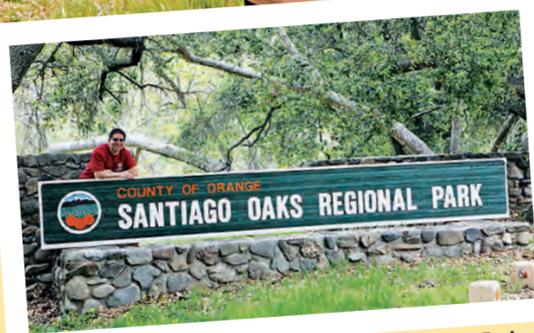


— City of Orange

Santiago Oaks Regional Park



The Windes Nature Trail with Santiago Creek Trail in the distance.



Behind the Santiago Oaks Regional Park sign.

Hello everyone!

This month, let's go to the city of Orange. I decided we should go to a place that offered lots to see and many options. Santiago Oaks Regional Park is just the place. The park offers gorgeous views, various trails and lots of wildlife. I have to tell you, there are lots of mountain lion warning signs posted at each entrance to the park and at each trail. My wife was really scared, so we took the open trails to ease her fears. I liked the stream along the Santiago Creek Trail; we traveled toward the residential area and enjoyed the creek views plus the nice homes along the way. The creek trail was extra fun because we actually began our hike going up the Windes Nature Trail and connected right to the Pacifica Trail. By the time, we crossed the Santiago creek we were ready for a cool breeze.

Let's begin!

History: Santiago Creek was named by the expedition of Gaspar de Portola in 1769 in honor of St. James (San Iago). In 1866, Llewellyn Bixby and his cousins, Benjamin and Thomas Flint, and a fourth partner, James Irvine, purchased portions of Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana.

In 1938, 33 acres of land on the south side of Santiago Creek (just down stream of the Old Dam) were purchased by W. Norment Windes. He built a large residence, which later became the park's Nature Center. A nine-acre Valencia orange grove had been planted by 1937. Norment Windes and his wife lived on the property until his death. His widow sold it to his brother-in-law, Harold Blome, in 1955. Directly across the creek from the Blome property was the 62-acre parcel purchased in the 1920s by George Lemke from the Bixby Land Company. He named the area "Oak Tree Ranch," and in the late 1920s he planted 26 acres of Valencia oranges. In 1959, Lemke sold the property to

the Rinker family, who discontinued the citrus operation. The Rinkers hoped to build a residence on the property and planted approximately 3,000 trees among the declining orange trees. However, the Paseo Grande Fire of 1967 and the heavy flooding of 1969-70 both severely impaired the physical and commercial value of the area. Rinker soon abandoned his operations and his plans.

The Orange County Board of Supervisors acquired the properties for public use and preservation. Limited public use began early in 1977.

In 1981 the ranch house built by Windes in 1938 was re-opened as the park's Nature Center. It now provides exhibits on the natural and human history of the area with a special attention given to the wildlife. Park staff place particular emphasis on environmental education, sharing the beauty and wonder of nature. Nature walks, slide programs, and films are presented to school and youth groups as well as the general public.

The Hike: We decided to take three small trails – the Windes Nature Trail, the Pacifica Trail, and the Santiago Creek Trail.

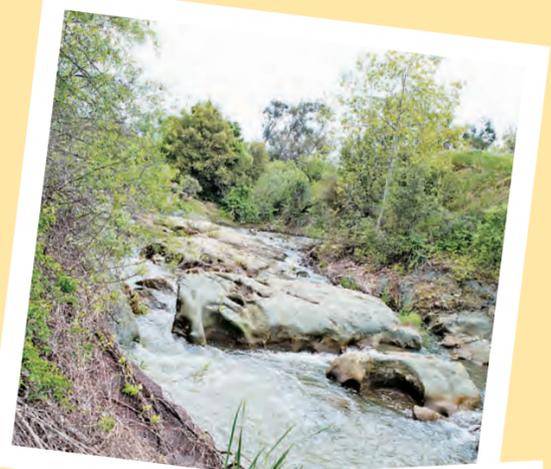
Santiago Creek Trail:

LENGTH: 1.4 miles
SURFACE: loam, sand
WIDTH: 3 to 15 feet
RATING: easy to moderate
CONDITION: excellent

Note: From the parking lot you have to cross the creek. One of the photos in the story actually shows the circular stones you would use to cross the creek. Be ready to jump from stone to stone.

This trail provides scenic views of Rattlesnake Ridge and orange grove. The trail turns north at the kiosk then crosses Fossil Canyon via a paved dip crossing and then turns west toward Santiago Creek. Near the creek, the

Santiago Creek Trail.



The crossing to Santiago Creek Trail (you must wait for the water level to reveal the stepping stones).

trail heads east, bordering the creek and its riparian community along the way. The area has picnic tables, a horse hitching post and water trough.

Windes Nature Trail:

- LENGTH:** three-tenths of a mile
- SURFACE:** clay, rock
- WIDTH:** 2 feet
- RATING:** difficult
- CONDITION:** good

This hiker-only trail is on the extremely steep terrain of Rattlesnake Ridge. The trail follows a "loop" to the nature center. The trail, with interpretive brochure, provides the hiker an educational self-guided experience through the area's coastal sage and oak woodland plant communities, geology and scenic vistas. Its steep terrain provides a challenge. The trail's natural features and vistas overlooking the park are a special treat for the visitor.

Uphill stairs on Windes Nature Trail.



Beautiful Windes Nature Trail.

Pacifica Trail:

- LENGTH:** four-tenths of a mile
- SURFACE:** clay, rock
- WIDTH:** 3 feet
- RATING:** difficult
- CONDITION:** fair

This hiker-only single-track trail represents the most physically challenging trail in the park. The trail begins off the Windes Nature Trail just above the park's nature center and follows very steep terrain to the top of Rattlesnake Ridge via switchbacks. The trail heads southeast to a rest area with a park bench providing overviews of the entire park, surrounding landforms, and, on a clear day, the Pacific Ocean.

There is so much more to this park, but because we traveled only a mile or so into the park using the Windes and Pacifica trails, miles and miles of hiking remain to do. That is where I leave the adventure for you.



Pacifica Trail marker and trail.

I really enjoy exploring and learning new things. Hiking is one of the best ways to be closest with Mother Nature (beautiful landscapes and all the wonder of nature). The views and area were beautiful here; you have options to park on the street or pay \$3 and park in their parking lot. From both places you can find the path and actually see the creek.

I always want to go back and take a different path. With hiking, you will always see something you did not see the first time. Sometimes it's the time of day that changes the way everything looks, and sometimes is just the time of year that makes the most difference. This park was really green as you can see by the photos (it rained for three or four days before we took this hike, so the newly watered land made the place totally green). Everything was gorgeous, just walking through the tiny trails was magnificent.

The parking lot is right next to the orange trees, and they, too, are beautiful. There is just so much to see; please come out and enjoy the outdoors your family. They may not be excited at first, but once they get out and see all the beauty, believe me they will not only enjoy the paths, they will want to explore and urge you to find more trails to hike. If you are new at this, remember to always bring your phone and small backpack with water, snacks and, depending what time of day, a sweater.

Signs leading to the park.



Wild animal warning signs.



Main entrance to the Santiago Regional Park.

**Until next month,
be safe and
Be Alive!,
Angel**

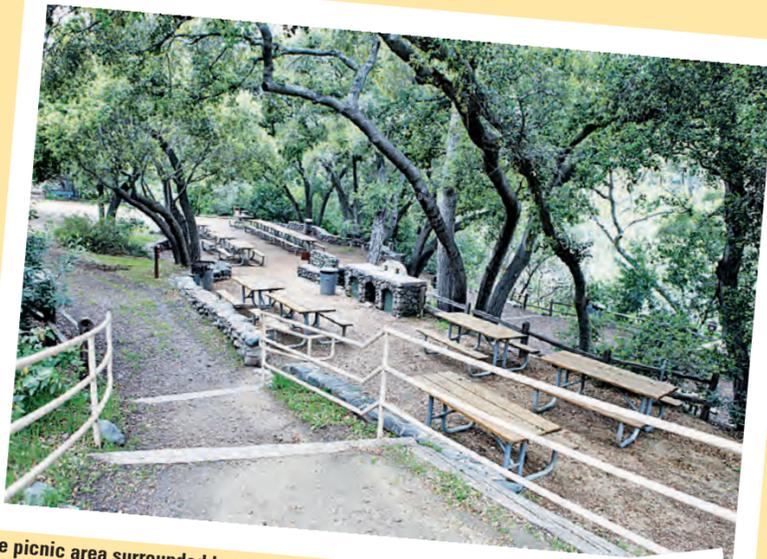
Angel's

Be Alive!

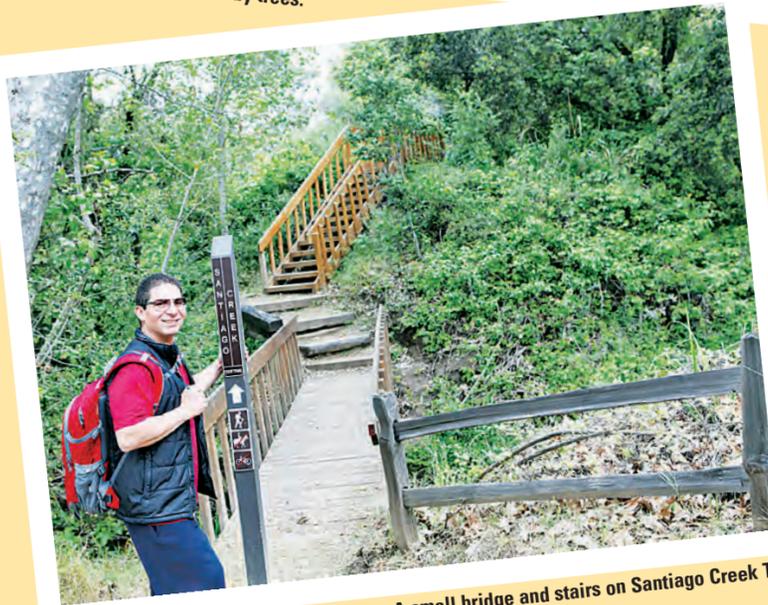
Angel Gomez, Director of Member Services



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



The picnic area surrounded by trees.



A small bridge and stairs on Santiago Creek Trail.

Santiago Oaks Regional Park

2145 N. Windes Dr., Orange, CA 92869

PARK AMENITIES

Amphitheater, barbeques/fire rings, bicycling/bike trails, dogs permitted, equestrian trails, family picnic area, hiking trails, horseshoe pits, interpretive center, interpretive programs, playground/tot lot, private party area, restrooms, scenic overlook and tables.

PARKING \$3

DIRECTIONS

Take the 5 Freeway south to the 22 Freeway. Exit east to the 55 Freeway. Exit north. Take Katella east to Villa Park, to East Santiago Road. Make a right on Windes Drive, which takes you to the park entrance.



The metered parking machine.