

good swimming and camping for backpackers.

Return to the Willow Ridge Crest Trail, and pass shallow Hoover Lake and several sections of chamise chaparral as you appreciate ongoing views of the Pacheco drainage to the east and previously mentioned vistas to the north and west. Turn left onto the signed Willow Ridge Trail 3.5 miles past Coit Lake. You'll spot an unsigned side trail 0.2 mile farther that leads to a spring that usually shrivels up by early summer.

Back on the Willow Ridge Trail, descend 1,000 feet of elevation over 1.3 miles to the East Fork Coyote Creek. Los Cruzeros, another backpack camp, is a short side trip downstream. Cross the creek and continue on the Pacheco Route, now

a dirt road. Climb 0.4 mile to a signed trail junction, bear left, and continue left at another signed junction 0.3 mile farther.

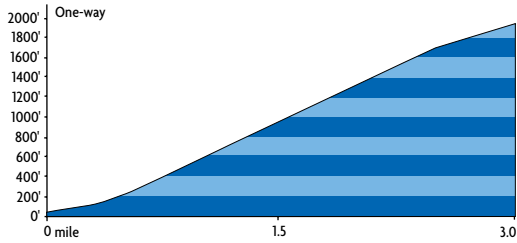
Gradually descend for 1 mile to Poverty Flat, another favorite creekside camping spot. From here, briefly follow Coyote Creek to two signed trail junctions, and cross the creek (which may be impassable in winter). Stay straight on the Pacheco Route for a 1.6-mile climb past a variety of oaks, plus gray pine and laurel, to a previously encountered trail junction, where you stay straight on the Pacheco Route. The trail now climbs to a plateau, with splendid views of canyons and rolling hills, and then descends to the trailhead.



*Montara State Beach*

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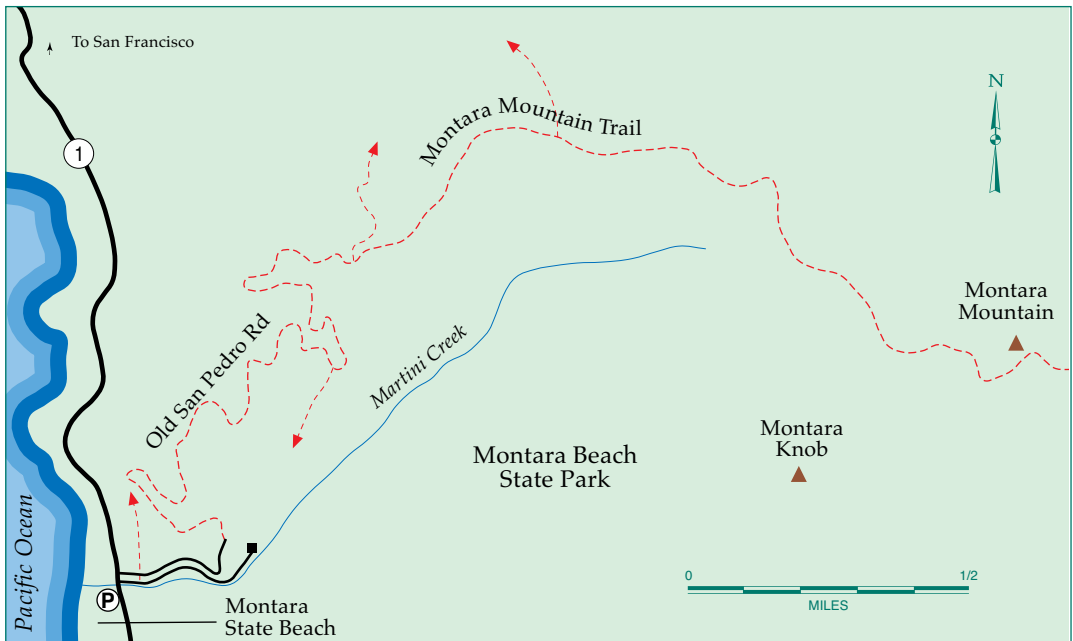
## NORTH PEAK MONTARA MOUNTAIN

**Length:** 6 miles round-trip**Hiking time:** 4 hours**High point:** 1,898 feet**Total elevation gain:** 2,200 feet**Difficulty:** strenuous**Season:** year-round**Water:** none; bring your own**Map:** USGS 7.5' Montara Mountain**Information:** Half Moon Bay State Beaches

This hike offers an impressive array of wildflowers and chaparral plants, as well as

a superb top-of-the-world panorama of the San Francisco Bay area and the Pacific Ocean, including the Farralon Islands.

Watch for a signed entrance gate on the east side of Highway 1 several yards north of the access road to Montara State Beach (10 miles north of Half Moon Bay). If this small lot is packed, you may have to park farther north at the Gray Whale Cove parking area on the east side of the highway or at the Montara State Beach parking lot.



The path initially travels east and parallels a grove of tall cypress trees. Bear sharply left onto Old San Pedro Road at 0.2 mile, just in front of the ranger's residence. Fortunately, this dirt path is wide, because poison oak, identifiable by its three-leafed branchlets, dominates trailside to 0.4 mile.

At 0.5 mile walk past a shady grove of Scotch broom and pampas grass, both hardy, exotic plants. The path now climbs relentlessly, with improving views of the towns of Half Moon Bay behind you and Pacifica northward.

Bear right at 1.4 miles onto the Montara Mountain Trail, a fire road. The steepest climbing occurs from 1.6 to 1.9 miles, accompanied by California poppy and lupine. Blue-blossom California lilac dominates trailside from 2 to 2.5

miles as monumental rock outcrops attract attention in the distance.

You may be tempted to stray off the beaten path to climb a number of small peaks from 2.7 to 2.9 miles, but stay on the main dirt road and reward yourself with a 360-degree view from the microwave/weather station atop 1,898-foot North Peak Montara Mountain at 3 miles. Look for Mount Diablo to the east and Scarpers Peak and the Santa Cruz Mountains to the southeast. Half Moon Bay and its neighboring beaches stretch below to the southwest, and mighty Mount Tamalpais hovers to the north above San Francisco's skyscrapers. To the west, beyond the coastline, stretches the vast blue of the Pacific Ocean, with the Farrallon Islands visible on exceptionally clear days.

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## PURISIMA CREEK AND HARKINS RIDGE

**Length:** 7-mile loop

**Hiking time:** 4 hours

**High point:** 1,550 feet

**Total elevation gain:** 1,200 feet

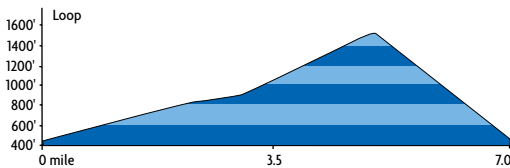
**Difficulty:** moderate

**Season:** year-round

**Water:** bring your own

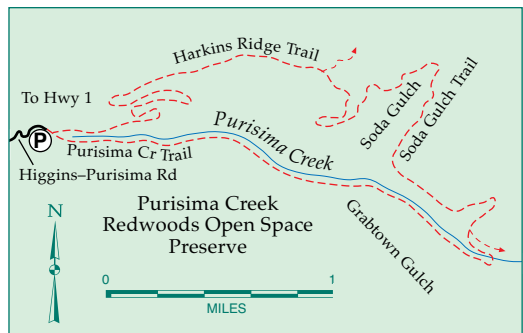
**Map:** USGS 7.5' Woodside

**Information:** Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District



This redwood tree journey parallels cool and peaceful Purisima Creek, passes tranquil, natural herb gardens on the secluded Soda Gulch Trail, and finally travels a view-filled, slender finger of Harkins Ridge.

Turn east on Verde Road 3.5 miles south of the intersection of Highways 1 and 92 at Half Moon Bay. Travel 0.25 mile and go straight onto



Purisima Creek Road. Go another 3.7 miles to the reserve and the trailhead.

The first mile along the Purisima Creek Trail,