

# Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage Hiking Guide



PALM DESERT



## Art Smith Trail

- Distance 8.3 miles
- Elevation gain 1,465 feet
- Difficulty Strenuous
- Dogs Prohibited

From Highway 111, travel South on Highway 74, for 4 miles, a parking lot is located on the righthand side just past the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center. If this parking lot is full overflow parking is along highway 74. Please use with caution.

Named for the longtime trail boss of the Desert Riders equestrian club, the Art Smith Trail starts at Highway 74 near the Visitor Center. More than 1,400 feet is gained in 8.3 miles, where the trail intersects with Dunn Road, but don't expect to be picked up here as the road is closed to vehicle traffic and should not be considered a shuttle site. To travel another 8 miles to Palm Springs, pick up the Hahn Buena Vista Trail followed by the Wild Horse and Garstin Trails. Or descend to Cathedral City by way of Dunn Road and Cathedral Canyon Trail, sequentially. The Hopalong Cassidy Trail junction is 1.5 miles from the Art Smith Trailhead – take the Hopalong Cassidy and you'll climb and descend again and again along the entire 8.3 mile route taking

you through gorgeous desert landscapes of the Santa Rosa Mountains and that will at last descend downhill leading to the city of Palm Desert.

The Art Smith Trail is truly one of the signature trails in the National Monument, offering stunning views across the Coachella Valley to the Little San Bernardino Mountains and Joshua Tree National Park, and over the bustling cities of Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage. Hikers escape the sights and sounds of the urban area as the trail climbs through hidden canyons and sporadic lush desert fan palm oases. Although the oases beckon, stick close to the trail to avoid disturbing desert animals that depend on these vital habitats. Peninsular Desert Bighorn Sheep sightings are popular along the trail, so keep your wildlife eye on the lookout. Be sure to take sufficient amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.

## Bighorn overlook

- Distance 0.6 miles
- Elevation gain 145 feet
- Difficulty Easy
- Dogs Allowed

To reach the trailhead, from Highway 111 turn west onto Frank Sinatra Drive. Next, go left into Rancho Mirage City Hall parking lot, continue to the upper lot. This brief hike with several switchbacks provides an incredible panoramic view and sheltered picnic table for a nice resting place. Your hike can be extended just past the picnic table where the Bighorn Overlook Trail connects with Jack Rabbit Trail. Once you hit the Jack Rabbit trail if you veer left the trail will take you to the Richard & Annette Bloch Cancer Survivors Park located along Highway 111, head West on Highway 111 for an easy return to Rancho Mirage City Hall. For an extended hike from the Jack Rabbit Trail junction go south to Frank Sinatra Drive. Turn right onto Frank Sinatra Drive to descend to the Rancho Mirage City Hall.

## Bump and Grind Trail

- Distance 1.1 miles
- Elevation gain 523 feet
- Difficulty Moderate
- Dogs Prohibited

The trail can be accessed from the Mike Schuler trailhead on Painters Path. From highway 111 travel South on Fred Waring Drive and make a left on Painters Path. Parking is available on either side of the street. This has been heralded as the most popular low elevation trail in the National Monument, frequented by exercisers looking to raise their heart rates. A loop opportunity is accessible by beginning at the Hopalong Cassidy/Mike Schuler Trailhead, follow the "Hoppy" to the Herb Jeffries to the Bump and Grind, then return to your starting point via the Mike Schuler Trail. This yields a loop of about 3 miles. Going the other way, however, avoids climbing the steep Herb Jeffries Trail, instead challenging your knees on the descent. Be sure to take a good amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.

## Chuckwalla trail (loop)

- Distance 2.2 miles
- Elevation gain 352 feet
- Difficulty Easy
- Dogs Allowed

To reach the trailhead, from Highway 111 turn west onto Frank Sinatra Drive. Next, go left into Rancho Mirage City Hall. Park in the City Hall parking lot. The Roadrunner trailhead is located across Frank Sinatra Drive. The Chuckwalla trail branches off the Roadrunner trail in .3 miles from trailhead and loops back around the Mirada Villas ending on the east side of Frank Sinatra Drive. This trail is etched out of the hillside offering great views making this a trail favorite of trail runners and mountain bikers. This is a dog friendly trail just remember to bring a leash and water for your pup and yourself.

## Ed Hasteley garden trail

- Distance .2 miles
- Elevation gain 0 feet
- Difficulty easy
- Dogs Prohibited

The Ed Hasteley garden trail is located at the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center. Make sure to pick up an Ed Hasteley garden trail guide in the Visitor Center that offers more information about the flora along the trail. This brochure will assist you in identifying several plants within view of the numbered posts. The trail begins outside the front entrance of the Visitor Center and takes you along a paved path for .2 miles. The

garden trail offers typical plants found throughout the Colorado desert and within the Monument. Several benches sit along the trail for a chance to pause and take in the sights of the flora and fauna.

## Eisenhower loop trail

- Distance 5.1 miles
- Elevation gain 689 feet
- Difficulty Moderate
- Dogs Prohibited

**Admission purchase is required at The Living Desert.** The Living Desert provides a map upon entrance that gives directions to the Nature trails and The San Andreas fault exhibit. Additionally there are signs showing the way to the nature trailhead. There are 3 trail opportunities offered. The wilderness trail is a 5-mile loop. It walks you through sandy dry washes, climbing up rocky desert mountain terrain and boulder hopping your way across the canyon. This trail loop is a great opportunity for wildlife viewing and offers gorgeous vistas of the Coachella Valley. This wilderness loop will return you to the living desert. There are also two shorter loops available on the Eisenhower loop. The Discovery loop is .5 miles taking a flat sandy stroll through desert woodland. The adventure loop is 1.5 miles through a hilly desert wash and climbs to an interpretive exhibit of the San Andreas fault and expansive views of the valley floor. These hikes are a great way to step into the natural habitat that many of the animals at the zoo are native to.

**Trails open: October 1 – May 31, trailhead gate closes at 4pm.**

## Gabby Hayes

- Distance .3 miles
- Elevation gain 164 feet
- Difficulty Easy
- Dogs Allowed

The trailhead is located at the Cahuilla Hills Park in Palm Desert. From Highway 111 travel South of El Paseo, turn right onto Painters Path, then turn left on Edgehill Drive and this road will lead to Cahuilla Hills Park. You can find parking located across from the Desert Cities

Baptist Church located across from the park. This is a short hike, only .3 miles but has connecting trail loop opportunities. At .3 miles the trail forks at the Hopalong Cassidy trail, at the fork stay to your right, (Dogs prohibited past this point). Hike on Hopalong Cassidy for 1.3 miles till you connect with the Herb Jeffries trail, go right on the Herb Jefferies and you will hike along the mountain ridge till descending back down to Cahuilla Hills Park. This is a 2.3 mile loop that traverses through desert mountain landscape and elevates to a mountain ridge with some elevation gain and great views of the valley below. Another hiking option is to veer left at the Hopalong Cassidy trail and follow the “Hoppy” trail to reach the cross, which is a popular destination hike and exercisers looking for a cardio workout (four-legged hikers welcome on leash). Be sure to take a good amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.

## Herb Jefferies

- Distance .9 miles
- Elevation gain 613 feet
- Difficulty Strenuous
- Dogs Prohibited

The trailhead is accessed from the Cahuilla Hills Park. From highway 111 travel South of El Paseo, turn right onto Painters Path, then turn left on Edgehill Drive and this road will lead you to Cahuilla Hills Park. This trail is a dedication to the legendary Herb Jefferies, a film star in the era of popular western movies. Mr. Jefferies, a former Palm Desert resident, performed and spoke at the trail dedication in April 2005. This trail is a segment of connecting trails that make up a 3-mile loop. Beginning at the Hopalong Cassidy/Mike Schuler Trailhead, follow the “Hoppy” to the Herb Jeffries to the Bump and Grind, then return to your starting point via the Mike Schuler Trail. This yields a loop of about 3 miles. This trail area allows for some great cardio exercise with a steep elevation gain in a short amount of trail. The great views up top make the hike worth the trek. Be sure to take a good amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.

## Homestead trail

- Distance .5 miles
- Elevation gain 733 feet
- Difficulty Moderate
- Dogs Allowed

This trail is accessed from Homme-Adams Park. From Highway 111, travel 1.2 miles South on Highway 74. Turn right on Thrush Road, then travel 0.2 miles and cross the storm channel. Turn right and proceed to the trailhead parking area. This is a very popular trail for your furry friends challenging for both dog and hiker. There is a sheltered picnic table at the trailhead and a short distance up the trail offering a quick stop for an outdoor lunch break. In a half a mile the Homestead trail connects to the Hopalong Cassidy trail. The trail splits into a fork, if you veer left the Hopalong Cassidy trail continues up to a cross at the top of the mountain which is a great viewpoint. Once you reach the cross you will set your eyes on beautiful sights of the city below while taking in the mountain views of the gorgeous Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains. This trail has a good amount of elevation gain and is known by locals as a great spot to trail run. Be sure to take a good amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.

## Hopalong Cassidy Trail

- Distance 8.3 miles
- Elevation gain 1,345 feet
- Difficulty Strenuous
- Dogs Allowed from intersection of Gabby Hayes trail to cross. Prohibited on other segments

The trailhead is located on Painters Path behind the Desert crossing shopping center. From Highway 111 travel South of Fred Waring Drive and make a left on Painters Path. Parking is provided along the street. Hiking the Hopalong Cassidy Trail named for the famous movie cowboy of the 1940s and '50s – is like taking a low-level airplane flight over residential enclaves and golf courses in Palm Desert. In places the trail clings to the mountainside while it slices across the hillsides. Be warned: You'll have to earn the incredible panoramic views along this rollercoaster trail. This trail is a great workout for you and your pup. It has a popular destination point to a Cross on top of the mountain (at night it is illuminated). Past the cross you are in for a 5-mile hike (dogs prohibited on this segment) with no outlets so be sure to bring plenty of water. The trail offers many sites of different canyons, golf courses, switch backs and lots of desert flora and fauna. Big horn sheep are often spotted along the trail so keep your wildlife eye out.

Another optional route to the Hopalong Cassidy is to start at the Art Smith Trailhead – which requires a 1.5 mile jaunt before you reach the “Hoppy” – this trail offers views of Palm Desert below, meandering through beautiful canyons, hiking up switchbacks – you'll climb and descend again and again along the entire 8.3-mile route. Eventually leading you to the Cross

on top of the mountain. From this destination the Hopalong Cassidy trail will take you to Painters Path behind the Desert Crossing shopping center.

For shorter hikes on the Hopalong Cassidy Trail, access the trail via the Homestead Trail from Homme-Adams Park, the Gabby Hayes Trail from Cahuilla Hills Park, or the Herb Jeffries Trail near Fox Canyon just north of Cahuilla Hills Park. Once you are south of Homme-Adams Park, however, your only exit options are to turn around or go the distance.

## Mike Schuler

- Distance .6 miles
- Elevation gain 92 feet
- Difficulty Easy
- Dogs Prohibited

Mike Schuler trailhead can be found behind the Desert Crossing shopping center on Painters Path in Palm Desert. This is an easy out and back trail but you can add more of a challenge by completing the trail loop, beginning at the Hopalong Cassidy/Mike Schuler Trailhead, follow the “Hoppy” to the Herb Jeffries to the Bump and Grind, then return to your starting point via the Mike Schuler Trail. This yields a loop of about 3 miles. Going the other way, however, avoids climbing the steep Herb Jeffries Trail, instead challenging your knees on the descent. These trails offer steep inclines and steady downhills for a great workout. Be sure to take a good amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.

## Randall Henderson Trail (Loop)

- Distance 2.4 miles
- Elevation gain 423 feet
- Difficulty Easy
- Dogs Prohibited

The Randall Henderson trail is located at the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center off Highway 74. Travel South on Highway 74 from Highway 111 for approx. 4 miles, the trailhead parking lot will be on the left-hand side. Parking is available during Visitor Center operating hours, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (October-April) and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. (May-September). Stop in the Visitor Center prior to your hike for a Randall Henderson trail

guide. Check with Visitor Center staff for times and dates on guided hikes during the fall and winter months.

This easy trail offers a good introduction to desert hiking. This loop trail – named for a founder of Palm Desert – gently rises about 400 feet over its 2.4-mile route. Typical plants of the Colorado Desert, such as creosote bush and cholla cactus, adorn the trail as it meanders through small canyons and across low ridges. The trail guide offers an interpretive view of the plants which are identified on posts with the guide having numbered zones by dominate plant zones. Be sure to take a good amount of water and start your hike early in the day to avoid direct sunlight.