

'LOST CAMPS' DATA WHICH IS REFERENCED IN THE 'INVISIBLE CAMPS' BOOK

I. PREFACE FROM THE 'LOST CAMPS' BOOK (relevant excerpts)

Do you enjoy treasure hunts? Do you like poring over maps? Do you relish hiking off trail in search of long-forgotten locations? If you can answer "yes" to any of these questions, then there is a good chance this book is for you.

Not so many years ago, I was challenged by an old-timer: "If you want to see the Ventana Wilderness, I encourage you to do what I have done. Hike every trail and visit every camp. It will get you to every remote corner and you will experience the fullness of what this wild country has to offer. You will need a couple of old maps that I have for you, as well as your own current ones." And then he went his way.

Well, I took him up on his offer. And now, more than seven years later, I have almost completed the challenge. He was right! It is the ultimate way to see what the Ventana is all about! Also, it helps one to realize how well traveled it was in its prime, when, for example, the fishermen managed to roam every drainage in their quest for good fishing holes. The trail and camps were well loved and used. What he did not tell me is that I would not run out of camps to find - even after the 90 plus indicated on his maps. Many of these had all but disappeared through time and neglect, and some devastating wildfires: notably the epic 178,000 acre Marble/Cone fire of 1977. It wiped out several of the camps, and many of the trails to them became hopelessly overgrown. Nor did a dwindling Forest Service budget help the situation. They simply became "The Lost Camps (and Trails) of the Ventana Wilderness".

Fortunately, the old maps reveal their general locations and some of the routes leading to them. Beyond that, it is anybody's guess. Imagine the thrill when one actually stumbles upon one of them and sees the rusted remains of tin-can debris or the half-buried icemaker stove, or the hazy lettering on an old metal sign barely visible on a nearby tree trunk. "Eureka! We have found it!" (P.S. This may trigger some nostalgia for some: as they realize that only the ghosts of many once-thriving camps remain. They are left with only their imaginations to re-invent the former glory. I must confess to a few of these feelings myself. Bill Post helped me with his quip made to fellow old-timers and their moaning over the lost past: "Get over it! It's gone! Put it in the back of your mind. Accept change and learn to live with it! Move on!" A tad blunt perhaps, but not bad advice.)

Regarding some of the camps:

1. Be alert to legal accesses that may open up.
2. But, obviously, they are not available for you to explore at this time.

All of this is an ongoing and unfinished adventure. That is why I am excited for YOU! It is not just a matter of retracing the steps I have described. Rather, you

can help finish the job in your own customized way: by deciding on new routes; or finding camps we missed, could not visit, or were not on our maps. Maybe you will simply linger longer at a camp to document things we overlooked. You may even be able to correct errors we made through poor recollecting or note-taking on some quick visit.

There is nothing complicated or technical about the following list of “Lost” Camps. It is as much of a diary as a factual guide. So, you are on your own, and we absolve ourselves of any liability issues that may occur in your meanderings. But we wish you well!

There are some good trail guides (Schaeffer, Elliot, and Sierra Club), as well as maps sold in stores or through the internet. You can consult them for details.

As far as the TITLE of this book is concerned: The word “Ventana” has been broadened to include a region: all of the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) within Monterey County: such as non -“Ventana Wilderness” areas of the LPNF and areas south of the Ventana, including Silver Peak Wilderness. Technically this is not correct. But this liberty has been taken to keep things simple.

Also included are an assortment of topographic, historical and cultural tidbits. However, at the request of the archaeological community, I have refrained from mentioning the locations of any Native American sites or features. You may well notice some of them in the course of your wilderness travels, but PLEASE show proper respect. Do not harm them in any way.

An important note: The epic Summer of 2008 Basin Complex Fire has consumed virtually all of the Ventana Wilderness - plus some adjoining areas on the coastal perimeter. So, many of the trail, terrain, and camp descriptions may have changed. However, you should be able to navigate your way ok.

But, enough of this Preface. It’s time to begin your CAMPQUEST! Have fun, and stay safe! And thanks for being interested in this subject!

Gratefully yours,
Paul Danielson (Chaplain retired, hiker hobbyist, and
happy Ventanaphile)

II. DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO CAMP TRAILHEADS

1. ABC CAMP:

a. Coastal Route (shorter distance – 65+ miles, but slower travel - about 20 minutes more): Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (G16), drive south (on Route 1) for 54 miles. Kirk Creek Campground is on your right and the road begins on your left. It will wind up 7.3 narrow, paved, scenic miles to the Nacimiento summit/saddle. Continue downhill for several miles until the road begins to open up and you see the abandoned west entrance FHL Guard gate. This is where you stop to access the proposed Slickrock Camp site.

b. Inland Route (longer distance - 75 miles, but faster travel - about 20 minutes less): Find your way to King City (consult a map). Take the Jolon exit (county road G16) located on Highway 101, just across the Salinas River bridge-crossing from KC. Drive the Jolon Road 17.8 miles to the Mission Road junction (Note a small, country church on your right). Continue 0.2 mile to the Fort Hunter Liggett gate. Once through the gate, look for the Nacimiento-Fergusson sign. (NOTE: Be sure to observe the posted SPEED LIMIT. They are quite strict about enforcing them! I know from personal experience!) It will lead you to the left and to a bridge over the San Antonio River. Follow that road as it winds and straightens its way through oak woodland savannah grasslands. You will pass the abandoned west FHL entrance gate (9.4 miles). This is where you should start looking for your access point to the proposed Slickrock Camp site.

2. BASKET SPRING CAMP:

Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (County road G16), drive south (on Route 1) for 61.8 miles. Turn left onto Willow Creek Road. (NOTE: It is 2.4 miles south of the Pacific Valley Guard Station, and just north of the small coastal hamlet of Gorda.) It is long, rough, and dusty (!) and eventually intersects the SCR Road in 7.8 miles.

3. CARLISLE CAMP:

Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (County road G16), drive south for 11.4 miles. Turn left onto Palo Colorado Road, which winds 7.7 miles up a narrow, redwood canyon, then past open hillsides, and finally to Bottchers Gap. This is where the paved road ends. The caretaker Larry may be there. He is usually glad to answer any questions you have and volunteer helpful information. There is vehicle parking at B Gap (modest fee, or park for free if you have a "Senior Pass").

4. GIRARD CAMP:

Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (G16), drive south (on Route 1) for 54 miles. Kirk Creek Campground is on your right and the road begins on your left. It will wind up 7.3 narrow, paved, scenic miles to the Nacimiento summit/saddle. There one finds the Cone Peak Road gate/entrance on the north side. From that point proceed for 3.6 miles. There is a small parking area on the left just beyond a trailhead.

5. HORSE CANYON CAMP:

a. Coming from the North (highway 101): Drive almost 26 miles from the Monterey Peninsula exit in Salinas. Take the Arroyo Seco exit just south of the city of Soledad. Follow the signs all the way down into the Arroyo Seco valley. At the junction with Carmel Valley Road (approx.16 miles from your 101 exit point), go left. Proceed past Millers Campground entrance.

b. Coming from the South (highway 101): Note the King City Broadway exit. Drive past it about 11 miles, and take the first Greenfield exit ("Route 101

Business”) until you hit Elm Street (in about ½ a mile). Turn left and in 5.8 miles you come to Arroyo Seco Road. Turn left and look for the Carmel Valley Road intersection in 6.5 miles, or a total of almost 13 miles from your 101 exit point.

6. LOGWOOD CAMP:

Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (County Road G16), drive south (on Route 1) for 28.5 miles to the Ventana Inn turnoff. It is on the left at the very top of a long, uphill grade. Go up their driveway and park your vehicle in the lower lot.

7. LOST VALLEY LOOP CAMPS:

See the directions (below) for “Lower San Antonio Camp” for directions to the Del Venturi Road and the course it takes. From where DV Road begins, (directly facing the San Antonio Mission on Fort Hunter Liggett) drive 17.2 miles to Memorial Park. At its western limit is where the paved road ends. The trailhead to Junipero Serra Peak begins here. --- For Lost Valley destinations continue on the road. During the rainy season, you must begin your hike at the closed gate, and then follow the dirt road the extra 2.6 miles to Escondido Camp. (Check with the LPNF regional HQ in King City for road conditions and seasonal closures. Go to the LPNF website or call 831-385-5434.)

8. LOTTIE POTRERO:

Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (County road G16), drive south (on Route 1) for 61.8 miles. Turn left onto Willow Creek Road. (Note: It is 2.4 miles south of the Pacific Valley Guard Station, and just north of the small coastal hamlet of Gorda.) It is long, rough, and dusty (!) and eventually intersects the SCR Road in 7.8 miles. Once you reach the SCR Road, turn right and proceed for approx. 6.5 miles to saddle at Three Peaks. There you have the choice of parking your car and walking down to the car camp. Or, you can continue another 2.5 miles along the SCR Road if you are driving a sturdy, high clearance 4WD vehicle. The road continues a few miles more before it dead ends. (The proposed Three Springs Camp site lies just beyond that point.)

9. LOWER SAN ANTONIO CAMP:

Find your way to King City (consult a map). Take the Jolon exit (county road G16) located on Highway 101, just across the Salinas River bridge-crossing from KC. Drive the Jolon Road 17.8 miles to the Mission Road junction (Note a small, country church on your right). Continue 0.2 mile to the Fort Hunter Liggett gate. Once through the gate, be sure to observe all posted SPEED LIMITS as there is strict enforcement on the base. In 4.9 miles, look for the Del Venturi Road sign, at the junction where you can see the San Antonio Mission straight ahead. You turn left and come to a concrete ford going across the San Antonio River. (Note: If the water levels are high during the rainy season, take the right-hand turn at the junction mentioned above. It will put you on Milpitas Road, which is dirt but ok for a passenger car. Follow Milpitas Road for about 10 miles, until it eventually

joins us with the paved DV Road.) Back to the normal “unflooded” narrative: At the 0.8 mile point shortly past the river crossing, be sure to head right to remain on DV Road.

10. MILL CREEK CAMP:

Beginning in Carmel, at the intersection of Highway 1 and Carmel Valley Road (G16), drive south (on Route 1) for 54 miles. [The Kirk Creek Campground is on your right and the side road off of Highway 1 (Nacimiento/Fergusson Rd.) begins on your left. It will wind up 7.3 narrow, paved, scenic miles to the Nacimiento summit/saddle.] Highway 1 continues south.

11. NORTH FORK CAMP:

Same as directions (above) for “Carlisle Camp” to get to Bottchers Gap. Then begin your hike (or drive with permission) down the dirt road to the Boy Scout Camp. You will pass the trailhead to Little Sur Camp in 1.8 miles. Continue down the road for another 1.8 miles to the concrete river crossing and the parking lot just past it. The Camp Ranger requests that you leave a note on the dashboard of your vehicle: giving your name, number in your group, your departure date/time, and your anticipated return date/time.

12. PICK CREEK CAMP:

Same as directions above for “Logwood Camp.”

13. RINGTAIL CAMP:

Starting at its junction with Highway 1, drive up Carmel Valley Road (County Road G16) 23.3 miles. At the junction with Tassajara Road, turn right and fasten your seat belt (!) for the 11.7 mile ride to China Camp and the Pine Ridge Trailhead. En route, be sure to stay left at the intersection with Cachagua Road (1.4 mile point) and enjoy the pavement until it ends at the 3.2 mile point. After that, it is all dirt including some washboard sections and lots of ascending twists and turns (Note: the access to Mary’s Flat is at the first big curve in the dirt road section.) It is passable with a passenger car, but check conditions before heading up after winter rains and snowstorms. When you arrive at China Camp, the best thing is to park your vehicle somewhere in the camp itself (Note: be sure you are not blocking or taking up a campsite). That tends to avoid the occasional vandalism that seems to occur at the parking areas on Tassajara Road itself.

14. TIN HOUSE CAMP:

See as directions (above) for “North Fork Camp,” to get to the Boy Scout Camp. (Note: If you elect to try one of the other two alternative routes, consult a map of Highway One as it runs through the Big Sur area.)

15. UPPER HARE CANYON CAMP:

Same as directions (above) for “Girard Camp.”

16. VENTANA SPRING CAMP:

Same as directions (above) for “Carlisle Camp” to get to Bottchers Gap.

17. ZIGZAG CAMP:

a. Coming from the North (highway 101): Drive almost 26 miles from the Monterey Peninsula exit in Salinas. Take the Arroyo Seco exit just south of the city of Soledad. Follow the signs all the way down into the Arroyo Seco valley. At the junction with Carmel Valley Road (approx. 16 miles from your 101 exit point), go left. Your destination is the Arroyo Seco Campground complex, past Millers and a bit beyond where the AS Road officially ends at the Guard Station. A kiosk is here, where you must pay an entrance fee, for either day-use or for camping. (Note: You are exempt, if you have a “Senior Pass”.) Continue on the paved road for 0.5 mile: across the bridge, on up the hill, and past the campground, until the pavement ends at a closed gate. Turn right and park your car.

b. Coming from the South (highway 101): Note the King City Broadway exit . Drive past it about 11 miles, and take the first Greenfield exit (“Route 101 Business”) until you hit Elm Street (in about ½ a mile). Turn left and in 5.8 miles you come to Arroyo Seco Road. Turn left and look for the Carmel Valley Road intersection in 6.5 miles, or a total of almost 13 miles from your 101 exit point. Continue as in the directions immediately above.

III. CHAPTER INFORMATION (page numbers indicate various ‘Lost Camp’ references as they occur within the ‘Invisible Camps’ book)

1. BARNES (LOWER PINE CREEK): (page 5)

Visited: 12/16/07, 2/10/08

Location: On Pine Creek, in the extreme north end of Los Padres National Forest, approx. 1.3 miles upstream of its confluence with Carmel River.

Access: Drive to the Los Padres Dam roadhead/Carmel River trailhead. Suggest you park your vehicle at the Ranger Station located 0.1 mile before the road ends. Less chance of vandalism, especially if one is going to be out overnight. Not recommended is the 6.0 plus cross-country downstream route from (Upper) Pine Creek Camp . Got a taste of just a 0.5 mile sample of that terrain, working downstream toward LPC Camp on the first exploratory trip. Very slow and laborious.

Directions: Follow the road/trail past the dam to the 1.7 mile point, which is the Big Pines Trail junction. (Note: This is shortly after the road portion of the Carmel River Trail ends, and the trail portion begins.) Take Big the Pines Trail (3miles?), to where the rising, overgrown firebreak portion gives way to a more level turn around the northern slope of the ridge. You may notice a road going sharp to

your right. But one continues going straight and then curves left. Take that one! You are now on Blue Rock Ridge. Shortly, you will come to a long, wide-open, flat portion of the ridge. At the far end it begins to descend. In that saddle, look to your right for a tree just off of the trail. There will be an old 2 x 4 board bolted to the trunk in a vertical position. That is your MARKER. (By the way, if you miss the marker and actually hit a “blue rock”, serpentine rocky outcrop, you have gone too far! Retrace your steps to the saddle.) Take an off-trail detour to the right of the tree and down the slope. Soon you will stumble onto an old overgrown road cut, which you may now notice begins slightly to your right. You will want to head left and down that roadbed. This is the way down to Lower Pines Creek Camp. (Note: Don’t be deterred by the first 50 yards or so. Clip or push your way through overhanging brush, branches, and poison oak to where things start to open up.) The roadbed will generally follow a side ridge that goes all the way down to Pine Creek, for well over a mile. It switchbacks from time to time and for the most part is a gentle descent. There may still be some pink flagging (from Feb. 2008). Be prepared for unavoidable contact with occasional, knee-high+ poison oak stands. When you finally get to the bottom and are getting closer to Pine Creek, trail will plunge and then get sketchy. It levels out and crosses thick streamside vegetation. There should still be a sign on a tree saying: “This is the place. You found it!”. You are at an overgrown annex to the camp. The camp itself lies across the stream on the other (NW) side. Look for a good place to cross, brave the poison oak which borders the creek, and LO AND BEHOLD, you are there. You can discover the various features of the camp for yourself. It appears to be an old horse camp which local ranchers/horsemen/fishermen created and enjoyed, until recent disuse. It was in surprisingly good shape when we first found it (Dec. 2007).

Description: See for yourself.

The Return: You can retrace your steps. You will understand why we did not see this route when we had come downstream on the first exploratory trip, and were on the other side of the creek. Unless you know it is there, the road back up is NOT visible from the camp site!

History: I was told by Emilio Pozzi (now retired, and then backcountry ranger during the 50’s through 70’s) that Henry Barnes put in the road for his cattle to get water. (Note: In some lists the camp is named “Barnes Camp.”) It became the recreational route to LPC Camp for friends who hunted and fished. You can still see very old, large, tree-branch cuts made to keep the road open for a vehicle. More recent, smaller, brush-cuts appear to have been done to allow continued horseback and foot travel.

Additional Comments: This camp was unknown to me until a fellow hiker discovered it in a vintage 1983 Monterey County map (located and labeled); Also in a vintage 1983 Los Padres Forest map (located and labeled); Also in his 1990’s “DeLorme Atlas & Gazetteer” for Southern and Central California”

(located but not labeled). I checked my 1990 DeLorme, and there it was! Also to my surprise, it was listed when I went on a Google Search under the *Lat.-Long.com* website, with the coordinates given (see beginning of this chapter).

Overnight Camping?: There is normally year-around water from the creek; there is a picnic table in good condition and a fire-ring/grate; there are numerous flat spots to pitch a tent. However, significant elevation gain and the brush make the backpacking option more difficult.

Time to Allow (Day hike): Out and back as suggested: 9 hours, slow paced.

2. BIG CREEK (NEW CAMP) (page 6)

Located in the headwaters of the North Fork of Big Creek: - SE of Lower Bee Camp, S of the intersection of the Lost Valley Connector with the NCR Road, and W of the intersection of the Rodeo Flats Trail with the NCR Road. It is virtually “findproof”, because of the intense brush on the ridges and slopes, plus the wildness of the canyon-stream networks in the area.

**Jack English (the legendary old-timer still living in his hand-built cabin in Pine Valley-2009) wrote down the following observation in a letter to Bob Larson dated January 25, 1983: “[*New Camp*] on the 2nd fork of Big Creek, from the North, shows no trail. When we found the camp, perhaps 20 years ago [*i.e. approx. 1963 – ed.*], there was a tree across the stove. We could not find any trace of a trail.”

**Jon Libby and his wife Kate came down from the NCR Road to the camp a few years back. They found it to be a pleasant, flat, open spot, but also found it devoid of any stove or camp artifacts.

** Clark does not mention it, although it appears on the 1939 LPNF Recreation Map of the Monterey Division of the forest. I have made two tries, and failed both times. Maybe YOU will be the one to do it. (Note: Jeff Norman recalled it by the name, “Sartan Camp.” ‘Sarten’ means frying-pan in Spanish. Pat Bailey mentioned that someone found frying pans hanging there.)

Note: This camp lies in one of the few areas of the Ventana which did not get burned by the Basin Fire of 2008. So it remains “brushed in.” Old-timers speak of accessing it along the streams, a time-consuming and arduous task to say the least.

Note: The search for New Camp should be paired with that for the nearby proposed Middle Fork Camp (Big Creek). See “Invisible Camps Supplement”: Section 3, #1.

3. HOT SPRINGS #2 (THE CEDARS): (page 7)

Visited: 4/7/04

Location: 0.3 miles west and down slope from the NCR Road on a small stream (headwaters of Hot Springs Canyon Creek).

Access: See the coordinates above for the junction/jumping off point. By the way, the terrain here is more open and user-friendly than at Buckhorn Spring.

Directions: One descends along a relatively open slope into a low, flat area running north and south. Do not go south, as it leads to a brushy drainage that appears to be hard going. Rather, look to your right. As you head toward that slope, you discover a path going up it, and bending left as it begins to drop into a drainage. (The path turns out to be a maintenance route for a water system designed for an ATV or similar off-road vehicle.) Once you hit the stream, you see the beginnings of the beautiful, lush stand of tall, old-growth incense-cedar trees. Thus the name of the camp. The old campsite is not initially visible, but other features present themselves first. For example, mechanisms making up this actively-used water-supply system for a residence up the hill. (Note: You are not trespassing. They appear to be drawing water off of public land. It must be that some kind of arrangement that has been made.) (Also Note: I have been told that the system was destroyed in the 2008 fire, although it may have been rebuilt by now.) Also, there is an open area farther downstream, to the right, with a fire-ring and a little room for camping. Plus, there is a trail that keeps going down, that one could follow into Hot Springs Canyon. But the “prize” camp we are looking for lies in a surprise spot: namely on an elevated, somewhat sloping bench, on the south side of the creek. It is covered with cedar saplings. The giveaway is an old fire grate propped against the trunk of a large tree. Flush with victory, you can now relax, take a break, and contemplate your next move.

Description: See above paragraph. Also note this Sierra Club 1st ed. Trail Guide quote: “*This small hillside camp ... (is) dark and not a cheerful camp, with one table and one stove.*”

The Return: Simply retrace your steps back to the road.

History: Bob Larson mentions that there used to be a cabin there, but it was destroyed in the 1977 Marble-Cone fire – ironically, the only one that got destroyed.

Additional Comments: Well, now you have covered all the “lost” camps that are found along this loop. However, you can still choose to take in Upper Bee Camp, as long as you are in the vicinity. Also, you could try to follow the overgrown route that leads from UB Camp down to the “semi-lost” Lower Bee Camp. Or, you could attempt one of the other routes/accesses to LB Camp, as reported in the chapter on “Special Case” Camps, part V. Otherwise, its on to the Lost Valley Connector, being sure to watch your footing as you slip and slide your way

down its intensely steep, washed-out tread. Then it's back home for a shower, and crash! But back to The Cedars camp narrative.

Overnight Camping: Definitely. Here among the shady cedars. A more comfortable spot might be the open area mentioned above, down and across the creek. There is available water.

Time to Allow: 1+ hours so you can explore around.

4. PINE VALLEY #2: (page 8)

Access: The Pine Ridge Trail to Church Creek Divide, then down the trail to the right until you reach the complex of camps in Pine valley.

5. MIDDLE FORK (BIG CREEK) (page 23)

Note: See the data given above in item #2 above in this "Chapters Information" section.

6. VENADO ("DEER) (page 38)

Reference to Plaskett Ridge Camp: (Open and accessible by passenger car) Located approx. 1.4 miles southwest of the South Coast Ridge Road, and 6-7 miles north of where the Willow Creek Road intersects it. Or, 6.8 miles south of the Nacimiento saddle/summit junction with the SCR Road. For directions to either intersection, see the "Driving Directions" section for "Basket Spring Camp." The 1+-mile dirt road-spur to the camp takes you to some pine-shaded, car-camp pullouts. There is a gate nearby that marks the beginning of private property. You need to bring your own water. The 1969 Sierra Club *Trail Guide* indicates it once had a table and a stove.

Note: This camp search should be paired with that for Venado Proposed Camp.

Visited: 2002

7. UPPER SKINNER CREEK (#s 1 & 2): (page 46)

Reference to Skinner Creek Camp:

Coordinates: Latitude: 36 degrees, 21.532' N
Longitude: 121 degrees, 47.157' W

UTM: 10 N 608924 4024437

Visited: 5/11/05

Preliminary Comment: You are going to do best with a GPS on this one. Or, some good topo map-reading skills.

Location: In Skinner Creek, about 1.5 miles down from Turner Creek Saddle, at the bottom of the east-facing slope of Skinner Ridge.

Access: The Skinner Ridge Trail/Ventana Double Cone Trail out of Bottcher's Gap.

Directions: The Skinner Ridge Trail begins here (aka "Ventana Double Cone Trail"). Where you first hit Skinner Ridge itself, there is a spacious, flat, open spot which used to be a homestead site. (Its coordinates: Lat. 36 degrees, 21.667' N; Long. 121 degrees, 47.759' W) For now, it is where you can get your bearings. You should now plug in the following coordinates (Lat. 36 degrees, 21.775' N; Long. 121 degrees, 47.687' W) That will enable you to "Go To" and get to that all-important, unmarked exit-point from the Skinner Ridge Trail. From that spot, you proceed all the way down the side-ridge to Skinner Creek. Try your best to stay close to the ridge line, although brush and poison oak may get you off course for short stretches. Once at the stream, it might be a good time to remind yourself of the coordinates for the camp (listed above). Then, you head downstream on the west side, generally on a course a bit away from the creek, because of its brushy border. You proceed past the confluence on your left. Then, you work your way along a relatively flat area with a small side drainage crossing it. Sorry about all the abundant stands of poison oak. In due time, you will come to a fairly flat, shaded spot with a large oak. This is it! There you may still find an old, rusted cooking utensil lying there on the ground. Enjoy the surroundings of this very remote and tranquil place.

Description (continued): As noted above, with room for tent, and perennial water close by. No table, no stove, and cannot remember any fire-ring.

The Return: Go back the same way you came. There is no easy way up or down Skinner Creek from that point.

History: It seems to be one of the shortest-lived official LPNF camps. It was put in sometime in the 60s and went up in smoke during the 1977 fire. The original access was down a steep 1.5 mile spur-trail from Turner Creek Saddle. But it disappeared after the fire. Clark mislocates the camp (page 528), a rarity for him, so do not go by that information. One other thing, on the previous, blue-line

search, we found an old Pepsi Cola bottle half-buried in the ground at the site of the proposed Upper Skinner Creek Camp (See Section Four - #1 in the Invisible Camps Supplement.) It was of the earlier spiral-ribbed kind. The numbers, which included "74" on the bottom, allowed us to determine (from a web search) that it was manufactured sometime between 1970 and 1980. This is consistent with the time people were en route here to the camp. In fact, the "74" may very well be the year the bottle was made.

Additional Comments: The route given here is after two failed attempts, those being based on incomplete or erroneous information. So consider yourself a fortunate person, even when you are grumbling about the dicey route given here!

Overnight Camping?: Sure, if you want to! BUT, it is a tough slog back with a backpack up the side ridge from the creek to the main ridge trail.

Time to Allow (Dayhike) : 3-4 hours

8. SOUTH FORK (TORRAS FLAT): (page 53)

Access: There are three trailed (mostly) accesses to TH Camp:

1. **The Mt. Manuel Trail route.** (Note: It has almost exactly the same daunting mileage, elevation differentials, and expended time, as Option #2.) The trailhead begins near the most inland picnic area of Pfeiffer-Big Sur State Park, which is just off of Highway 1 near the community of Big Sur. The trail climbs and climbs and climbs, then levels off and undulates along a high ridge, until, in approx. 6 miles, it comes to the Cabezo Prieto area. Here one hits a long, level highpoint (helicopter landing spot?). Then, you head down a long, steep side-ridge above Doolans Hole Creek, to a saddle. At this point, one can try to do a major brush bust (directly north) down to the Little Sur; then a short crosscountry, upstream creek walk to the camp. Or, better, you can continue past the saddle along a ridge-hugging use-trail (someone's "pet" route), that finally descends to the Little Sur, at a point farther upstream from Tin House Camp. (Are you still with me?!) A short distance upstream from that point is an unofficial camp at a confluence, called Torras Flat. It has seasonal water, a fire-ring, and a small tent-site. From this base camp, one can make the journey downstream to TH camp. Return?: Just go back up to Torras Flat and then back up to the Mt. Manuel Trail.
2. **The East Molera route.** This also involves major length and monumental elevation gains and drops. It can be done as a dayhike, but is not recommended for most! (18+ miles; 8000 feet of accumulated elevation gain up and the same down; 12+ hours.) It begins at Highway 1, just south of the entrance to Andrew Molera State Park. It winds its way up and up

and up, all the way to Post Summit. Then it follows the undulating high ridgeline toward Cabezo Prieto, before it drops down the Mt. Manuel Trail toward Vado Camp. It then requires a cross-country departure which goes steeply into the bottom of the Little Sur drainage. Then a long, tough slog through nasty, creek-side vegetation, until one reaches the Tin House camp-site. Return? : Same way back, with the same depleting elevation changes. Better bring a flashlight for this one!

3. ***The Route from Pico Blanco Boy Scout Camp to Vado Camp, and then a long creekwalk from there to TH Camp.*** This can be accomplished as a long dayhike. This third option is the one that is recommended. Either park at Bottchers Gap (modest fee, or for free if you have a “Senior Pass”), or, walk down the dirt road if you could not get permission to drive it (Or best, drive it!). You will pass the trailhead to Little Sur Camp in 1.8 miles. Continue down the road for another 1.8 miles to the concrete river crossing and the parking lot just past it. (Note: If you were able to drive down, the Camp Ranger requests that you leave a note on the dashboard of your vehicle: giving your name, number in your group, your departure date/time, and your anticipated return date/time. You normally would begin your hike by going up the steps from the parking lot to the dining facility area. The dirt road behind it marks the beginning of the Little Sur Trail: which climbs steeply at first through the woods. In 0.3 mile, it arrives at a junction. Continue on the Little Sur Trail, which is the righthand fork. (Note: Ignore the trail to the left, which is the route to Jackson Camp, Fox Camp, the Window, and North Fork Camp.) You now begin a 2.4 mile/1 hour long, 1300 foot uphill climb to a saddle and Launtz Ridge. Here you encounter another fork in the trail. This time take the lefthand option, which marks the beginning of the Mt Manuel Trail. (Note: the righthand option heads toward Pico Blanco Public Camp and ends at the Old Coast Road.) You now begin a gradual descent to Launtz Creek Camp (1.3 miles). Next is Vado Camp (another 0.9 mile). Here is where you should pause to get your bearings. The Mt. Manuel Trail crosses the river and goes up slightly. Then, it makes a switchback to the left, and continues upstream on the other side. But only to a certain point. It has become virtually impassable through years of neglect and disuse. So, your only real choice is to head upstream. You may see a faint “fishermen’s” use-trail along the side of the river, but don’t count on it. So, alternately use the creek and the side benches the best you can. After roughly 3 long, grueling miles, you will come to the environs of Tin House Camp. On the south side, on an overgrown flat (a boggy area with stinging nettles!), begin your search for the site of the old Private Tin House Camp. You should find the pile of tin sheeting/siding, as well as old stove and a standing USFS orange (“pre-attack”) fire sign. Continue past that to the stream confluence, and continue upstream along the southerly creek

bank. About 15 minutes from the private camp ruins, you come to the old “lost” public camp.

9. PICK CREEK: (page 59)

Access: The NCR Road, beginning at the Ventana Inn; (Or, the De Angulo Trail). ALSO, the route which is described below in the “Directions” section involves passing through a private in-holding. Therefore, it is STRONGLY recommended that you contact the current owner before you attempt to cross his land. Access from the South Fork Trail by way of Pick Creek Falls is slow going but doable. Another possibility is a cross-country route, namely: --- Once you have passed the junction of the NCR Road with the spur to Cold Spring Camp, you are leaving the Logwood Creek drainage. Within the next mile, you will notice on your left the Pick Creek drainage coming into view: first the saddle and then the upper, fairly-open slopes of the headwaters area. Anywhere you can manage to leave the road, head toward that open area. (Note: It appears that the benchmark “BM 3489” is about the right spot on the map to head to.) This will allow you to begin a cross-country trek down the drainage, preferably along the ridges. (Note: on 9/25/09 a couple of us made the mistake of leaving the ridge too soon and coming down into the drainage. It became narrow, treacherous, and very slow going.) Eventually you leave the ridge, as the meadowlands of the valley come into view, where the camp is located. You would head south, directly down the slope, into Pick Valley and the meadows. Then, proceed to the eastern-most one and the camp.

10. SULLIVAN: (page 63)

Directions: At the end of the paved Arroyo Seco Road is a parking area. Here you begin your hike (or bike ride) 2.4 miles along the graded, dirt Arroyo Seco/Indians Road. Look for the sign on the right, and begin your trip along the Marble Peak Trail. At the bottom of your initial 0.3 mile descent, you will come to Horse Bridge, a pedestrian/equestrian foot-crossing over the AS River. On the east side, before you reach the bridge, is the path that takes hikers upriver for the ever-popular late summer/early fall swim-hike to an impressive waterfall and pool. Across the bridge on the west side, are the upslope remains of the old Soroptomist Camp. Both are worthy side explorations, depending on how much time you have.

Reference to Horse Bridge camp: This is essentially a “relocated” camp. Repeated high flood-water events gradually have chewed it away. It is shown on some old maps, but no longer exists. (see Clark’s mention below). The Sierra Club (1st edition) 1969 *Trail Guide* makes reference to it seven different times! It is listed in the Ledger book as having 3 fire-rings and 3 tables. A newer, unofficial one, in a different location, does exist today. It consists of a few scattered fire-

rings on leveled sites on or near the confluence of Tassajara Creek with the Arroyo Seco River, west of the historic Horse Bridge. The latter spans the Arroyo Seco slightly upstream, and forms a link for the Marble Peak Trail; as it passes over the river. This unofficial camp is not marked, but it is well known by locals and enjoys regular use. It affords easy access to some outstanding swimming holes. Clark gives the following note: *"This former LPNF campsite is now closed. It was located E of the horse bridge across the Arroyo Seco near the confluence of Willow Creek and W of Indians Road. Sec.2 T20S R4E."*