

Finding Your Way on This Site

Look out on the horizon, visually or metaphorically.

Where can you go to feel its light? What experience will put you in touch with nature and with the history of those who preserved the serenity of the landscape over time? Explore a location based on the season, the culture, on walkability or your own proximity. Click on a section to review the directions and options for discovery.

Meanwhile, prepare for your journey by reviewing the information and inspiration on the website. Hiking books and websites abound for those seeking pure recreation. This work also speaks to those whose need for a walk in the wild springs not only from

recreational drive, but from a need to sink something of one's soul into the soil, to uncover more of truth and to discover another realm of oneness by forgetting self in the indiscriminate world of creation.

It does so by serving as a guide for exploring places where indigenous people have already drawn inspiration from nature's archetypal truths. The site descriptions seek not to exploit nor glamorize the lives of those who came before but to learn from them one attribute: a closeness to the natural world that enhances the inner life.

Because the search for universal truth and soul sanctum does not confine itself to the young and athletic, many of the trails described herein are short,

with potential meditation sites occurring early on the route. Most of the trails and sites are easily accessible, for the same reason, and also avoid exploitation of the ecosystem and tribal rights to privacy. Because the book belongs especially to those who need respite from metropolitan living, many of the locations lie within short driving distance of an urban center. Apologetically, I confess that time did not permit inclusion of the whole state of California but mostly the center of the state.

The sites listed retain some link to specific tribal groups, identified through oral sharing, archeological digs, historian's notes and markers, and writings and recollections. The journeys will not all feature

apparent signs of early tribal life, such as middens (dumping sites), morteros (grinding holes), petroglyphs (carvings in rock) or pictographs (paintings on rock).

Do not consider this a comprehensive listing of significant sites, for such a work would necessarily delve into every pocket and pinhole of California geography. (Indeed, people who honored the land have walked almost every acre of its passages over the centuries.) Rather, this compilation will help the reader identify favorite places in a few locales either currently or historically frequented by indigenous peoples in the midmost part of California, to appreciate the role they played in its preservation

and to recapture a willingness to slow down and feel the earth beneath our feet and to see with new eyes the beauties laid out by nature in all four directions as we quietly walk the good road.

No visitor to such a place can guarantee the same experience to the next guest. The contours of the trails changed slightly, due to fire, floods, slides, drought and earthquakes, and I offer a disclaimer that some may have changed from the time I walked them until today. However, sometimes a natural disaster does little to hinder a lusty crop of spring wildflowers; in fact, the mountains loom higher and the wildflowers lustier after a fire, and new vistas appear as the contours of a trail change. It never

hurts to check the ranger station for trail closures when in doubt after a weather-weary year.

I selected the sites not necessarily for their abundance of natural wonders nor any arbitrary judgement of their beauty, which one hiker cannot quantify nor qualify anyway, but because they maintain some significance in the lives of sanctuary-seekers who, sometimes with resting spots occurring on the trail or with nearby sites too protected or sacred to identify in print.

I offer this book with deep respect for the rights of each tribal nation, and for their protected lands. Only a few public petroglyphs and pictographs are included rather than ceremonial sites and burial

grounds. The book focuses predominantly on trails open to the public and from which descendants of the original inhabitants are willing to share the earth's bounties. The stories have been told with permission. The effort to protect sacred lands coexists with a desire to share the benefits of sacred tradition.

Many indigenous peoples did not originally embrace the concept of human ownership of land as modernity sees it. One tribal leader kindly remarked, "I have mixed emotions about chasing people away as we were once chased away, because the land in general was meant to be shared by all creatures."

This website, therefore, belongs to those who can share the land with respect. It belongs to all whose interest extends beyond merely hiking of trails to honoring and preserving the ecosystem as so many have in the generations that came before. It belongs to those not just looking forward to a mild workout, but to ascending a promontory where birds clap by at shoulder-level and the sun braises closed eyelids and rapture becomes synonymous with peace. This compilation belongs to those in search of insight and serenity, seeking places to become genderless, timeless, immortal yet insignificant among the massive stones and holographic horizons.

If used as intended, the writings will not teach the reader as much as the stones will teach such a journeyman.