

Mt. WITTENBURG SUMMIT FROM BEAR VALLEY (VIA Mt. WITTENBURG TRAIL–SKY TRAIL–MEADOW TRAIL LOOP)
POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE, CA

This 5.2-mile loop trail starts at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, and ascends to the ridge between Bear Valley and the coast, then on to the top of Mt. Wittenburg. We had done the Mt. Wittenburg Trail–Sky Trail–Meadow Trail Loop two weeks earlier, but we did not get good views due to the fog. So, we opted to redo that loop trail and additionally hike to the top of Mt. Wittenburg (which, unfortunately, does not have very good views due to dense trees at the summit). Note that, according to TOPO maps, there used to be a "short-cut trail" which connected the summit of Mt. Wittenburg with the Mt. Wittenburg trail, below its junction with the Sky Trail; unfortunately, I could not find any remaining trace of this trail.

See my report on the Bear Valley–Mt. Wittenburg–Meadow Trail loop for more photos and details on those trails.

I recommend picking up a hiking map from the Bear Valley Visitor Center (a PDF is also available on the NPS website).

The distances for this hike are as follows:

Bear Valley Visitors Center to Mt. Wittenburg Trail turnoff: 0.2 mile

Mt. Wittenburg Trail turnoff to junction with Z-Ranch Trail: 1.8 miles

Junction with Z-Ranch Trail to summit of Mt. Wittenburg, and back to the junction with Z-Ranch Trail: 0.4 miles

Junction with Z-Ranch Trail to junction with Sky and Meadow Trails: 0.4 mile

Junction with Sky and Meadow Trails to Bear Valley Trail via Meadow Trail: 1.6 miles

Bear Valley Trail–Meadow Trail junction to Bear Valley Visitors Center: 0.8 mile

Looking across at the nearby hills on the hike up the Mt. Wittenburg Trail from the Bear Valley Trail. On our past hikes up this trail, there had been smoke and/or fog which had prevented us from seeing much of a view:



Another spot along the Mt. Wittenburg Trail from which we could get a view of the nearby hills:



Looking out at the view through some trees further up the trail:



When we reached the ridge, and the junction with the trail to the Mt. Wittenburg summit, there was no fog obstructing the view towards the coast:



This is the trail heading up to the summit of Mt. Wittenburg:



The trail quickly enters a dense patch of trees:



The sunlight streaming through the trees in some places made for great photographs:



There are some use-trails branching off of the main trail; this one leads to a nice picnic spot, which unfortunately does not have any views beyond the trees:



For most of the hike to the summit of Mt. Wittenburg, the trail goes through dense trees:



This HDR photo turned out surprisingly nice, despite how dark it was under the trees through here:



Here we are approaching the summit of Mt. Wittenburg:



Looking out at the nearby hills through the trees:



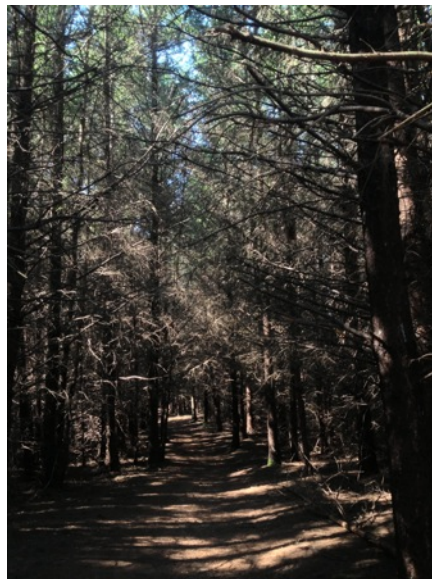
This use trail appears to loop back around to rejoin the main trail (I did not explore it further out of concern for ticks, since the grass here was quite long):



This is the "official" summit of Mt. Wittenburg:



From here, we headed back down the main trail:



The forest in this area goes through many different variations: Here, the trees are so dense that there is very little undergrowth, but they are not particularly tall. Further down the Mt. Wittenburg trail, the trees become a little less dense and taller, and there are grasses growing among them. And, on the Sky Trail past where it joins with the Meadow Trail, the trees become very tall and are more spread-out, and there is a substantial amount of small shrubbery between them:



Here we have rejoined the Sky Trail; this is the view looking out towards the coast, and Drakes Bay (which unfortunately isn't showing up well in this photo due to the poor resolution of my camera):



This is one of many wildlife research cameras located in this area:



Here is the intersection with the Meadow Trail; there was no fog here on this hike, but on our past hikes there was fog at this location, coming over the hills from over the ocean:



Looking down the Sky Trail, where it continues towards the Woodward Valley Trail junction and the Old Pine Trail junction:



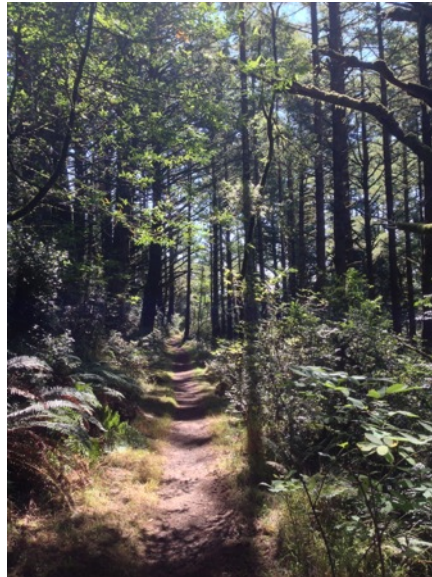
Walking down the huckleberry-lined Meadow Trail near where it meets the Sky Trail; it was very nice to enjoy the sunshine filtering through the trees here, rather than shivering in the drippy fog:



Looking at the view through the trees and across a nearby valley:



The Meadow Trail is very scenic, especially in the sunshine:



Notice that some hills are visible in the distance here; on previous hikes down the Meadow Trail, we only saw fog beyond the meadow:



In warmer months, this part of the trail can be quite warm to walk through, but in September it was very pleasant:



More scenic views as we descend to Bear Valley along the Meadow Trail:



These two trees alongside the trail have grown very close together, and the bigger one seems to be supporting the smaller one (which is a California Bay Laurel):



As we get closer to the main Bear Valley Trail, these orange flowers are a common sight alongside the trail:



I think this is a Pipevine plant climbing this small tree (it is a favorite food of the Pipevine caterpillar):



I'm not sure what this bush with the purple flowers is called; it's growing near the main Bear Valley Trail:

