Discover Wildcat Canyon

Year opened: 1936
Acres: 2,789
Highlights: Hiking, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, surviving structures from Works Progress Administration work projects completed in the 1930s.
Did you know? This park originally included today’s Tilden Regional Park, which was split off in 1937 and renamed in honor of Charles Lee Tilden, the Park District’s first general manager.

FEES: There are no fees at Wildcat Canyon.

HISTORY
Today’s Wildcat Canyon Regional Park is likely located entirely within the homeland of the Huchiun, an Ohlone tribe whose members spoke the Karkin language. The Huchiun thrived for generations and variously hunted, to occur in larger and healthier populations than if they never used them. The 1772 and 1776 arrival of Spanish expeditions signaled a time of severe disruption, dislocation, and upheaval. Despite these changes, today’s Ohlones are bringing ancestral cultural traditions forward into the future.

By 1840 most East Bay land had been parcelled out in land grants, and Juan Jose and Victor Castro were awarded all vacant lands between the already established ranchos. The Castros kept a small portion, and speculators shared the rest with a water company and the town of Orinda. At this time the streams and springs of Wildcat Canyon became the focus of a struggle over water rights. In the mid 1920s, when the East Bay Municipal Utility District built Mokelumne River water to the East Bay, the “water wars” came to an end.

In 1936 the East Bay Regional Park District acquired 1,910 acres to create Wildcat Canyon as one of its three original parklands. Additional acquisitions since then have brought the parkland to its current 2,789 acres.

ALVARADO PARK is at the north end of Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. This area began as a private park in 1909 and was taken over by the City of Richmond in 1923. It remained a city park until 1965, when it was transferred to the East Bay Regional Park District to become part of Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. The original facilities at Alvarado Park included an open-air pavilion and dance platform, later converted to a roller rink. These are now gone, but marina work, retaining walls, a stone bridge, and stone light standards remain.

Alvarado Park is considered a unique variation on the National Park Service-style of “rustic park architecture.” Its stone masonry was constructed during the City of Richmond’s ownership through various Depression-era work programs. Because of these unique features, Alvarado is included in the National Registry of Historic Places.

GEOLGY AND WILDLIFE
The hills and valleys in Wildcat Canyon are marked by squatters’ struggles and water wars. Old and fresh landslides and slumps are numerous. Springs and ponds are common. Small earthquake faults have left their traces. Large coastal live oaks, bay laurels, and a scattering of bigleaf maples and madrones grow on east-facing slopes. North-facing hillsides support nearly pure stands of bay laurel fringed with coast live oak. Moist chaparral of coyote brush, poison oak, elderberry, snowberry, blackberry fern, and blackberry grow high on north-facing slopes.

A riparian forest of alder, willow, creek dogwood, and bay laurel grows in the gorge of bedrock-cutting Wildcat Creek. The west-facing canyon slopes are covered with introduced annual grasses (oat, rye, barley, etc.). A few stands of native bunch grasses persist. The re are many native wildflower species competing with introduced plants such as poison hemlock, mustard, radish, and cardoon thistle.

Foxes, raccoons, skunks, and opossums range nightly through the canyon. Deer, ground squirrels, and voles forage by day. Gopher snakes, king snakes, and western racers inhabit the fields and meadows; garter snakes hunt the ponds and stream verges. Rubber boa and ringnecks snakes inhabit the forest. Redtail hawks, American kestrels, sharp-shinned and Cooper’s hawks, and turkey vultures soar aloft. Great horned owls inhabit the night. There are also many varieties of songbirds. Remember: please do not take animal or plant life, as all such resources are protected for the enjoyment of everyone.

PUBLIC TRANSIT
AC Transit #70 and #74 stop at San Pablo Dam Road and Clark Road weekdays with an approx. 1-mile walk to the Clark-Boas Trail. Line #67 goes to Grizzly Peak Blvd. and Spruce St. daily and into Tilden Nature Area on weekends. For AC Transit service is subject to change: AC Transit: 511 or 817-1717. TDD/TTY: (800) 448-9790. Para-Transit: (510) 287-5000.
WILDCAT CANYON

Hikers, Horses & Bicycles, Paved
Hikers, Horses & Bicycles, Unpaved
Hikers & Bikes Only
Hikers Only

9 1/2 Mileage Between Points
Paved Road Seasonal Stream
Seasonal Pond
Parking Equestrian Staging Picnic
Restroom Reservable Picnic
Information Horseshoes Telephone Drinking Water
Peak Gate

Contour Interval 20 feet

WELCOME!
Please enjoy the Regional Parks safely, and help protect and preserve the parklands by complying with park rules and regulations.

SAFETY and ETIQUETTE
• Stay on-trails. Taking shortcuts can be dangerous and causes erosion.
• Whaling and swimming in undesignated areas may be dangerous and may harm the watershed.
• Carry and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is a leading cause of injuries on the trail.
• Be prepared for sudden changes in weather conditions.
• Trails can be slippery, rocky and steep. Proceed carefully at your own risk.
• Wildlife may be present on the trails at any time. Feeding or approaching wildlife is dangerous and illegal.
• Bicycles may be ridden on designated trails and fire roads. Please observe trail etiquette, with horses, then hikers, having the right-of-way. Equestrians should let other trail users know how to safely pass horses.
• Keep the parks beautiful. Pack out what you pack in.

RULES
Dogs must be leashed 200 feet from any trail or park entrance, and at all times in designated areas and in posted areas of the park. Dog walkers are required to clean up after their dogs and remove dog waste bags from the trails. Dogs must be under voice control at all times. Dogs are not permitted at the Botanic Garden and the Little Farm Environmental Education Center in Tilden Regional Park.
• State law requires that all bicyclists under age 18 wear an approved helmet while riding on trails and roadsides. All bicyclists and equestrians are strongly encouraged to wear helmets at all times.
• Cattle graze year round in the park; keep a safe distance from horses. Please observe trail etiquette. Beginners and fire roads. Please observe trail etiquette, with horses, then hikers, having the right-of-way. Equestrians should let other trail users know how to safely pass horses.
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For more information on the park, its trails, and services, please visit www.ebparks.org.