

Sespe Hot Springs

Ojai Ranger District

Los Padres National Forest



Sespe Hot Springs in the Sespe Wilderness is one of several natural hot springs located in the Los Padres National Forest. Congress created The Sespe Wilderness in June of 1992 with the Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act to preserve the natural qualities of the land. Through this congressional act, seven wilderness areas totaling 400,450 acres were added to the Los Padres National Forest. The Sespe Wilderness, encompassing 219,700 acres was the largest of the seven wilderness areas to be designated. Access to the Sespe Hot Springs is by foot or horseback only. Mountain bikes are not permitted in areas designated as wilderness.

The spring months are ideal for visiting Sespe Hot Springs as the summer temperatures can climb to 100 degrees or more. The winter months can also be enjoyable if Grade Valley Road is not closed because of snow. In the rainy season, there is also the possibility of high water crossings. Be sure to check with the Ojai Ranger District during these months for additional information. Elevation of the Sespe Hot Springs is 2,600 feet.

There are 3 ways to access the hot springs:

1. Sespe River Trail - Length 16.8 miles one way. Moderately difficult hike. From Highway 33 take Rose Valley Road to the Piedra Blanca Trailhead. Cross the riverbed and head down-stream (east) on the old road. There are seven more river crossings before Sespe Hot Springs. The first is at Bear Canyon after 4.5 miles. There are numerous camping locations and many deep pools along the river though they may be dry during the summer.

2. Alder Creek Trail - Length 7.5 miles one way. Moderately difficult hike. Take Highway 126 to Fillmore, turn north on A Street/Goodenough Road to Squaw Flat Road toward the Sespe Oil Fields. This is a narrow rough road traveled by large oil trucks so be very cautious as you continue to the parking area at Dough Flat. At the trailhead you enter the Sespe Wilderness. Hike north 2.5 miles to the first trail junction, and then turn left toward Alder Creek. Cow Springs is the first camp along the way. In the summer months, water is normally very low and there is not much shade so it can be very hot. The next trail junction is 2.7 miles. If you stay to the left, the trail will go to Alder Creek and you'll reach Alder Camp after 0.6 miles. If there is no water there, continue downstream until the trail leaves the drainage bottom, approximately one mile from Alder Camp. Follow the stream for 150 yards and you'll reach Shady Camp, which normally has water year-round. From the Shady Camp turnout, it is 5.2 miles to the Sespe Hot Springs.

3. Johnson Ridge Trail - Length 9.5 miles. A difficult hike. From the trailhead at Mutau Flat in the Mt. Pinos Ranger District, it is a steep drop down in to the Sespe. There is no water and little shade along the trail. Prior to the June 1992 wilderness legislation, this was a popular motorcycle trail but it is now open only to horse back riders and hikers.

For Additional Information Contact: Ojai Ranger District

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