

**SKY TRAIL TO TOP OF OLD PINE TRAIL, POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE, CA**

For this 7-mile hike, we started at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, ascended via the Mt. Wittenburg Trail to the ridge between Bear Valley and the coast, then followed the Sky Trail to the top of the Old Pine Trail. Because the Old Pine Trail is generally quite overgrown, and at this time it additionally had a posted warning about ground hornet nests near the trail, we turned around and headed back up the Sky Trail to its junction with the Meadow Trail, which we then followed down to the Bear Valley Trail.

See my report on the Bear Valley–Mt. Wittenberg–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 junction with Sky and Meadow Trails: 0.4 mile

Junction with Sky and Meadow Trails to junction with Sky and Woodward Valley Trails: 0.8 mile

Junction with Sky and Woodward Valley Trails to junction with Sky and Old Pine Trails: 0.3 mile

Junction with Sky and Old Pine Trails back to junction with Sky and Meadow Trails: 1.1 miles

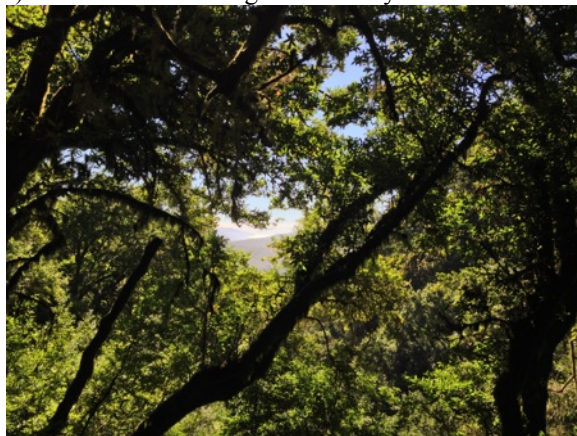
Junction with Sky and Meadow Trails to Bear Valley Trail via Meadow Trail: 1.6 miles

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

The sky was clear on the morning we did this hike, so we were able to get good views on the way up the Mt. Wittenburg trail:



Here, we are looking south towards (I think) Five Brooks. The fog in the valley looks almost like a glacier from here:



There was also no fog to the west towards the ocean, which is somewhat unusual. This view is from the junction with the Z-Ranch Trail:



From here, we headed down the Z-Ranch Trail towards the Sky Trail:



Looking west across the ocean and towards Drakes Beach:



The views were spectacular from the Z-Ranch Trail, just above where it meets the Sky Trail. I was wishing at this point that I had brought a better camera than my iPhone on this hike:



I think we could just barely see the Farallon Islands from here (but what we saw could have just been low clouds; I'm not sure):



Here is another view, this time of Limantour Beach, from further down the trail:



Another panorama of the excellent view of the ocean we had while descending along the Z-Ranch Trail:



Here is the junction with the Meadow Trail (left). The Sky Trail joins the Z-Ranch trail to the right (just behind where this photo was taken, and not visible), and continues straight ahead in this photo:



We were fortunate to get some views through the trees here, as there often is a lot of fog:



The trees along this early part of the trail are moderately tall and not very wide:



There also is a considerable amount of moss and ivy growing on these trees:



Soon, the trees get taller. Here I am looking up towards the top of one of these impressively tall trees:



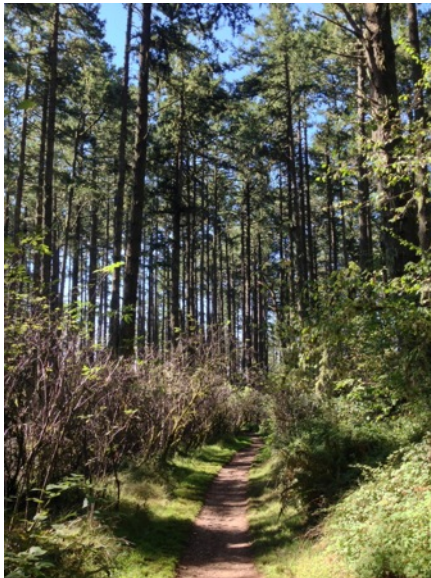
Notice all the moss and vines coating the trunks of these trees:



Looking through all these trees at the blue sky beyond:



The next three photos show the almost surreal hike through this incredible section of forest:



Here, the smaller, moss-covered trees near the trail almost form a tunnel to walk through up ahead:



Notice how green the grass still is alongside the trail, even though it is late September:



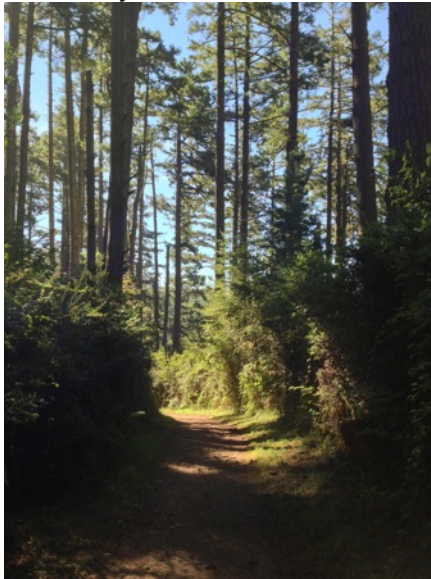
This small tree is almost entirely covered in moss:



As we descended towards the top of the Old Pine Trail, the trunks of these trees became thicker:



Here we are walking between two walls of dense huckleberry bushes:



The sunlight shining through the trees here made for incredible HDR photographs:

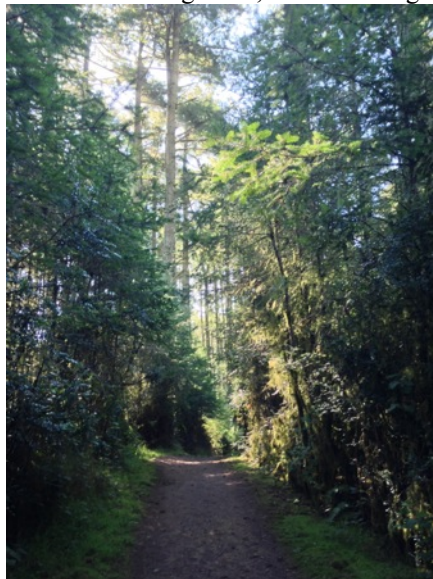




Notice the vines climbing way up this tree:



Notice how the forest changes slightly in places, sometimes having more, denser undergrowth:



The trail crosses to the west side of the ridge here:



The trunk of the tree just right of center in this photo splits, and has two trunks reaching for the sky:



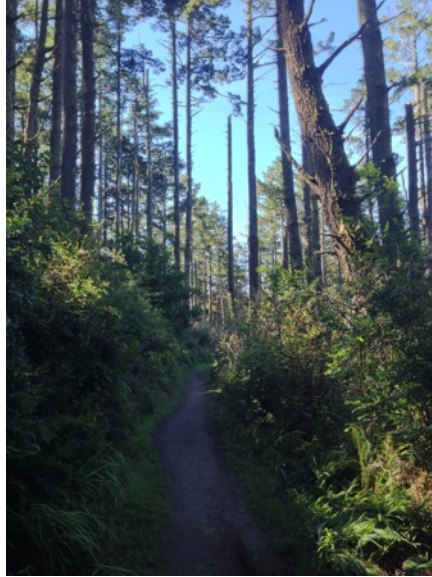
Zooming in on where this tree trunk splits; note the mass of ferns growing at the juncture:



To the left in this photo is yet another tree with lots of vines climbing its trunk:



Continuing along the Sky Trail as the trees start to thin:



Here, a tree fell across the trail and was cut to clear the path. Notice how the center of the trunk is at the far right, and the rings expand outwards asymmetrically:



The trail begins to descend more rapidly here, and the trees are not as tall here as they were earlier in the hike:



The next four photos show our progress towards the junction with the Woodward Valley Trail:



Here we have reached the junction with the Woodward Valley Trail, which heads towards the coast and joins the Coast Trail after 2 miles:



The Sky Trail gets narrower here, and continues towards the top of the Old Pine Trail, 0.3 miles away:



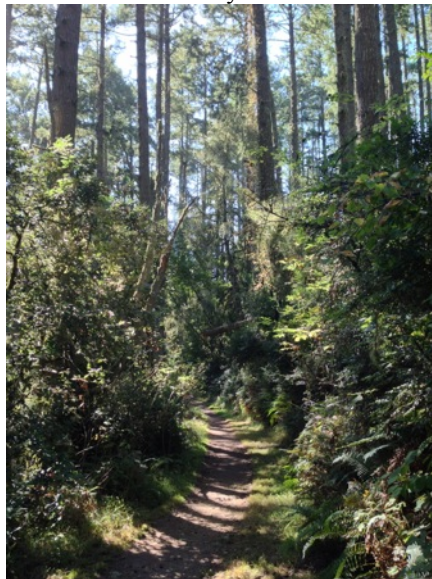
Here is the trail sign at the junction:



The Sky Trail climbs back up the ridge after its junction with the Woodward Valley Trail, and it continues to be very scenic:



Notice that here we are entering yet another patch of dense huckleberry bushes:



Looking southeast towards Bear Valley from the east side of the ridge:



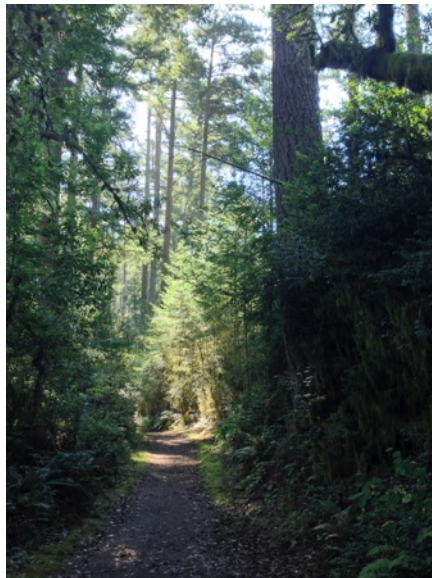
The trail flattens out as it continues through the huckleberry patch:



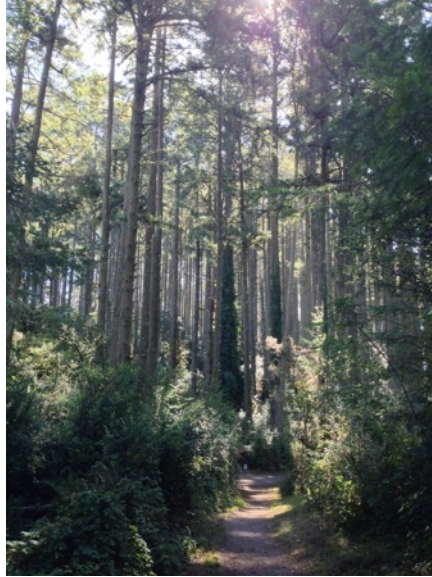
Notice the long strands of green moss hanging off the bushes to the right in this photo:



Here we are descending along the ridge again:



Near the top of the Old Pine Trail, we enter another grove of impressively tall trees:



At the fork with the Old Pine Trail, there is a sign warning hikers of an active yellow jacket nest along this somewhat overgrown trail. Note that it is still 1.9 miles along the Old Pine Trail to the Bear Valley Trail and Divide Meadow from here:

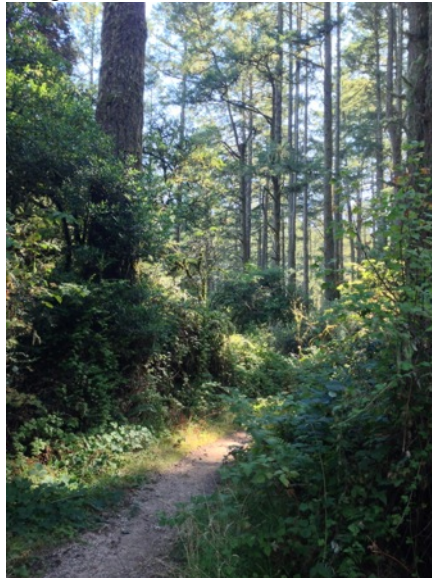


The Sky Trail continues to the right here; it reaches the junction with the Baldy Trail after 1.3 miles, then joins with the Coast Trail after a further 1.5 miles:

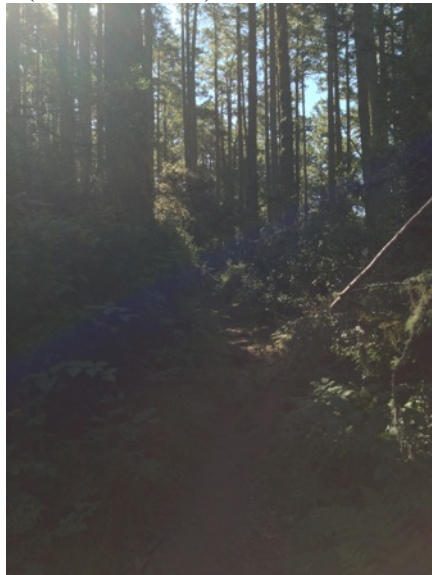




The Old Pine Trail takes off to the left, and cuts through the thick bushes:



Unfortunately, this picture was taken looking into the sun, but it shows that the Old Pine Trail is quite narrow here. Thus, we decided to turn around here, out of concern for yellow jackets (as well as ticks!):



This small blackberry bush is located near the junction with the Old Pine Trail:



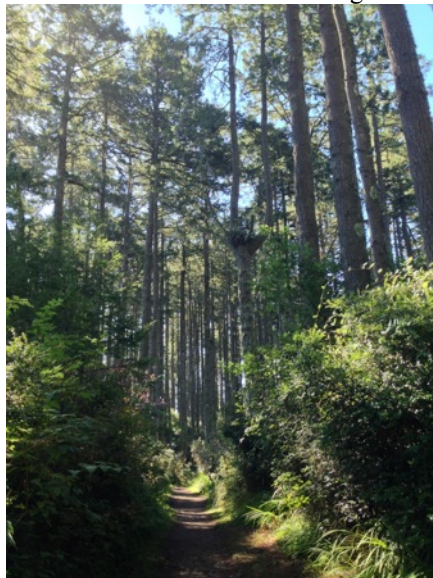
The next two photos show our progress back up the Sky Trail towards its junction with the Meadow Trail:



This tree's trunk has a flat place where a branch probably broke off and ferns are growing on it. Interestingly, it is located near the other tree which had ferns growing on it, between the two trunks, but we had missed it on the earlier part of our hike:



Here we are walking through the impressive forest of tall trees with thick trunks again:



On the way back up the Sky Trail, we spotted this small patch of blue-ish berries (I am not sure whether they are actual blueberries):



The grass which is growing under the trees near the top of the Meadow Trail is surprisingly long and thick, perhaps because of all the moisture it gets from the fog which is usually here:



Here, we have reached the top of the forest of tall trees, just before the junction of the Sky Trail with the Meadow Trail:



Notice the thick patch of moss growing on the west side (ocean-fog-side) of the trunk of the tree to the right in this photo:



Looking north, at the (dry) grassy meadow just above the top of the Meadow Trail:



The meadow for which the Meadow Trail is named is generally quite dry at the end of the summer, much different from the green grass growing below the trees along the Sky Trail:



One last photo, of a steep stretch of trail near where the Meadow Trail joins the Bear Valley Trail:

