The Narrows

The Narrows is a 1-mile long stretch of East Fork Coyote Creek between China Hole and Los Cruzeros without an established trail. Expect uneven ground. May have to wade in the water in wet seasons.

Camping at Mississippi Lake

Best camping spot is on the northwest shore by the picnic table with a ramada, on the lake side of the road and a vault toilet is nearby.

Another option (which shortens the hike by 1 mile) is to camp at the south shore, near the dam. Lake is across the road from the campsite and a vault toilet nearby.

Lake is mostly surrounded by reeds, making access to the water difficult.

Camping at Los Cruzeros

6.2 miles, +50/-1450 feet from trailhead
7.1 miles, +2050/-1450 to Mississippi Lake

Three established sites by East Fork Coyote Creek, between Los Cruzeros signpost and junction with Willow Ridge Trail. The sites have partial shade, no picnic tables or outhouse. Seasonal water from the creek.

Camping at Willow Ridge

7.6 miles, +1050/-1450 feet from the trailhead
5.7 miles, +1050/-1450 to Mississippi Lake

Willow Ridge Spring usually flows until mid-summer. Watch for encroaching poison oak near the spring. Take unnamed 0.1 mile long trail to the spacious flat area under large oaks, overlooking the canyon of Coyote Creek and Mahoney ridge.
Great for watching sunset.

Trip highlights

- China Hole - popular swimming hole
- The Narrows, scenic rocky canyon. May be impassable in high water
- Steep climbs and descents
- Panoramic views from Willow Ridge
- Largest lake in the park: fishing (bass), swimming, wildlife viewing
- Remote area, away from light pollution - you can really see Milky Way!

- **The Park is open year round, 7 days a week/24 hours. The Visitor Center is open 8AM - 4PM on weekends.**
- **In summer, temperatures above 90 degrees between 11AM and 7:30-8PM are not unusual. Hike early in the morning and late in the evening. Plan shorter trips when necessary to prevent heat exhaustion.**
- **In winter, expect cold nights - mid-30s or below.**
- **In winter and spring, many creeks may be impassable after heavy rain.**

Pine Ridge Association
www.coepark.net
(408)779-2728
9100 East Dunne Ave.
Morgan Hill, CA 95037

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Henry W. Coe State Park

Backpacking Trips - Park Headquarters

Mississippi Lake

Western Pond Turtle at Mississippi Lake - July 6. 2013

Duration: 2-4 days

Difficulty: strenuous

Distance, elevation gain/loss:
one way to Mississippi Lake: 13.3 miles, +2100/-2900 feet

Trailhead: Park Headquarters, at the end of East Dunne Avenue

Permits/fees: Backpacking permit and parking fees required; register at visitor center when open or self-register for Mississippi Lake and possibly Los Cruzeros and/or Willow Ridge

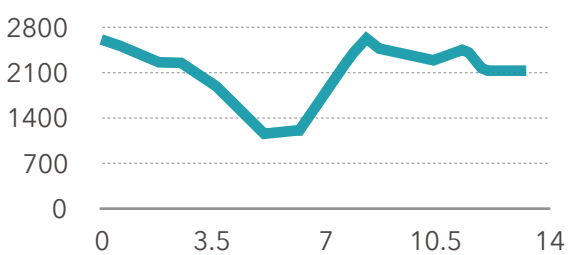
Key points - one way

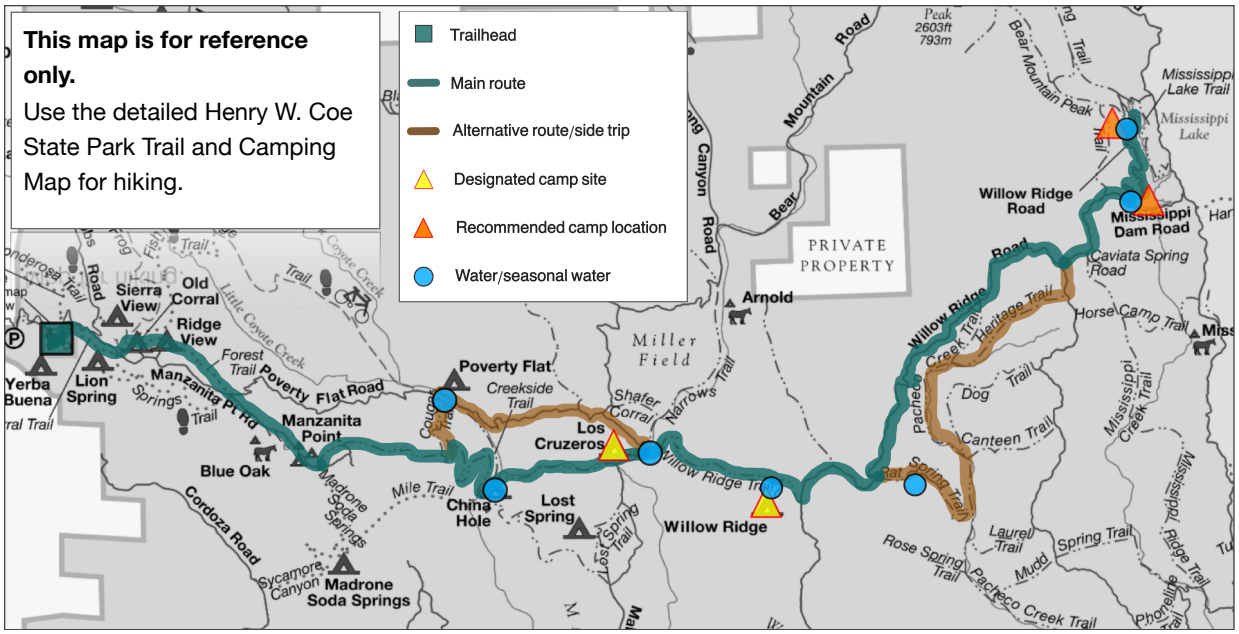
0.0		Corral Trail
0.6		Forest Trail
1.8		Manzanita Point Road
2.5		China Hole Trail
5.1	W*	China Hole, continue through the Narrows
6.1	W*	Los Cruzeros Camps, continue along East Fork Coyote Creek upstream
6.2		Turn right onto Willow Ridge Trail
7.6	W*	Willow Ridge Spring and Camp
7.9		Willow Ridge Road, turn left
8.7	W*	Rat Spring Trail is on your right, leading to a spring 0.4 miles away
12.1		Mississippi Lake southwest shore, keep left
13.2	W	Mississippi Lake northwest shore

*** distance and elevation approximate**

W/W* - water/seasonal water source. Check water source conditions with park staff or at www.coepark.net.

Elevation - one way via Willow Ridge





Route

Follow Corral, Forest (both mostly shady), Manzanita Point Road and China Hole Trail to China Hole, a popular swimming hole in summer. Cross the creek a few hundred feet upstream and enter The Narrows.

The canyon gradually opens up as you reach Los Cruzeros. Continue upstream on the right side of the creek. At the signed junction, take Willow Ridge Trail.

Ascend steeply through mixed forest, grassy meadows and patches of chaparral. Coast live oaks and bay trees provide shade. In late spring, meadows are sprinkled with yellow mariposa lilies.

After 1.4 miles of steep climb, watch for Willow Ridge Spring on your right, hidden in the shade. Continue along Willow Ridge Trail for 0.3 miles until it ends at Willow Ridge Road.

Turn left, and In 0.5 miles you will reach the highest point of the ridge at 2615 feet. Rat Spring is the only water source near Willow Ridge Road until you reach the lake.

Willow Ridge is a roller coaster with many small (+/-150 feet) but steep ups and downs.

For the next 4 miles, the road follows the ridge crest through chaparral with occasional grey pine or oak, very little shade, and great panoramic views.

At mile 12.1 of your hike, you will reach the junction with Mississippi Dam Road, with a view of the lake but no access to water. If you plan to camp by the dam, take a right. Otherwise, continue along the west shore for 1 mile to the outhouse and picnic table with ramada.

Multi-day options

You may choose to camp mid-point on the way in and/or out, at Los Cruzeros or Willow Ridge.

Alternative route

To avoid The Narrows in the wet season, use Cougar Trail/Poverty Flat Road. Both routes may be impassible after a heavy rainstorm.