

Diablo Foothills Regional Park – Castle Rock/ Stage Road/ Little Yosemite/ Briones to Mt. Diablo/ Hanging Valley/ Stonegate/ Buckeye Ravine/Shell Ridge Loop/ Borges Ranch Trails

Seasonal waterfall, open grass lands, pine forest, and expansive views; experience a little bit of everything.



Length: 7.34 miles

Location: Walnut Creek

Intensity: Challenging

Trail Features: This challenging hike travels through two very different environments near newly reconstructed Castle Rock Recreation Area. This route passes a seasonal waterfall (January-April), it is strongly recommended to have sturdy hiking shoes and trekking poles during the rain season. During the summer bring plenty of water. Grab a park map, and check for park updates at the bulletin board.

Trail Directions: This loop trail can be done in either direction from the starting point; this description saves the strenuous parts for the end. From the staging area, head south along the Shell Ridge Trail towards the Castle Rock Trail. Castle Rock Trail will become Stage Road Trail with surrounding rock formations and the beautiful Pine Creek below. Stay on the trail and avoid the single-track trails cutting into the creek, as this is a very sensitive habitat for the endangered red-legged frog. About 100 yards before the gate marking the entrance to Mt. Diablo State Park, turn right onto the Little Yosemite Trail. When the trail forks, take the right fork, which leads over a small creek and up the hill. Shortly after a big rain there is a beautiful waterfall in the stream, hence the trail name. Partway up the hill, a gate marks the boundary between Diablo Foothills Regional Park and Mt. Diablo State Park. Continue along the Little Yosemite Trail into open grasslands. At the top of the hill, turn right onto the Briones to Mt. Diablo Regional Trail,. Both trails to the right lead to the main trail. The next signpost can be misleading; it reads “Not a through trail” with an arrow pointing left. Don’t go that way; continue straight to the gate at the top of the hill and see the jagged rock outcrops called “China Wall” along the ridgeline to the left. Passing through the gate at the top of the hill, you are back in Diablo Foothills Regional Park. At the next trail junction, about 150 yards ahead, turn left onto the Hanging Valley Trail, which leads down a small valley. Passing through a fence line at the bottom of the valley, turn right on the Hanging Valley Trail and ascend a hill to the ridge top. Continue past a dead-end trail on the left to the junction with the Stonegate Trail and the Twin Ponds Trail, then turn right on the Stonegate Trail. In a short distance, the Stonegate Trail rejoins the Briones to Mt. Diablo Trail. At this junction, bear left. Shortly you will see the Buckeye Ravine Trail on the right, with a trail marker and a “No Bicycles” sign. Do not take this branch of the Buckeye Ravine Trail. Stay on the Briones to Mt. Diablo Trail for another fifth of a mile to the next junction of the Buckeye Ravine Trail, which also has a “No Bicycles” sign.

