

Rio Laja Trail- Section 11: *Blue House Trail*

Description:

This trail is best traveled during dry season due to the need to travel in riverbed on occasion, as there are areas with no visible trail at the top of the riverbank. There are lovely views to be observed, dense foliage, and abundant tree stands. This section is 3.1 miles/ 5 km long.

Access to trailhead parking:

From Hwy 51, travel roughly 16.3 miles/ 26.1 km from the Ventana Golf Course intersection. A left turn appears .7 miles/ 1.2 km after KM 79 marker. There is a yellow post on the right marking entrance to road, and a white metal fence on right side of road. Follow dirt road for slightly less than a half mile before a small brick house (on right with scooped wall) will come into view. Park above or below the house, on right side of road. The road below the brick house is passable for 4x4 vehicles only.

Waypoint 1: Trailhead parking, 0.0 miles/ km 0.0. GPS coordinates: 21.131, -100.857. Dirt road descends 100 yards/ 90 meters before reaching the riverbed. Head right, toward the west, along trail above right riverbank. Pass a 15-meter rock retaining wall on left, then travel along agricultural fields to the right.



Waypoint 2: Trail will split at .28 miles/ .45 km- take right. Trail descends into an arroyo. Ascend arroyo and continue on trail. The trail becomes obscure and then established again at .4 miles/ .64 km, where it will meet a road and then split. Trail descends into Laja riverbed and becomes obscure. Take trail to left, toward the Laja.

Arroyo intersects trail

Waypoint 3: Big blue house on right, at .76 miles/ 1.22 km. Cross drainage ditch filled with carrizo on lower end, continuing toward fields on opposite side of ditch. Continue along on faint trail between agricultural field and Laja, or drop down to lower trail in Laja if during dry season. At .95 miles/ 1.52 km, the river will appear to split. Continue on dirt road on upper bank in a westerly direction *avoiding* what appears to be the main course or river to the left, where a traffic bridge crosses over this tributary to the Laja. In dry season, descend from trail down riverbank where carrizo begins to get thick at 1.06 miles/ 1.7 km.

When there is water in the Laja, continue on upper trail between dense carrizo and fields. This trail is indistinct, as it has been impacted by agricultural use. At 1.19 miles/ 1.9 km, another smaller stream enters the river from the left. Above the stream on left side of riverbank is another bridge that serves car traffic, a large brick structure, and a church with prominent steeple.

Waypoint 4: Dam crossing the entire river. It may be advisable to continue traveling in riverbed during this section of the trail. At 1.57 miles/ 2.5 km, a clear trail will ascend from the riverbank on left and meet a prominent dirt road. At 1.7 miles/ 2.7 km, take a left off of dirt road and onto trail that shortly ends up back in river. If on upper riverbank after 1.9 miles/ 3.1 km, take trail to left, ascending onto small ridge and continue faintly through tall grasses. The trail will soon end-descend to riverbank when able.



Waypoint 5: Cement plant on left bank at 2.23 miles/ 3.6 km. Where there is a bend to the NE, a prominent, steep trail ascends from the river. Head to the left and pick up well-used trail with field to the right and willow trees to the left. At trail divide, take a left and keep carrizo stand to the right between the trail and the river. Drop back down to the river around 2.9 miles/ 4.65 km, where the river shifts toward the west. Follow prominent, tall, barbed-wire fencing, before returning to riverbank.



Waypoint 6: End of Section 11, start of Section 12, at 3.1 miles/ 5 km. GPS coordinates: 21.141, -100.881. A steel pedestrian bridge marks the end of this section. This section is 30.34 miles/ 48.6 km from the start of Section one on the Rio Laja trail network.

Steel pedestrian bridge