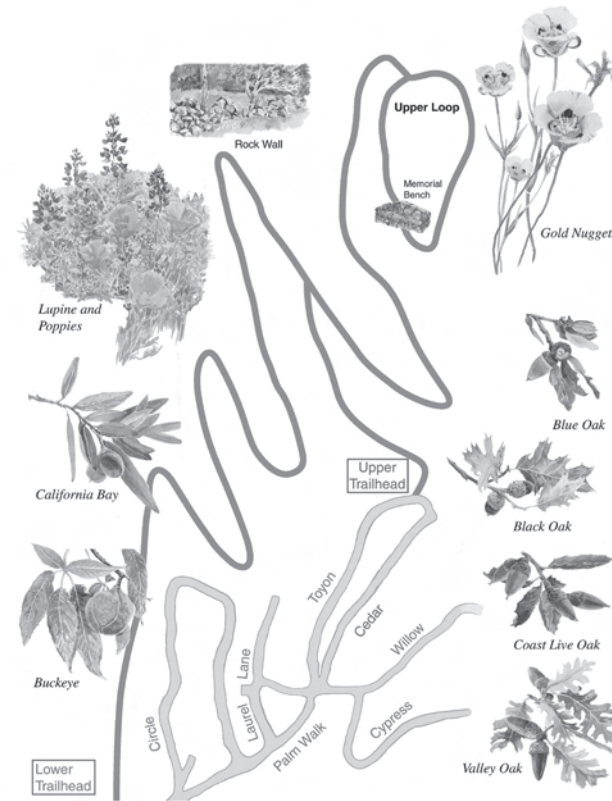


Welcome to Sonoma Overlook Trail

ENJOY OUR HERITAGE

Originally a hunting territory for Native Americans, the area over which Sonoma Overlook Trail now passes has served many other purposes. Arrowheads found in the area indicate the presence of the first permanent residents, members of the Muchi tribe, a sub-branch of the Coastal Miwoks. While living on the former Sonoma Mission site, these Native Americans used the hillside areas for hunting. By the mid-nineteenth century, the property had become part of the estate of General Mariano G. Vallejo, who gave the sloping portion of what was then called Battery Hill to the Pueblo de Sonoma for use as a community cemetery, a purpose it serves to this day.

In the 1890's Solomon Schocken purchased the upper, rockier portion of the hill to the east of Sonoma Overlook Trail and established a successful stone quarry. He provided stone used in the construction of several Sonoma buildings and in the rebuilding of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. From the basalt that was plentiful at the site, Schocken also fashioned cobblestones and paving blocks used on streets throughout the Bay Area. By the early 1920's, however, the popularity of the automobile had



so decreased the demand for those materials that the quarry was closed. In the years that followed, the abandoned hillside came to serve as a garbage dump, but was closed to that use in the 1950's. The city-owned property remained undeveloped, even somewhat neglected, for decades.

Then, in the 1990's, two groups became interested in the area: those who wanted to preserve it and those who wanted to develop it. The differing views on its best use aroused community interest. A vote of the citizenry strongly rejected any commercial development, and participation in subsequent community forums registered popular support for limited access to the property.

The Sonoma Ecology Center and the Community Services and Environment Commission became involved, and thanks to their efforts Sonoma Overlook Trail is now a reality. Grants from the State of California Integrated Waste Management Board, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the City of Sonoma funded the removal of debris from the dump, as well as restoration of the site.

The trail itself was financed by individuals, civic groups, and local businesses; it was built largely by volunteers. Today, a hike on the trail offers an opportunity for all Sonomans, their guests, and visitors to our city to experience the area and enjoy views comparable to those of the original inhabitants and early settlers of Sonoma Valley.



ENJOY SONOMA OVERLOOK TRAIL ...SAFELY!

As you travel this trail into a beautiful pocket of nature, please respect the area, other hikers, and the local inhabitants. The forces of nature prevail here. Honor them and you will have a great walk.

Stay on the designated trail. Cutting off of the trail causes erosion and damage to the hillside. Hiking on the established trail is safer for you, too, for you are less likely to encounter poison oak, deer ticks, rattlesnakes, or even a mountain lion.

This is a footpath only. Please leave pets, horses, and bicycles at home. The local plants and animals will be healthier, safer, and more visible when you treat this area gently.

Enjoy the views—safely! Watch your step. Wear sturdy shoes and comfortable clothing, preferably layered, to be prepared for changing weather conditions. Protect your head with a hat and your skin with sunscreen. And ALWAYS carry drinking water!

Wildfire danger is high here. Neither smoking nor fire building is permitted on the hillside.

Don't disturb local plants and animals. Leave wildflowers for others to enjoy. By not picking them, you allow them to finish their life cycles and produce seeds for next year. By not feeding wild animals you allow them to follow their natural instincts and to remain self-sufficient.

Don't litter! Leave the hillside as beautiful as it was when you arrived.



ENJOY THE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE



This Sonoma hillside is home to a large number of plants and animals native to California. Lower parts of the trail pass through mixed evergreens, with bay and coast live oak predominating. Madrone, manzanita, toyon, buckeye...and the ubiquitous poison oak...border the trail as it gradually ascends, skirting grassy meadows, which are dotted with wildflowers in the spring. A particularly treasured feature of this property is its oak woodlands. In addition to the coast live oak, the Black oak, Oregon oak, Blue oak, and Valley oak provide a crucial source of food and habitat for a wide variety of creatures.

Wildflower season opens with milkmaids and buttercups, followed by blue-eyed grass, lupines, blue larkspur, yellow mariposa lilies, brodiaea, soaproot, yarrow, clarkia, and California fuschia, to name but a few. Several species of ferns grow on the shadier slopes. These include polypody, goldback, maiden-hair, and coastal wood fern.

While most of the animals that make their home here are nocturnal and thus not likely to be seen, look for signs such as tracks and scat that indicate the presence of coyotes, fox, raccoons, opossums, wild turkeys, and deer, as well as the occasional bobcat. Bird watchers will find excellent opportunities to spot numerous species. Depending on the season, you may encounter hermit thrushes, Pacific slope flycatchers, or fox sparrows near the trailhead. Birds such as the oak titmouse, California towhee, and western scrub jay can be heard and seen anywhere along the trail. The open meadows at higher elevations are frequented by American kestrels, acorn woodpeckers, and western bluebirds. At the top, while enjoying a beautiful view of Sonoma, you may be rewarded by the sight of a red-tailed hawk circling below (or a golden eagle soaring above your head!)



SELF GUIDED CHECKLISTS AVAILABLE AT THE TRAILHEAD KIOSK:

- ◆ TREES
- ◆ WILDFLOWERS
- ◆ BIRDS



Directions to Sonoma Overlook Trail:

Sonoma Overlook Trail's main trailhead is at the entrance to the Mountain Cemetery, off First Street West just four blocks north of the Plaza. The upper trailhead takes off from Toyon Road within the Mountain Cemetery. Trail information and self-guided checklists are available at the main trailhead kiosk.

Sonoma Overlook Trail Task Force

In partnership with the City of Sonoma and the Sonoma Ecology Center, the Sonoma Overlook Trail Task Force has the lead responsibility for the stewardship of the trail. Trained docents knowledgeable about the trail's flora, fauna, and history are available to guide private groups.

For further information about the Task Force, or to volunteer for trail maintenance projects, or to request a docent guided hike, contact Task Force Chair John Donnelly (707-933-8128, donnelly2@sbcglobal.net).


Also visit "contacts" at
www.sonomaecologycenter.org.

Support the Sonoma Overlook Trail

The Sonoma Overlook Trail has been funded by generous contributions from members of the community and local businesses. If you would like to make a donation, please send contributions to:

Sonoma Overlook Trail/SEC
P. O. Box 533
Sonoma, CA 95476

Please don't discard this brochure. Offer it to a friend, pass it on to another hiker, or save it for a return trip.

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Sonoma Overlook Trail



**A Joint Project of
The City of Sonoma
Community Services and
Environment Commission
and the
Sonoma Ecology Center
under the Stewardship of the
Sonoma Overlook Trail Task Force**

The gently graded Sonoma Overlook Trail (7% maximum grade) is slightly less than three miles round trip. The loop at the top of the hillside provides panoramic views of the entire Sonoma Valley and beyond.