



Top Waterfall
Rose Valley Falls Hike,
Los Padres National Forest

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Top Waterfall

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The natural world comes alive with the free fall of water diving off precipices -- and this year more than most after the nonstop drenchings. Rose Valley Falls is one of Southern California's best waterfalls, yet few hikers take advantage of it. Not just another small SoCal cataract, Rose Valley rivals any waterfall south of Yosemite during rainy years.

A series of three drops totaling more than 300 feet of hurtling foam, Rose Valley Falls is the highest waterfall in the Los Padres National Forest. The first drop -- a mere 20-foot cascade -- is often overlooked. The second is an impressive 90-foot plunge as Rose Valley Creek spills over a near-vertical face. At almost 200 feet, the upper falls is a replica of Bridalveil Falls.

The hike is a treat, easy enough for children yet rewarding for experienced hikers. Begin the trek at Rose Valley Campground, where a wooden sign leads you to the path skirting Rose Valley Creek. It's a mere 10 minutes to the base of Lower Rose Valley Falls. For the upper falls, backtrack about 25 yards to a trail spur that heads up the hillside to a view of the falls you'll never forget.

How to get there: Highway 33 is closed at Wheeler Gorge due to rain damage; call (805) 646-4348 for updates. Take Highway 33 north, turn left at Ojai, then it's eight miles to Wheeler Gorge Campground. Continue 6 1/2 miles to Rose Valley Road and three miles to an unsigned intersection. Turn right to Rose Valley Campground.

-- Chris Shaffer

