

# Trail Guide: Central Forest Walkabout

## At A Glance

**Length:** 3.5 miles

**Time:** 90 min – 2.5 hrs

**Elevation:** 345 ft – 530 ft

**Parking:** At Lupine Close, Big Tree Close, or Vantage Road at Hwy 1.

**Restrooms:** None

**Difficulty:** Moderate to difficult.

**Accessibility:** Not suitable for mobility-impaired visitors.

**Features:** Wildflowers in spring, Redwood Forest, Solitude, A good workout



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“When the wind is fierce or the fog is thick or the visitors are too obvious along the bluffs, it can be warm and balmy in our forest. After heavy rains there are muddy places and the trees drip. But the shining sun can turn cobwebs into diamond necklaces and persuade the wild azalea to release its fragrance.” — Janann Strand. “Rambles.” 1996.

The central forest lies on the eastern edge of TSR between Big Tree Close at the north and Sorcerer Wood in the south. In maps it is shown as the “Timber Production Zone” for historical reasons, but no timber is harvested here now. It is a mixed forest of pines, firs, redwoods, tan oaks, madrones, wax myrtles, and the rare California Nutmeg (*Torreya*). Wild mushrooms grow in an understory of huckleberry, coffeeberry, salal, and a variety of ferns. Squirrels, deer, ravens, jays, flickers and woodpeckers make their home here. The bear and mountain lion may be here but rarely seen. In the fall when the huckleberry crop is ripe, look for bear sign (dark blue droppings with berry seeds) on the trail. Sag Ponds dot this landscape. Seasonal streams abound. Young redwood trees grow in rings around burned stumps. Extensive logging took place here more than a hundred years ago. Our forest is almost entirely “second growth”. Several trails span this forest including the Ridge Trail, Sag Ponds Trail, Big Tree Trail, Big Tree Loop, and the South TPZ Connector. This is a walk that may appeal to a forest wanderer.

Park at Trail Post (TP) 125 on Lupine Close and head up the hill on the Lupine Close Trail. A gentle trail starts between two homes and skirts the edge of the forest —

look for a large redwood tree ring on your left. The trail becomes steeper as you leave behind a broad view of the Pacific Ocean and enter the forest. A short but very steep section is followed by a gentler rise. The trail soon levels out and quickly drops down along a stream bed to meet the Big Tree Trail at TP 124. There is a bench on your right overlooking the wooded ravine, a good place to take a short rest and catch your breath. An alternate route to get here without the long uphill climb is to park at TP 123 on Big Tree Close and hike down to this very spot.

Walking on with the forest all around, continue south on the Big Tree Trail. Look for two very large, burned redwood stump clusters about 100 yards apart on your right as you go. Both are half-open to the trail, giving scale to the size of the giants that once stood here. The



*Burned out redwood stump on the Big Tree trail. Photo by Malay Thaker.*

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*Top: Seasonal stream on the Big Tree Loop trail. Bottom: A lucky break for the rest bench, January 2023. Photos by Malay Thaker.*

Big Tree Trail rises and falls for another mile or so. Along the way, look for tan oaks competing with the firs and young redwoods for life-giving sunlight. Acorns and oak leaves carpet the trail in many places. Several stream beds that you cross will be running with flowing water after a storm and muddy for most of the wet season.

At TP 120, take a right turn onto the Big Tree Loop. After a short steep downhill, it levels out to a couple of small open meadows. Douglas Irises bloom here in the spring along with other colorful flowers. Crossing a stream bed and heading up a slope brings you to TP 267. Big Tree Loop continues to the left but take a side trip on the South TPZ Connector trail heading off to the right. The short excursion is well worth it.


The trail runs level and straight for a short distance and then turns a corner and leads to an unmarked trail junction. There is a rest bench 20 yards away on the left. Take a break at the bench and enjoy the ocean view

framed by forest on the sides — a good spot to have a snack and drink. A large pine tree had uprooted and collapsed on top of this bench in a storm in January 2023. By a miracle, the bench survived completely intact. The remains of the tree still surround the bench.

An alternate route to get here is to hike uphill along the South TPZ Connector from Hwy 1 at Vantage Rd and TP 265. This trail provides good views of the ocean and highway along the lower section. It gets steeper as it enters a stand of young fir trees, but soon moderates to a gentler uphill, emerging from the trees into a small meadow just below the rest bench. The elevation gain on this route is about 100 ft higher than when starting from Lupine Close.

Next, return to the Big Tree Loop at TP 267 and continue uphill to the right. The trail rises continuously as it heads for ridge line. At TP 119, the Big Tree Loop terminates and reconnects with the Big Tree Trail. A sharp right turn would take you downhill towards Redwood Rise and Pine Meadow Rd. But keep straight and uphill to TP 118.

At TP 118 you may turn left to return the way you came, back to Lupine Close or Big Tree Close. If you are feeling energetic or don't like to backtrack over the same ground, an alternate route to get back to your point of origin is to make a right turn at TP 118. A level trail will take you past TP 117 to TP 116. At this four-way trail junction, make a sharp left turn heading north on the Ridge Trail. This gently rising trail will take you past a water tank (still in service) and on to TP 122. Continue along Timber Ridge Rd for 150 yards and then turn left on Big Tree Close. At the end of the cul-de-sac at TP 123, you may walk downhill to TP 124 and then down to Lupine Close. This extension adds another 30 mins and an extra mile to your walkabout.

Malay Thaker  
Trails Committee 



*Left: Douglas iris. Right: Trillium. Photos by Malay Thaker.*