



2025

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides   



**Mt. Lowe
Railway Trail**
California



Mt. Lowe Railway Trail

California

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Overview

The 5.8-mile path of an old tourist railway rolls through dizzying heights in the mountains near Pasadena in Southern California. Visitors are rewarded with inspiring views of rugged mountains, canyons, and the urban landscape below and can inspect ruins of mountaintop resorts and the remains of the railway.

About the Route

Unlike the mostly smooth, straight routes followed by typical rail-trails, the Mt. Lowe Railway Trail clings to canyon sides as it meanders through the San Gabriel Mountains in the Angeles National Forest. Carry plenty of food and water, as neither is available on this trail.

Scientist and inventor Thaddeus S.C. Lowe created the railway as a tourist destination in the 1890s. It made a 2,200-foot ascent up Rubio Canyon from Altadena on a 62% grade achieved by using gears and counterbalanced passenger cars powered by electricity—the only such trolley in the country. Present-day visitors are spared that climb up the Great Incline (which was demolished after the railway ceased operating in 1938) by starting their explorations from a trailhead on a roadway named Chaney Trail about a mile north of Altadena. Still, the route climbs about 1,400 feet to the ruins on Echo Mountain and 2,400 feet to Mt. Lowe Trail Camp.

Passing through the gate, take Mt. Lowe Road, a fire road, 2.4 miles to reach where it meets Chaney Trail Drive at the junction with the Mt. Lowe Railway Trail. Take the right fork onto the dirt trail, which leads to the ruins of the White City resort in 0.8 mile.

The resort included a 70-room, Victorian-style hotel, as well as an observatory, a casino, a dance hall, a zoo, and more. After Lowe went bankrupt, the Pacific Electric Railway acquired the operation. Along with a historical marker and artifacts from the railway, such as cars, wheels, and giant gears, there are foundations remaining for many buildings that were claimed by fire, landslides, and neglect over the years. Facing south, there are views of the Los Angeles Basin. (From here, the Sam Merrill Trail heads downhill to the Cobb Estate trailhead in Altadena and serves as an alternative way to reach the White City ruins.)

Returning to the trail junction, head right (north) onto Mount Lowe Road, which overlaps the Mt. Lowe Railway Trail and Echo Mountain Trail routes, to follow the old railway corridor's Alpine Division, which ran between White City and a tavern near Mount Lowe. Soon there is the longest straight section of the railway route, spanning just 225 feet. This leads to two tight switchbacks, the first called Horseshoe Curve and the second, Circular Bridge, the site of a wooden trestle suspended over the canyon below.



Mt. Lowe Railway Trail

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States: California

Counties: Los Angeles

Length: 5.8miles

Trail end points: Chaney Trail Dr & Mt. Lowe Rd in Angeles National Forest (Altadena) to Muir Peak Rd in Angeles National Forest (Altadena)

Trail surfaces: Dirt,Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Horseback Riding,Mountain Biking,Walking

Parking & Trail Access

The Mt. Lowe Railway Trail runs between Chaney Trail Dr & Mt. Lowe Rd and Muir Peak Rd in the Angeles National Forest (Altadena).

Parking is available at:

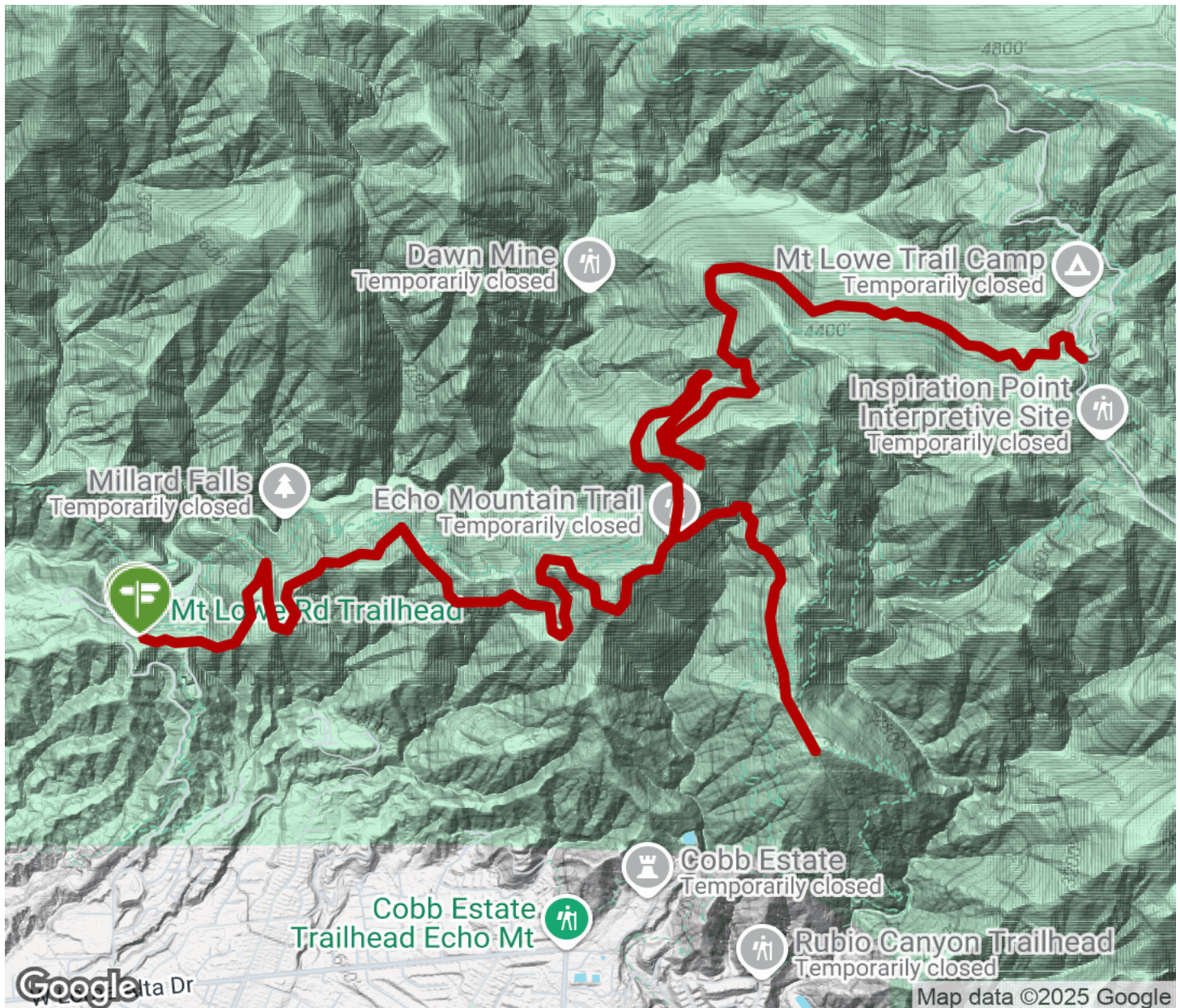
- Chaney Trail Dr & Mt. Lowe Rd (Altadena)

This is not an official address, please visit the [TrailLink map](#) for parking options and detailed directions.



Mt. Lowe Railway Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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