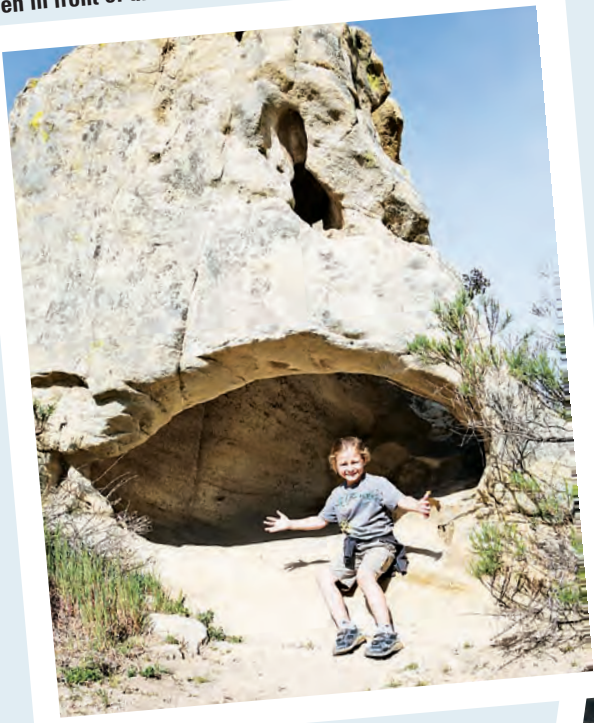


Aden in front of this cool rock.



Aden, doing reconnaissance, finds a lizard.



A high-flying hawk.



Aden and I say, "Go this way."

— Laguna Beach

Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

This month, we will be hiking in the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. This is a well-known park in the area with lots of history, and was actually all under water millions of years ago. That is pretty cool trivia. There are many things to see on the trail, with lots of beautiful hills and gorgeous views.

We started a little late, about 10:30 a.m. Although the trail and temperature were fine, I think you always get the best shots before 11 a.m. However, we always make lemons into lemonade.

History

The history here is very interesting. Lying to the north of Aliso Canyon, the Laguna Canyon area lay within the tribal boundary of the Tongva, a Native American group whose territory expanded from north-central Orange County well past the San Gabriel River and into the Los Angeles Basin. Aliso Creek, whose watershed borders Laguna Canyon to the east, formed the tribal boundary between the Tongva and Acjachemen.

Laguna Canyon Creek was a seasonal stream, but the Laguna Lakes, formed by springs arising from a minor fault zone, stayed year round. A Native American path ran through the canyon to the present-day Laguna Beach area, where they collected abalone and limpets, and fished. The Tongva lived in villages of 50 to 100 members, in huts made of brushes and tules

on a wooden framework. When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the mid-18th century, they named the canyon "Cañada de las Lagunas," referring to the Laguna Lakes. A land grant, called La Bolsa de San Joaquín, occupied the canyon area up to the 19th century. By 1905, springs in the Laguna Canyon area began to supply water to Laguna Beach.

Before Laguna Canyon became a wilderness park, a housing development was proposed to be built in and around the canyon, tentatively called "Laguna Laurel." The 2,150-acre community, which was proposed to contain 3,200 housing units as well as a number of businesses, was canceled in the 1990s after the City of Laguna Beach purchased four of its parcels to provide space for a wilderness park, while the City of Irvine purchased one, and Laguna Coast Wilderness Park was opened and dedicated in 1993. Occasionally, the park system (which adjoins Aliso/Wood Canyons Regional Park) is augmented by donations of vacant

land. The proposal to stop the development was supported by a crowd of 8,000 in 1989, which gathered in Laguna Canyon in a protest known as the "Walk-In." Several years later, 2,000 to 3,000 gathered to protest the construction of California State Route 73 (which would cross the canyon), but the highway was built eventually.

In 1993, a massive wildfire burned more than 16,000 acres in Laguna Canyon and Laguna Beach, and ranked behind the 1948 Santa Ana Canyon fire as one of the worst fires in Orange County history. The fire was in part caused by strong Santa Ana winds, which caused flames that rose up to 200 feet high.

The Hike

After reading a few reviews, I now understand why some people said to start walking the trail counter-clockwise. We did the opposite and found ourselves climbing uphill for most of the beginning leg of the hike.

Once you get up to where the other trails break off into other directions, it is pretty easy. You have wonderful views and can actually go in any direction once you are on top of the hill. Before you go up the trail, you



Cell Phone tour information.

Aden and I kneel by this really neat grass area behind us.



This is the upward climb if you go straight up the trail.



Angel's

Be Alive!

Angel Gomez, Director of Member Services



Send your photos to me at agomez@cityemployeesclub.com.
I would love to see them!

Aden takes a break at the Emerald Canyon Marker.



Aden points to the informational telephone number.



Aden and I have reached another trail marker.



Aden and I at the Dommer Spur trail marker.

Bulletin billboard: the sign-in sheet and maps.



Angel and Aden point to the warning signs.



The Laguna Coast Wilderness Park sign.

will pass a table and bulletin board with all the posted warning signs. There is also a check in sheet for safety. You are also given an area map, which is very helpful. At the beginning of the trail, you will see lots of big boulders with hollow spots. Going up the trail, you will also see markers along the hike. Try this! Use the telephone number on the markers and call; there is a recorded message about the area. It's pretty cool.

While we were enjoying the exercise, we saw all types of animals – bunnies, lizards, hummingbirds and also high-flying hawks.

Angel (my son) was not feeling his best, so Aden picked up the slack and started working his pointing skills. Be careful and look at every marker. We actually went off the trail and started our way on Emerald Canyon. We realized and turned around and made another mistake and found ourselves going down the same way we came up the trail. So, I did not go down Laurel Canyon Trail; I'll save that for next time.

Special note: Warnings about bobcats, rattlesnakes and mountain lions are posted all around the trail area. We were having a great time until someone told my wife that they had just seen a bobcat in the direction we were heading, and then she went into high alert mode (as any protective mother would). I love her for being so protective. However, my boys loved the trail and were having lots of fun along the way.

The trails are very well kept and wide enough for a

small car. Be aware that mountain biking is also a big thing around the area, so please stay to one side of the trail (to be safe). Most of the people on the trail were very friendly.

We are definitely going back and exploring more trails in the area. You will find trail markers all along the paths; please be sure to take a close look.

On the way back down, I got Angel to take one more photo. However, as I told you, Aden stepped up to the plate (or should I say up to the rock) and helped me take a few more photos. Thanks Aden.

This was short and sweet, so if you want to see a lot more mountain trails, please come out to the O.C. and spend some time in the outdoors.

I want to also thank everyone who reads "Be Alive!" Thank you for all of your emails. Thank you to The Club. And one more thank-you to my family for always going on these outdoor activities. Kathy, Angel Jr. and Aden, you are simply the best!

Don't forget to bring your camera; take plenty of photos, and send them to me at agomez@cityemployeesclub.com. Bring water, snacks and maybe some sunscreen.

**As always,
be safe and Be Alive!, Angel**

Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

18751 Laguna Canyon Rd.
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

TRAIL HIGHLIGHTS

DISTANCE: 3.5 miles

ELEVATION GAIN: 700 feet

DIFFICULTY RATING: moderate

SUGGESTED TIME: 2 hours

BEST SEASON: All year

TRAIL ACTIVITIES

- Mountain biking
- Walking
- Cell phone tour

DIRECTIONS

Coming from I-5, exit El Toro Road going toward Laguna Beach. Follow El Toro Road until it dead ends into Laguna Canyon Road. Make a left onto Laguna Canyon Road. The trailhead is on the right side about a quarter of a mile from that intersection.

PARKING

Parking in the lot is only \$3 for the entire day.



The parking lot.