

# Backbone Trail Thru-Hike Databook

By Shawnté Salabert for [Treeline Review](#)

## TREELINE REVIEW FULL WRITEUP

<https://www.treelinereview.com/where-to-go/santa-monica-mountains-backbone-trail>

This includes a description of the entire route, side trips, trailhead and other logistical information, gear rundown, and more.

## GPS TRACKS

These are links to my GPS tracks on CalTopo, which *do* contain very slight off-Backbone travel in a few spots (and one spot after Latigo Canyon Road where I forgot to un-pause my watch for a short bit - whoops!).

Day 1: [PCH / Ray Miller Trailhead to Decker Road / Mulholland Highway](#)

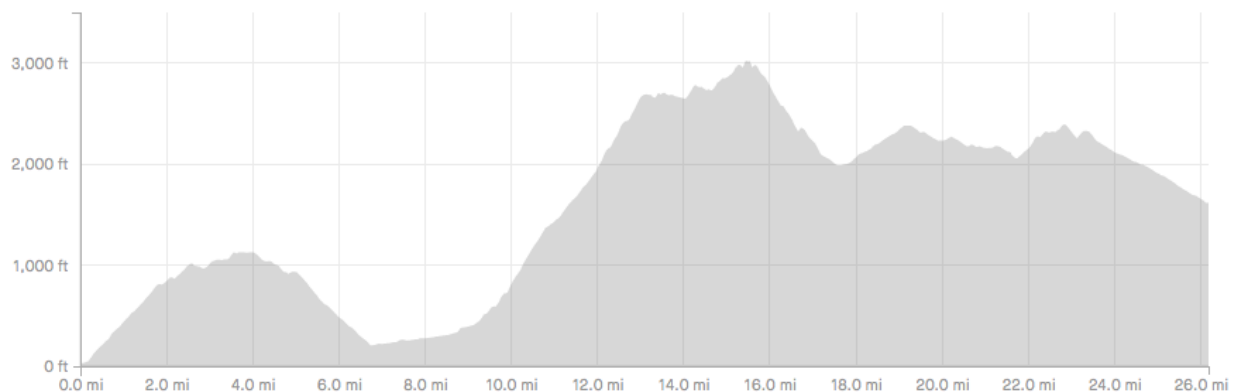
Day 2: [Decker Road / Mulholland Highway to Piuma Road Trailhead](#)

Day 3: [Malibu Creek State Park to Will Rogers State Park](#)

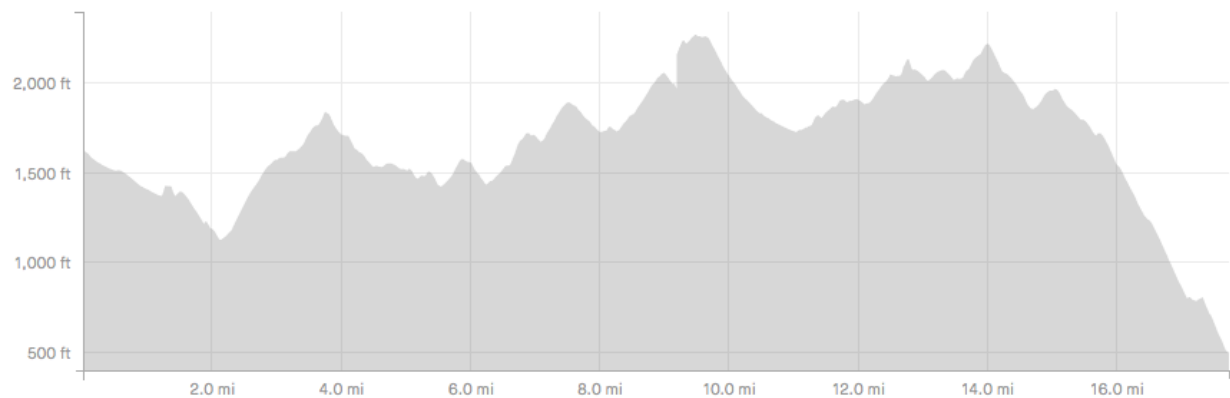
## ELEVATION PROFILES

These were created from my Caltopo GPS files.

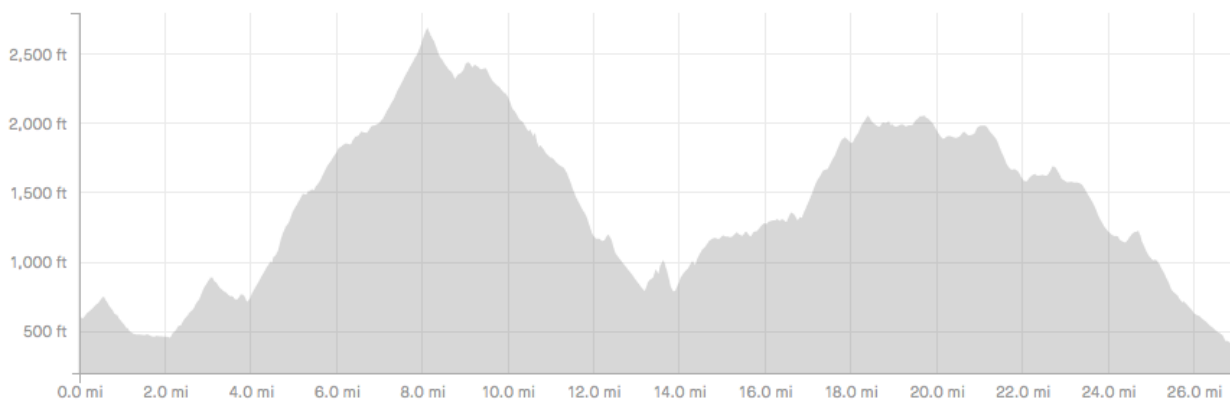
Day 1: PCT / Ray Miller Trailhead to Decker Road / Mulholland Highway



## Day 2: Decker Road / Mulholland Highway to Piuma Road Trailhead



## Day 3: Malibu Creek Campground to Will Rogers State Park



### **EASTBOUND DATABOOK**

This is the rough databook I created to help my hiking buddy and I plan for our thru-hike, with some additional information added afterward. Please note that mileages in the databook may be off slightly here and there, since they're based on map data rather than on-the-ground GPS data. This is not meant to be a guidebook or a perfect list of data points in any way, but hopefully it *does* help in your general planning!

**[W]** = dependable water source

**[W]** = seasonal / unreliable water source

**[C]** = campground

**[T]** = toilet

TH = trailhead

TR = trail

Mtwy = Motorway (fire road)

\$ = costs money

**Mile 0.0** – **[T]** **[C]** Ray Miller TH (Point Mugu State Park)

- Need permission from the State Park to park overnight; \$
- 2.7** – hang left on Overlook TR, which is a fire road
- 4.6** – turn right Wood Canyon Vista TR (Backbone signage on post is worn off)
- **[C]** **[T]** Can depart just ahead to hike to La Jolla Valley walk-in CG; pit toilet; \$
- 6.4** – **[W]** Spigot on yellow pole at junction with dirt Sycamore Canyon Road, head left
- 6.5** – Stay straight and ignore road on your left
- 7.1** – stay on road, ignore Old Boney Trail on your right
- 7.6** – stay straight & ignore fire road on your left
- 7.8** – entrance to Danielson Ranch / Blue Canyon – now on Blue Canyon Trail
- 8.0** – **[W]** **[T]** **[C]** Danielson Ranch Group Campground (water spigot) \$
- Must reserve ahead of time; very pricey
- 8.1** - **[W]** possible water in canyon if it's been wet
- 8.6** – Stay down in canyon & ignore Old Boney Tr to your left
- 9.7** – on a long saddle now
- Ignore trail to right (Old Boney again) & head up to your left toward rocky ridgeline to pick up Chamberlain Trail; walk just over 3 miles along rocky spine
- 12.8** – 1<sup>st</sup> side trail to Tri-Peaks on left
- 13.3** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tri-Peaks TR departs to your left
- 14.4** – Sandstone Peak use trails begin appearing on your right
- 15.2** – hang left onto Mishe Mokwa Connector TR
- 15.4** – Mishe Mokwa TR departs to your left; stay right and head down
- 16.0** – **[T]** Mishe Mokwa TH at Yerba Buena Road / Trifuno Pass
- parking & portable toilet; be careful crossing road
- 20.5** – Cross Yerba Buena / Little Sycamore Canyon Road
- 21.1** – meet up with Etz Meloy Mtwy fire road
- 22.4** – depart onto singletrack which winds down down down
- 25.0** – Decker Road / Mulholland Highway
- 26.3** – **[T]** Encinal Canyon Rd
- Paved parking, outhouses, picnic table
  - trail actually continues to your left, across Encinal - not straight ahead (which takes you to Agony trail)
  - **[W]** Water is available at the Malibu Conservation Camp fire station at the end of Rattle Snake Road
- 26.8** – Now in Zuma / Trancas Canyon
- **[W]** Possible water down in canyon if it's been wet
- 27.9** – brief linkup with Edison Rd fire road
- 28.0** – depart fire road
- 28.5** – join Zuma Ridge Mtwy for short bit
- 28.6** – depart Zuma Ridge Mtwy on singletrack to your right
- 30.2** – **[W]** Possible water in Zuma Creek if it's been wet

- best accessed on the far side of the bridge
- 31.1** – [T] Kanan Dume Rd
- pit toilets, shaded bench, big parking area
- 33.4** – Latigo Cyn Rd
- 34.4** – Cross Newton Mtwy
- [W] possible water down in Upper Solstice Canyon if it's been wet
- 36.4** – briefly join, then depart another unpaved road (Edison?)
- 37.0** – Corral Canyon (Malibu Creek State Park)
- pick up single track (mostly walking ON rock, then a brief singletrack segment)
- 37.4** – join Mesa Peak Motorway (fire road)
- 40.0** – hairpin turn, ignore Puerco Cyn Rd, which appears twice on your right
- 41.8** – side road to Tapia Water Treatment Plant – private property, stay right
- 42.4** – [W] [T] Malibu Cyn Rd (Piuma TH / Tapia TH)
- Bathrooms, parking \$
  - Follow Backbone for a short bit to Tapia Park, then walk through the park & pick up the Tapia Spur Trail to reach Malibu Creek SP for [C] (\$, reserve ahead of time); site #3 is right by the connector trail
- 44.3** – Piuma Ridge TH at Piuma Rd
- [W] Possible water in Cold Creek if it's been wet
- 47.5** – Side trail for Stunt Rd, goes to your left
- 48.7** – Junction of trail to Saddle Peak ( straight to stay on Backbone)
- 49.5** – briefly join w/ Stunt Rd, with great views across Lois Ewen Overlook
- continue past the signs on Topanga Tower Mtwy
- 49.6** – look for singletrack departing on your right
- 50.2** – begin long switchback descent on Hondo Cyn TR
- 53.0** - [W] possible water crossing the trail here if it's been wet
- 53.5** – Old Topanga Cyn Blvd
- [W] possible water in the creek if it's been wet, just before reaching the road
  - [W] Topanga Creek General Store & restaurants about 0.5 mi off-trail, south on Old Topanga Canyon Rd
  - After crossing, pass Henry Ridge Tr and Greenleaf Rd connector, going right here down to Topanga Canyon Road
- 54.2** – [W] [T] Topanga State Park - Dead Horse TH
- Bathrooms & water fountain
- 55.5** – [W] Trippet Ranch Rd
- 56.4** – [W] [T] [C] Musch Camp, \$
- 57.5** – climb up to Eagle Junction, where you'll hang a left on the East Topanga Fire Road
- pass Eagle Rock side trail on right not long after

**58.0** – stay straight; pass Chaney Fire Rd and Garapito Tr, which depart close to each other on left

**58.8** – **[T]** Hub Junction

- shade, bench, pit toilet
- head right (south) from here

**59.4** – depart fire road to pick up singletrack Temescal Ridge TR on left

- Just after this junction, there's a side trail on left to 2126' Temescal Peak
- eventually turns into Rogers Fire Road, which winds down (and occasionally up) a series of ridgelines alongside Temescal Canyon

**64.3** – Junction with connector trail to Rustic Canyon, which goes to your left; stay straight

**64.7** – Chicken Ridge Bridge

**66** – Enter Will Rogers SP & intersect the Inspiration Point Loop Trail

- detour 0.1 mi to Inspiration Point for excellent views

**67** – **[W]** **[T]** Will Rogers TH (Will Rogers State Historic Park)

- Bathrooms, parking \$