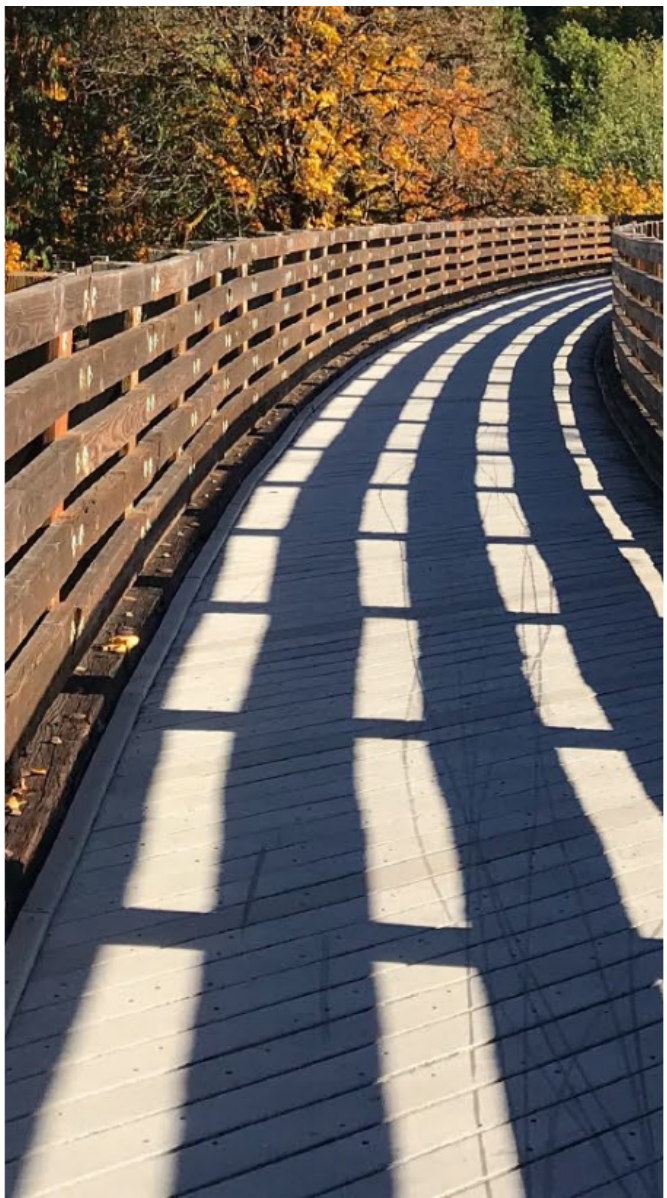
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2025

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Alum Rock Park Trail

California

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Nestled between Alum Rock Canyon and the Mt. Diablo foothills, Alum Rock Park west of San Jose is California's oldest city park. From the early to mid-1900s it was a popular resort and spa, complete with an indoor swimming pool, mineral baths and a restaurant. Visitors rode a train from San Jose into the park until the late 1920s, when the railroad folded. A relic of this tourism era still stands in the park: a log cabin dating back to 1913.

Alum Rock Park's 2.4-mile rail-trail follows a portion of the old tourist railroad line. It is a great family rail-trail, offering an abundance of modern facilities while maintaining its natural beauty and unique geological formations. The paved portion of the trail is wheelchair accessible. The trail begins as a dirt track with a fairly steep incline as it heads out into the park but quickly levels out. On the left are rolling hills and the Penitencia Creek, its banks blanketed with several types of fern as well as blackberry and wild rosebushes; on the right is a steep, fern-covered canyon.

The scenery begins to change after about 0.5 mile, as signs of civilization emerge. You pass the shaded Quail Hollow picnic area and a campground. The surface becomes paved and smooth 1.4 miles in. Continuing on to mile 1.5, you see a visitor center that features a ranger station, picnic benches, open spaces for sports and horseshoe pits. There are two playgrounds nearby, one on each side of the visitor center. One has tot swings and is designed for smaller children. The other has larger equipment for older kids. The Youth Science Institute (YSI) is located 2 miles in. It runs summer camps for children and houses a variety of live animals for display throughout the year.

Farther along on the left are several beautiful old stone bridges and small grottos. The grottos were constructed in the early 1900s to enclose the park's mineral springs. These springs were believed to possess healing properties, and their presence played a major role in the early success of Alum Rock Park. Signs posted in front of the grottos give detailed information about the springs and their history.

The rail-trail begins to feel rustic again toward the end. The surface changes to dirt, and the trail becomes enveloped by a variety of trees, including coast live oak, madrone and sycamore. Soon you arrive at a wood-planked steel bridge that crosses the creek. This is the end of the rail-trail, and bicycles are not allowed beyond this point. If you are on foot, you can cross this bridge and continue walking, where you'll eventually meet up with the South Rim Trail. The 740-acre park has 13 miles of hiking trails to explore.

Alum Rock Park Trail

California

States: California
Counties: Santa Clara
Length: 2.4miles
Trail end points: Petitencia Creek Rd. to Alum Rock Falls Rd.
Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Dirt
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Wheelchair Accessible,Mountain Biking,Walking

Parking & Trail Access

From Interstate 680 take Berryessa Road East. Turn right onto Piedmont Road then left on Penitencia Road. Continue past a residential area on Penitencia Road until you come to a dead-end with a parking lot and signed trailhead.

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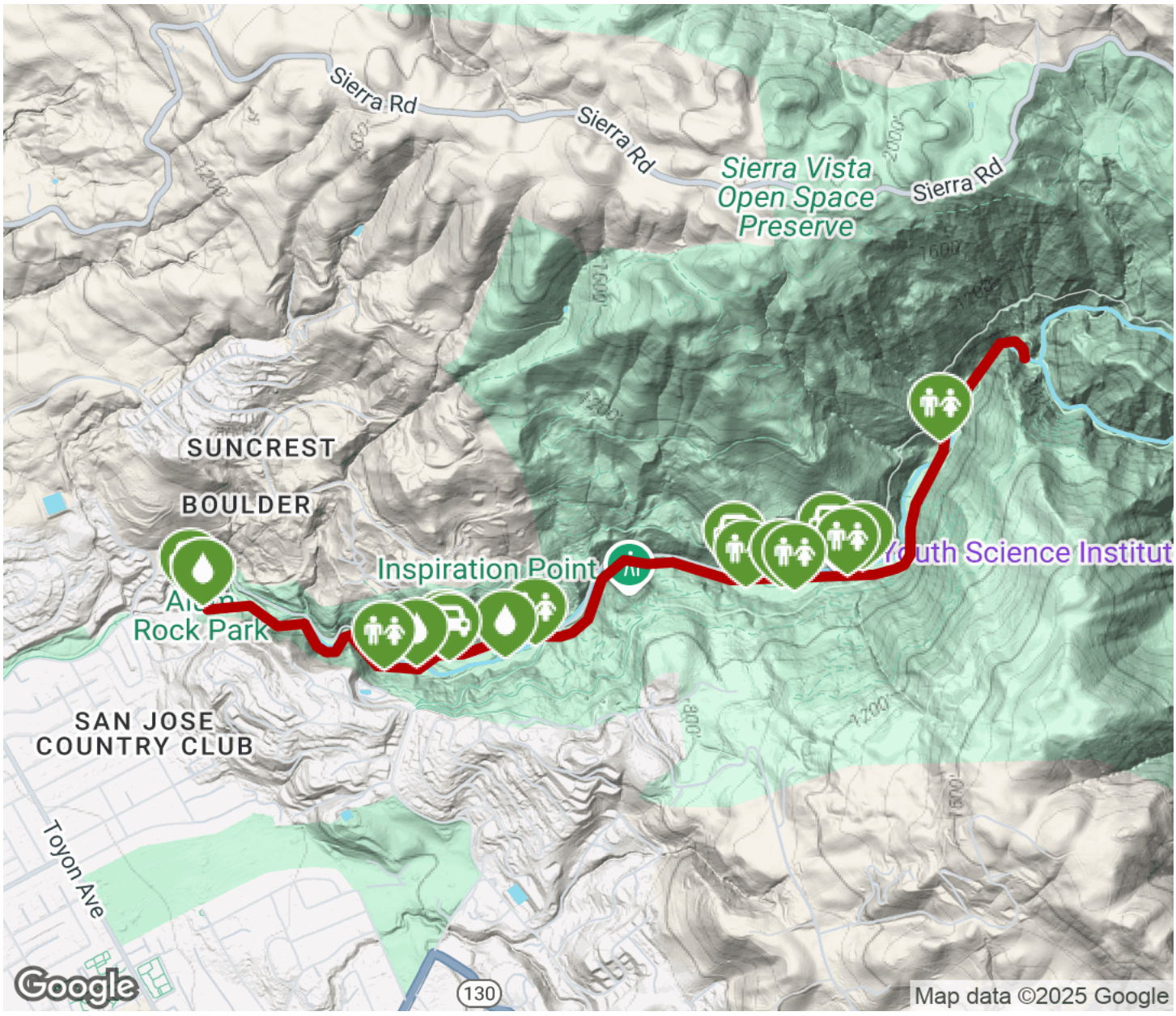

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel