

# Vasquez Rocks – Mapper's Notes

(it's not really about the vegetation)

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1:10,000 scale, 5m contours - updated in 2022 for better conformance to current ISOM standards.

The Vasquez Rocks map was begun in 1997 and was mapped in earnest in 2001 for the US Relay Champs. Since then there have been minor updates but, in general, the park has not changed much. Vasquez Rocks is a complex, technical cliff-filled area. The terrain is hilly and in some places quite steep.

## **2022 Update:**

For the OUSA 2022 Nationals, the map has been cartographically updated. This update did not include any field-checking other than things noticed while course setting/vetting. The update involved georeferencing the map with a new LiDAR base and generating new 5m contours. Every feature on the map was painstakingly moved to its correct position relative to the LiDAR base materials. The content of the map was changed as little as possible. As a result there are some mapped features that were once ISOM compliant, but shouldn't be any more.

The features:

**Trails** – This park is basically one huge trail. There are minor trails leading from everywhere to everywhere. For the most part, they are not mapped. All of the official maintained trails are mapped, along with a number of other trails that are distinct through routes. Because of the network of minor trails, running is generally fast. You can almost always find some small animal or human path headed the same way you are.

Our continued use of this area depends upon us not destroying vegetation. Please try to step between the plants and not on top of them.

There are a few free standing gates blocking off park roads from the public roads and parking lots. These are mapped as minimum size passable fence.

Small black circles on the map represent campfire rings.

There are only a few black X's - windmill, singular gravestone, old pillar, misc. ruined stuff  
The main dirt road into the park and a few small parking areas off of it are mapped with light brown.

## **Rocks:**

The minimum size for cliff and boulder features is one meter. A few boulders that are smaller than this are mapped in areas without other significant rock features.

Both thick and thin black lines indicate cliffs that are impassable (at least to a little wimpy runt like me). Tick marks have been left off to improve legibility. The high visibility in the terrain generally makes it obvious which direction the cliffs are facing. The thinner lines have been used

extensively to improve legibility and to show relative heights of nearby features. Only the largest cliffs in an area are shown with thicker lines. Small passable rock faces are generally not mapped. Larger passable rock areas are mapped either as rocky ground or as bare rock.

The back sides of the cliffs are often outcrops of steep but passable bare rock. This bare rock is shown with contours running through to indicate its steepness. Some smaller cliffs have similar outcrops on their back side which are too small to be mapped, but which make the cliff look bouldery when approaching from the top. Where an outcropping is of approximately even height from both directions it is mapped as a boulder.

Any rock face which can be walked across in some direction is mapped as bare rock. Any rock face which is unreachable because it has cliffs on all sides is mapped solid black. Because most bare rock faces are sloped, they may appear like boulders from some directions.

Smaller cliffs are often lined up along a hillside and can look similar to a trail on the map. This has been mitigated somewhat by the recent update since cliffs now have rounded ends. If a series of dashes is very short or the dashes aren't really quite lined up, it's probably cliffs.

#### **Vegetation (it's not really about this):**

Mapped vegetation will give you an idea of runnability, but I don't recommend navigation based on vegetation boundaries.

The vegetation is primarily grass and scrub. The closest things to actual forest are a few small areas of oak. Anything that stays under about 1 meter high is mapped rough open, with undergrowth lines if it is slow going. There are two main plants which grow above this limit – they are chamise and juniper. The chamise is still a shrublike plant, but it grows to about 2 or 3 meters and where it is dense it definitely impacts speed. The light and medium green on the map is almost all heavy chamise. The juniper bushes are brighter green, woody, and bushy. Some are as small as 1 meter, but the largest reach 4 meters or more in diameter and height. The junipers usually grow with enough space between them to make running easy, but they impact visibility.

The original map (preview map) showed heavier juniper areas as white and more sparse juniper areas as rough open with scattered trees. ISOM has now introduced the Open/Rough Open with scattered bushes symbol (yellow with green dots). This much better represents the runnability of the juniper areas and both white and rough open with scattered trees were updated to this new symbol.

Small green tree dots are usually large juniper bushes. Larger green circle is an actual tree - usually pepper trees. Green X is a dead bush or tree - only a few are mapped.

Dark green requires a machete to get through or else it's poison oak.

The southern portion of the park burned in 2007. This area is now mostly open grassland. Thicker vegetation in this area was removed from the map, but is finally beginning to get thick

again. Some light green areas were added after course setting/vetting. Individual mapped bushes may no longer exist in some of these burnt areas.

**Streams:**

Most of the streambeds are wet only when it rains. The main canyon stream is mapped with a solid line, but even it goes dry seasonally. Streambeds in steep areas are usually rocky. Streambeds in flat areas are usually sandy and often look like sandy trails.

**Hazards:**

CLIFFS – don't fall off any! Be especially wary of places where the black lines cross the streambeds. There are a few south facing waterfall drop offs in the park. The most dangerous one has been fenced off. The fence is far too small to map, but it has a sign on it which says "No vehicles beyond this point". Trust me – they don't just mean vehicles! (I'm not really sure how you'd get a vehicle there in the first place)

Rattlesnakes – Sightings are very common in this park through the spring and summer. In the winter they are less likely to be out, but don't stick your hands in any crevices where you can't see.

Mountain Lions – At this time, there have been no recent mountain lion sightings in the park. The likelihood of a mountain lion encounter is minimal. If you see one, don't run. Make yourself look as big as possible and make a lot of noise.

Yucca – The only plant you should have to worry about. Yucca grows as a 1/2 to 1 meter high clump of long slender leaves radiating from the center. It may have a single stalk growing out of the center. The leaves are hard and very sharp at the tip. They do not give way when you brush against them and they poke you. It is best to just run around them to avoid getting poked, but gaiters are recommended just in case.

Poison Oak – yes, there is poison oak at Vasquez Rocks. It is found only in the deepest canyons along the south and east edges of the map. Competitors are not expected to have to get anywhere near it.

Out of Bounds: The northwest corner of the map is a designated wildlife sanctuary and is out-of-bounds. The basemap shows through the out-of-bounds pattern, but it has not been field-checked. This means large obvious rocks in this area are not on the map. This area is marked in the terrain by intermittent yellow signs. There is no physical boundary like a fence. Except in the southeast, the map edge is the park boundary. Please respect the private property along these borders.

## Vegetation Pictures



Yucca and Juniper



Chamise in front of steep bare rock