



Mount Gower Open Space Preserve

ACCESS: From Hwy 67 (Main Street) in Ramona take 10th Street (which becomes San Vicente Road) south and east 6 miles into San Diego Country Estates. Left at Gunn Stage Road 1.8 miles to the entrance of Mount Gower Open Space Preserve (which begins at the dead end of Gunn Stage Road). The staging area is 1/4 mile beyond the entrance on the right side of the dirt entry road. The staging area has restrooms and a drinking fountain. Park hours are 8:30 a.m. to approximately 1 hour before sunset. <Note: all of this area and facilities burned during Firestorm 2003, but re-building is anticipated.>

LENGTH AND ELEVATION: 4.8 miles of trails; 1625' to 2650'.

DESCRIPTION: Toward the northeast end of Mount Gower Staging Area, enter the trailhead at the park's information kiosk. The trail system of this 1574-acre preserve currently has 2 main branches that do not form loops. The 2-mile long west trail leads to a 2310' viewpoint atop a barren ridge.

The more difficult trail to the south and east currently extends approximately 6 to 7 miles. At about 1.25 miles from the trailhead on this latter trail is a rest area with benches that overlooks oak-lined Swartz Canyon. From there a short spur trail leads to a 1976' peaklet overlooking the Country Estates and San Vicente Valley. The main trail descends into Swartz Canyon, crosses a small stream, and rises steeply to an undulating ridgeline. Mount Gower Open Space Preserve shares its border here with the Cleveland National Forest.

A connecting trail parallels Swartz Canyon and provides access to the San Diego Country Estates trail network (Homeowners Association permission to use is required).

Mt. Gower Open Space Preserve is the new site of the historic annual "Turkey Trot" horse and mule ride and hike at Thanksgiving time. A group of RTA members travel through the preserve to a nearby private ranch for a grand Thanksgiving feast.

RECOMMENDED USES: Suitable for all categories of non-motorized recreational use. Users should be aware that there are numerous steep ascents and descents. Also, the trail through Swartz Canyon crosses a small stream.

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