

Map Legend

- Trailhead
- Free Parking
- River Crossings
- Santa Margarita River
- Main Roads
- Santa Margarita River Trail Preserve
- Other Conservation Lands

Trails

- Confluence Trail
1.25 miles one way from the County Trailhead to Sandia Creek Trailhead
- SMR Trail South moderate moderate
2.75 miles (one way)
- SMR Trail North moderate no bikes strenuous
2.4 miles (one way)
- Raptor Rim Trail moderate no bikes strenuous
1.5 miles (one way)
- Sandy Wash Trail moderate no bikes moderate
- 500 Foot Trail moderate moderate
2.0 miles (one way)
- Vista Point Loop Trail moderate strenuous
- North Stagecoach Loop Trail moderate strenuous no bikes
2.0 mile loop with 0.5 mile spur
- Connector & Access Trails

Trail Markers

Contour Interval = 20 feet



THE WILDLANDS
— CONSERVANCY —

SANTA MARGARITA RIVER TRAIL PRESERVE



SANTA MARGARITA ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
No Access Turnaround Point



FALLBROOK TRAILS COUNCIL

The Wildlands Conservancy's nonprofit partner the Fallbrook Trails Council have been volunteer stewards of these trails since 1995 and will continue their good work maintaining the trails in the years to come.



THE TRAILS

..... SANTA MARGARITA RIVER TRAIL SOUTH

2.75 miles (one-way) » Moderate Moderate
From the Sandia Creek trailhead walk towards the two wooden kiosk displays and follow the rock lined path into the oak woodland. At 0.25 miles you will encounter the Santa Margarita River and outcroppings of bedrock. Take care navigating the rocky terrain for approximately 0.1 mile. From here follow the well shaded river terrace, passing by several trail segments that lead to river crossings. At trail marker A8 turn right and climb the trail and turn left once you reach an intersection to rejoin the trail and continue toward Rainbow Creek. This is an out and back trail.

..... SANTA MARGARITA RIVER TRAIL NORTH

2.4 miles (one-way) » Moderate Strenuous No Bikes
From the trailhead cross the Santa Margarita River at river crossing 6 or 7 and follow the sandy trail network (indicated yellow on trail map) to the edge of the oak woodlands. From here ascend the steep section of trail to a ridge and descend back into the oak woodland (indicated in blue on trail map). Follow the trail across a seasonal stream crossing and ascend once again to gain amazing views of the river corridor and surroundings, including Gavilan Mountain. The trail will take you past several additional river crossings and narrow shelves and lead to the foot a Gavilan Mountain. Several loops can be made by crossing the river and connecting with the Santa Margarita River Trail South (indicated in green on trail map). River crossing #12 is a popular place to cross the river.

..... 500' TRAIL

2 miles (one-way) » Moderate Moderate
This trail is an alternative to the River Trail and instead rings the upland portions of the preserve at an elevation of 500 feet above sea level. Chaparral dominates the slopes surrounding that this path traverses. There are numerous vistas of nearby granite studded peaks, Santa Rosa Plateau, and the Santa Margarita River and its tributaries filled by lush green riparian canopies.

..... RAPTOR RIM TRAIL

1.5 miles (one-way) » Moderate Strenuous No Bikes
Climb up Raptor Ridge through California lilac and spring-time wildflower fields to the breath-taking views of the winding Santa Margarita River below. Follow the trail along the rim of the canyon to a set of switchbacks that connect with the SMR Trail North.

..... NORTH STAGECOACH LOOP No Bikes

2 miles (loop) optional 0.5 mile spur » Moderate Strenuous
This portion of the preserve rewards those who are willing to go the distance with unique springtime wildflower displays and Opuntia cactus gardens. Some of the most mature and large oaks and sycamores reside on the out fringes of the river floodplains in these areas. The last half-mile spur trail brings you to the boundary with San Diego State University's Santa Margarita Ecological Preserve. No access is permitted on the Reserve without a docent guide.