

South Plateau Trail Guide

A 0.7 mile walk through a pine forest

This guide will tell you about some of the plants between here and the Gibson Beach Train junction. As you walk along you may see and hear gray squirrels in the trees and perhaps hear the twittering of pygmy nuthatches, chickadees, and other birds high in the Monterey pines.



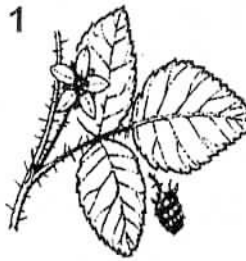
There are eleven numbered posts along this trail that match the descriptions in this guide.

Enjoy your hike!

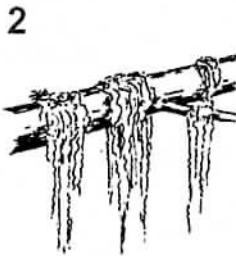
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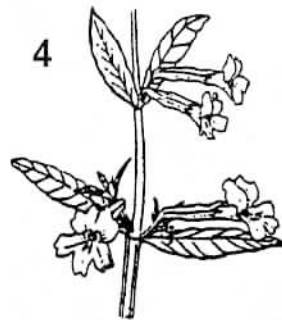
Wild blackberry is a member of the rose family. The ripe black berries are relished by many wild creatures as well as by humans. Notice that each compound leaf has three leaflets. This is also true of poison oak, but note that blackberry leaves and stems are covered with small spines.



Notice the **lace lichen** hanging from the branches of the Monterey pines. This plant-like growth is often incorrectly called Spanish moss, a different species altogether. Lace lichen is a combination of an alga and a fungus. The alga lives in the tissues of the stringy fungus and the fungus provides a structure for the alga to live in. The lichen does not harm the trees.

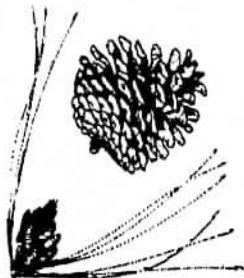


Poison oak is dangerous to humans who are allergic to the oil found in all parts of the plant, including the dried stems. Do not touch this plant! Learn to recognize it. The leaves vary in color from bright green to scarlet, and in size from less than an inch to over 2 inches. Note how it is climbing the nearby pine trees. Poison oak can take the form of a vine, ground cover, or a shrub. Some unfortunate people pick the beautiful leaves for flower and leaf arrangements, to their sorrow. The oil causes watery blisters and intense itching for up to 2 weeks.



Sticky monkey flower has earned its name from the two inch, dark green leaves that are covered with a viscous substance under the leaf and are sticky to the touch. The trumpet shaped flowers range from yellow to orange and have a two lipped stigma which closes when irritated. This aids in trapping pollen brought by insects. Showy stands may be found throughout Point Lobos.

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The **Monterey pines** are native to this area. Monterey pines have three needles in a bundle connected at the base by a small papery sheath. The male cones that produce pollen are small and found at the tips of the branches where the bundles of needles attach. The female cones that produce the seeds are about the size of a pear. Squirrels are fond of the seeds or "nuts" found in the female cones. You may find cones on the ground with the scales chewed off by squirrels.

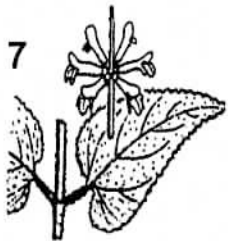
Intersection of Pine Ridge Trail

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Dead pine trees are a normal sight in a pine forest. Monterey pines are not particularly long-lived – generally less than 100 years. They are frequently attacked by bark beetles, fungi, termites, and, currently, pitch canker. Many dead or dying trees provide valuable nesting sites for small birds, such as pygmy owls, chickadees, and nuthatches. Eventually, the decaying tree will fall and decompose to soil.

7



Wood mint has hairs or bristles that are neither sharp nor toxic. Mint family members can be recognized by the square stem, opposing leaves, irregular lavender flowers, and generally a characteristic odor. Wood mint is abundant under the shade of the Monterey pines.

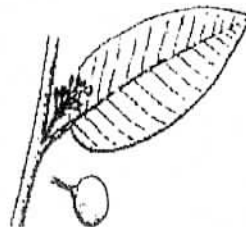
8



The **Coast Live Oak** generally does better in grasslands, which is what Point Lobos was until the early 20th century. The local Rumsien Native Americans burned the grasses after harvesting the seeds, thereby controlling the spread of pines that now populate the area and crowd out the oaks. The Rumsien used the acorns as a food staple. They leached the tannic acid from the acorns with hot water poured through baskets or sand pits, and ground the acorns in grinding rocks. The acorn meal was made into cakes or mush.

The bench. Take a moment and relax!

9



Coffeeberry is so named because it produces a black berry that looks like a coffee bean. The leaf resembles that of a rhododendron. The berries were used by early settlers as a laxative. Raccoons love to eat the berries, and the seeds inside the berries are often found in their droppings, or "scat". The berry is green when young and turns reddish color then black when it matures.

Watch your step going down a series of wooden steps.

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The gray-green **Sagebrush**, or *Artemisia*, is widespread throughout the coastal region of California. It is a member of the sunflower family and has a very pungent odor.

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Here you see an expanse of the **coastal scrub** mentioned earlier. Some people call this dense brush "chaparral", which is actually a different plant community that also has dense, rigid bushes. The plants of the coastal scrub are well adapted to the long periods without rain common to this area.

We hope you have enjoyed this walk. Please recycle this guide to the entrance station or trail box if you have no further use for it.

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