than a few days except on shaded slopes in the pines where it tends to last a while longer. The Figueroa Mountain Lookout, Catway and Zaca Ridge Roads are frequently closed to vehicle use during rain periods to protect the dirt roads.

**Springtime** on Figueroa is a season of fantastic flower displays. Late March brings out the early blooming specimens such as purple shooting stars and filaree. Later arrivals on the mountain include blue lupines, chocolate lilies, golden poppies and the scarlet indian paintbrush. Fishing occurs from March to mid-May in Davy Brown Creek below Davy Brown Campground and in Manzana Creek. Fishing in these creeks is catch and release only.

**Summertime** in the Figueroa area finds many visitors seeking the cool shelter of tall pines and fir at the higher elevations. The cool waters of Davy Brown Creek and Manzana Creek are attractive to young and old alike, seeking relief from the hot summer sun. Small gnats can be a nuisance at times, so bring your insect repellent.

**Fall months**, September-November, frequently have some of the most pleasant weather, and fewest visitors of the year. The fall, Indian summers are a favorite time to camp in tranquility, especially midweek at any of the sites.

#### PICNIC AREAS:

There are four picnic areas on Figueroa Mountain which are open 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily, they are:

**Cumbre** located among the pines high on Figueroa Mountain.

**Catway** on the Catway Road overlooking the Santa Ynez Valley.

**Figueroa Lookout** site is situated atop Figueroa Mountain adjacent to the fire lookout and offers a panoramic view of the San Rafael Wilderness.

**Pino Alto** picnic area is among the pine and fir atop Figueroa Mountain and it will accommodate persons with disabilities. This picnic area includes a paved interpretive trail suitable for wheelchair use. The trail is one-half mile and takes 30 to 45 minutes to traverse. Interpretive brochures are available at the Santa Lucia Ranger District office or by mail.

#### CAMPING:

There are four family campgrounds in the Figueroa Mountain

area that you can drive to, and one trail camp:

**Figueroa** has 33 sites and is located in a stand of pine and large Manzanita. It is open all year and offers a good view of the valley. The campground is close to a number of hiking trails and is the only one in the area with piped-in water.

**Davy Brown** has 13 sites and is open all year. Davy Brown is close to a number of hiking trails and an adjacent creek usually flows throughout the summer.

**Nira** has 12 sites and is open all year. Manzana Creek flows adjacent to the campground and flows throughout most of the year. Nira is at the end of the road and is the starting point for backpackers and equestrians visiting the San Rafael Wilderness, where the only ways to travel are by foot or horseback.

**Cachuma** has 7 sites and is open all year. Cachuma is set among large oaks in a narrow, shaded, canyon with a creek that flows part of the year.

**Ballard** trail camp, located on the La Jolla trail, is accessible by foot, horseback or mountain bike and contains two sites. Water is available at a nearby spring. Always purify water from streams.

#### THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Certain regulations apply to Figueroa Mountain that do not apply to the general Forest.

- The area is open to overnight camping only in the designated campgrounds.
- During fire season, generally May 1 to November 15, campfires are allowed **only in designated campground fire rings**.
- There is no shooting allowed in the Figueroa Lookout, Figueroa campgrounds, Pino Alto, Cumbre and Catway picnic areas.
- Vehicle travel off the designated road system is strictly prohibited.

#### HIKING & RIDING TRAILS:

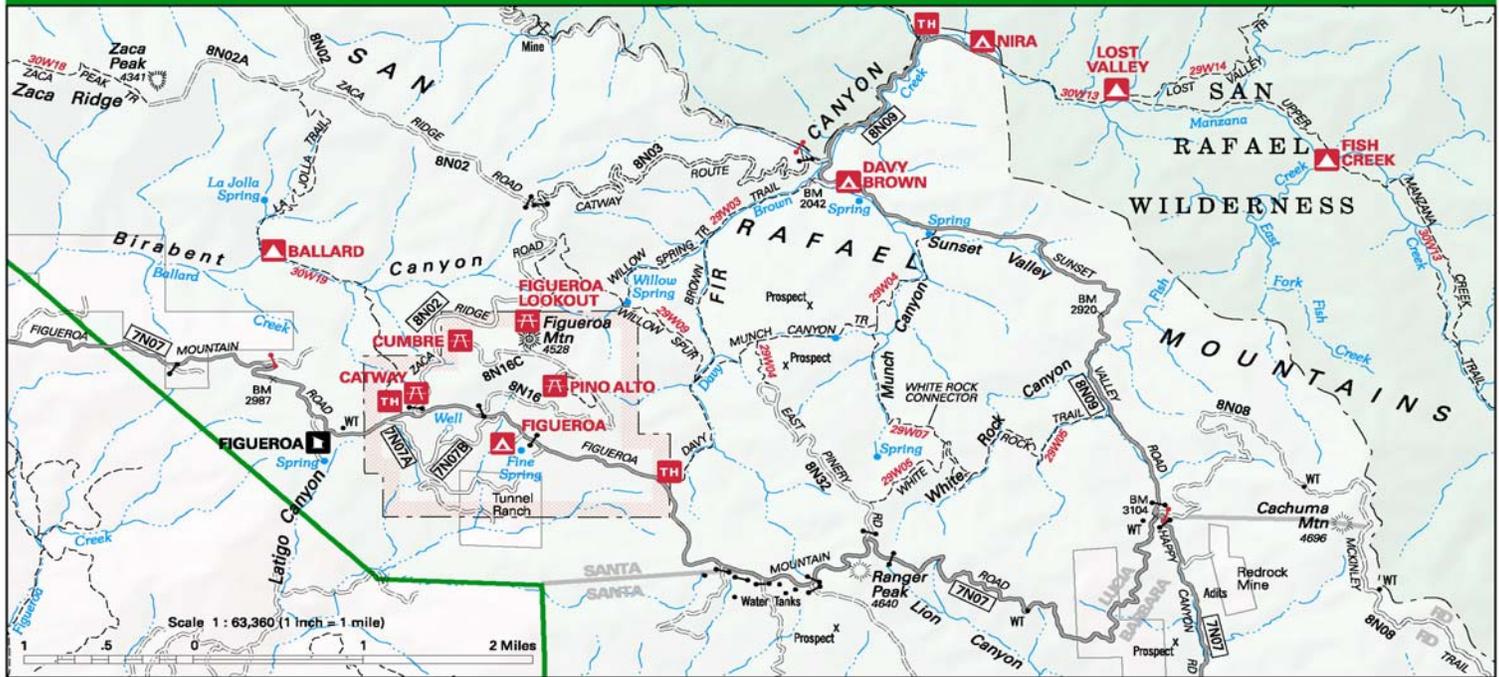
The Figueroa area trails offer an interesting variety of opportunities to explore this part of the Los Padres National Forest.

1. **Zaca Peak Trail** (2.5 miles) follows a ridgetop west from the Zaca Peak Road. The west end of the trail drops down to the privately-owned Zaca Lake Resort. Unobstructed views of the Santa Ynez Valley and Zaca Lake basin are found along this route. Trail not regularly maintained.

2. **Sulphur Springs Trail** (4 miles) is a very steep trail and takes you from Cedros Saddle, north to Manzana Creek and the San Rafael Wilderness. The trail drops 2,100 feet in elevation as it passes through oak woodlands and areas of pine. There is a spring about midway from Cedros Saddle to Manzana Creek. From Cedros Saddle, the trail also goes south two miles to Zaca Lake, a privately-owned lake and resort. Trail not regularly maintained.

3. **La Jolla Trail** (Ballard) (5 miles) is a steep trail that goes into a canyon bottom where a spring feeds a nice, cold stream. When you get to the bottom, you'll find the remains of an old CCC cabin. Ballard trail camp is in the canyon bottom. An easy hike

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down, but hard work coming back. This trail is most popular in fall and spring. Summer finds the exposed hillsides not very inviting.

4. **Catway OHV Route** (2.5 miles) is open to 4-wheel drive vehicles and motorcycles except during wet soil conditions in the winter. This route serves as a 4-wheel drive connector between Catway Road and Sunset Valley Road. The road is narrow, so allow plenty of time to enjoy the drive.

5. **Willow Springs** (2 miles) is a two mile connector between the Catway Road and lower Davy Brown Trail.

6. **Willow Spur** (1 mile) is a short connector between Willow Springs Trail and upper Davy Brown Trail.

7. **Davy Brown Trail** (3 miles) is a steep trail that follows a creek the length of Fir Canyon. There is an old mine shaft and remnants of a miners cabin along the way. You can take this trail downhill from Figueroa Mountain Road to Davy Brown Campground and have someone pick you up or hike uphill from Davy Brown. The trail winds its way through large big cone Douglas fir, pine and sycamore. It is always shaded, making for a great summer hike.

8. **Munch Canyon Trail** (3.5 miles) was originally constructed as a mining access road. Evidence of old mine excavations can be found along the route. This trail connects Sunset Valley to the Davy Brown Trail in Fir Canyon. A short spur connects to the East Pinery Road.

9. **White Rock Trail** (2 miles) This trail takes you through some nice meadows, while winding along a route from East Pinery to north of Cachuma Saddle. You will pass by an old mine where chrome ore was once extracted. Trail not regularly maintained.

10. **McKinley Trail** (10 miles) is an administrative access road from Cachuma Saddle to a saddle west of McKinley Mountain. From this point, the trail continues east into the San Rafael Wilderness. Most of the route follows the southern edge of the

San Rafael Wilderness. The ridgetop location offers panoramic views of the Manzana drainage and Hurricane Deck to the north, and the Santa Ynez drainage to the south. The only reliable water is at McKinley Spring Trail Camp nine miles from Cachuma Saddle. Trail not regularly maintained.

\*11. **Upper Manzana Creek Trail** (14 miles) goes east up Manzana Creek from Nira Campground. This trail is a major access route into the San Rafael Wilderness and connects with other Wilderness trails. Manzana and Manzana Narrows are popular trail camps accessed by this route. They are six and seven miles from Nira. The trail continues onto South Fork Station and the Sisquoc Trail. The cool water with resident trout makes these trail camps popular destination points during spring and early summer. Winter storms frequently create high water crossing problems and can strand campers. Summertime heat can make this hike difficult.

\*12. **Lost Valley Trail** (7 miles) leaves the Manzana Trail about one mile above Nira. This route was originally constructed for fire access and climbs gently from Manzana Creek to Hurricane Deck. The gentle gradient and no major stream crossing makes this an easier trail. Stretch your legs and cover some distance. Trail not regularly maintained.

\*13. **Lower Manzana Creek Trail** (8 miles) follows Manzana Creek northwest eight miles to the Sisquoc River. At the junction of these two water ways is the historic Manzana Schoolhouse and the popular Manzana Schoolhouse Trail Camp. This trail is well suited for day hikes or as an access to other parts of the San Rafael Wilderness in the Lower Sisquoc.

14. **Sunset Valley Trail** (2 miles) parallels the Sunset Valley Road. The trail meanders through oaks, pine and chaparral.

\*These trails are in the San Rafael Wilderness and are closed to motor vehicles, motorized equipment, and bicycles.

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