



2025

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Loma Prieta
Grade Trail**
California



Loma Prieta Grade Trail

California

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This extremely scenic rail-trail is located in the majestic Forest of Nisene Marks State Park near Aptos, California. The park was the site of major logging operations by the Loma Prieta Lumber Company from 1883 until 1923. In the 1950s, Herman, Agnes and Andrew Marks purchased about 9,700 acres of this land, thinking the area to be rich in oil. When exploration did not produce oil, the Marks family deeded the property in 1963 to the state in honor of their mother, Nisene Marks. The deed specified that the forest must not be developed, allowing the natural regeneration process to continue. Today Nisene Marks State Park thrives, with 30 miles of hiking trails, several campsites and multiple picnic areas. The evergreens, oaks, bays and madrones that were so extensively logged years ago are now abundant throughout the park.

From the Porter Family Picnic Area, you walk along a paved road for about 0.25 mile to the trailhead for the Loma Prieta Grade Trail. As you turn left onto the trail, you begin ascending into the woods, enjoying views of lovely Bridge Creek, until you reach the Porter House historic site, which was once the home of Warren Porter, former secretary for the Loma Prieta Lumber Company. Continue along the path until you reach a junction with the Bridge Creek Trail. This junction marks the start of a loop trail; you can go either direction from here.

If you veer left, you soon come to Hoffman Historic Site, the remains of a logging camp that operated between 1918 and 1921. You can still see a scattering of ties, cables and trestle timbers here. Beyond the camp you come to an intersection with the Big Stump Gap Trail. Remain on the rail-trail here as it continues north and then makes a sharp right turn. You will pass Bridge Creek Historic Site, another historic logging camp. A short side trail here leads to Maple Falls, one of two waterfalls within Nisene Marks Park.

The main trail continues through the redwoods, following the path of Bridge Creek and descending to rejoin the railroad grade at the Porter House. There are restrooms and water fountains at the parking lot. The trail is shaded, but it's a good idea to bring along plenty of water. Several benches along the walk make inviting places to rest and have lunch. Neither dogs nor bicycles are allowed on the trail.



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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States: California

Counties: Santa Cruz

Length: 5.5miles

Trail end points: Porter Family Picnic Area on Aptos Creek Road (The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park) to Porter Family Picnic Area on Aptos Creek Road (The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park)

Trail surfaces: Dirt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Walking

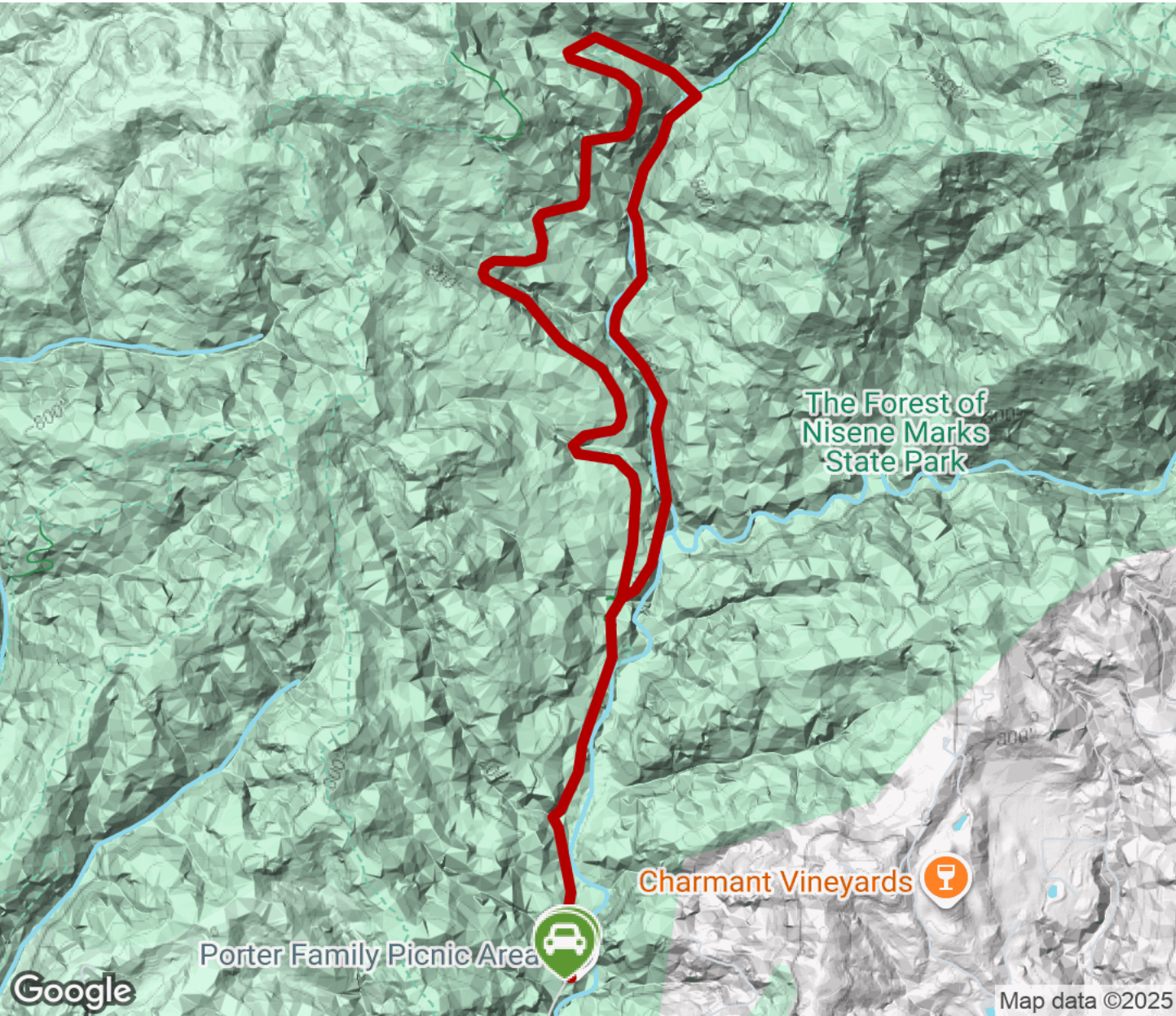
Parking & Trail Access

From State Route 1 in Aptos take the State Park Drive Exit to Soquel Drive. Turn right (east) on Soquel Drive and continue about 1 mile to the intersection with Aptos Creek Road. Turn left on Aptos Creek Road and go 0.5 mile to the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park entrance station. Continue another 4 miles to the Porter Family Picnic Area parking lot. The signed trailhead is visible from the parking lot.



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- Trailhead
- Restroom
- Parking
- Water Fountain
- Tunnel