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### **San Dieguito River Park's San Pasqual/Clevenger Canyon trail system takes hikers to heights overlooking inland North County.**

By [Jerry Schad](#) | Published Thursday, Jan. 19, 2006

Climbing high into the chaparraled, boulder-frosted hills at the east end of San Pasqual Valley, the San Dieguito River Park's San Pasqual/Clevenger Canyon trail system offers a variety of challenges for weekend hiking warriors. In the early 1990s the trails here were rather hastily carved out of a patchwork of public lands that had recently been incorporated into the emerging San Dieguito River Park. Since then, the rapid regrowth of vegetation following wildfires has obliterated some of the outermost trails, especially in the north section of the trail system, which is profiled here.

You'll find the trailhead on the north side of Highway 78 at 5.6 miles east of the Wild Animal Park and 2.6 miles east of Bandy Canyon Road. When headed east on 78, the turnoff comes unexpectedly; it is 0.3 mile beyond the parking lot for the south trail system.

The initial 0.3-mile stretch of trail slanting down to the oak- and sycamore-shaded bank of Santa Ysabel Creek is easy enough. Forging the creek to get to the other side, though, could be problematical or downright dangerous. That depends solely on the water flow, which is normally indolent, but occasionally (in a wet year) powerful.

Beyond the Santa Ysabel Creek crossing, the narrowing trail ascends in a zigzag pattern up the hillside, and the view west toward San Pasqual Valley and the coast gets ever better and ever wider. You come to a trail junction about 2.5 miles from the creek crossing, about 1300 feet higher in elevation. At the trail fork there, decide where you want to go: right toward any of three viewpoints, or left toward any of six viewpoints. You aren't likely to get very far in any short period of time by either route, since most of this upper part of the trail system has been sorely neglected in the past decade. Emergent chaparral vegetation has a way of knitting itself together very quickly following a fire.

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