

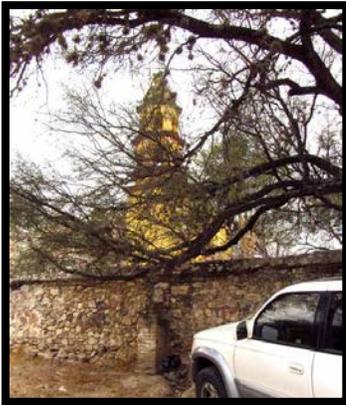
Rio Laja Trail- Section 5: *Monasterio Nuestra Senora de la Soledad*

Description:

Depending on the time of year, The Rio Laja may be dry. During these times it may be pleasant to walk in riverbed along slightly rolling grassy embankment to the right (going north or 'upstream'). There are many pleasant grassy meadows to walk through on this trail, with many stands of mature willow trees to enjoy. It is considered one of the best sections of the Laja to travel during any season. Section 5 of the trail is 2.97 miles/ 4.78 km long, ending at the Monasterio where Section 6 begins.

Access to trailhead parking:

Exit the Dolores highway to drive through Atotonilco, turn left at the main church (Santuario Atotonilco) onto the road towards San Miguelito & proceed .3 miles/ .5 km to parking. Trailhead parking is 1.2 miles/ 1.9 km from highway turnoff. Park by the stonewall enclosing the old yellow church. With the wall behind, observe a stand of carrizo to the right; the river is downhill directly right or southwest.



Trailhead parking area

Waypoint 1: Trailhead parking, mile 0.0/ km 0.0. GPS coordinates: 21.002, -100.799. Walk toward the river and take a right before the bridge, heading upstream (along a loose dirt truck road, traveling along the left bank of the river during the dry season). Cross the river on dirt road so it is on the left, where it will remain for the rest of this section. If the water level is low you can walk along the riverbank. The river begins to bend to the right, with an open grassy field on the right.

Waypoint 2: At .45 miles/ .73 km, the road runs into the river. Climb the small knoll then bear left. The trail is a clearly defined, paralleling the river below. The trail forks, take the higher path climbing a small embankment, and continue

through the trees climbing above and away from the river. At mile .63 miles/ 1 km, observe a large horizontal rock on the right and a tree on the left. Take the very lightly worn left trail, heading back towards the river. Walk on embankment above the river, with a large grassy field on your right, along a faint trail.

Climb grassy, small hill (no path is visible), and walk to left on higher embankment, with the river to your left. Depending on the height of the river, continue walking along the riverbank, or on the dirt road up higher to the right (out of sight from the riverbank). There is no marked trail here. Take the dirt car track up to the right, heading away from the river. Follow as it ascends and continue on road parallel to the river, through an open field of cacti. Take the left path staying on the dirt car track. The road bends to the right, close to the river.



Taking high path in trees

Waypoint 3: White stone structure to west across Laja, at 1.35 miles/ 2.16 km. There's a small abandoned white house surrounded by organos cactus across the river. Walk on higher embankment, keeping the river on the left. There are white fence posts on right bordering car track. Head downhill, where the road bends to the left. Continue through the grassy field, on a single-track footpath, down a steep embankment. The river will soon disappear from sight. To the right, and above, there is a vertical

stonewall ruin peeking through the trees.



Stone wall ruin

Approach a fenced property. When the trail splits; stay to the right, keeping the fence on right. Across the river to the left is a small village, with a distinct pink church spire. Bear East. Pass a yellow suspension bridge over the river on the left. Walk to the middle of this bridge to enjoy the view!

Waypoint 4: End of Section 5 and start of Section 6, at 2.64 miles/ 4.78 km. GPS coordinate: 21.018, -100.807. There is a green bridge crossing the river behind a private bridge entrance structure. A prominent road enters from the right. This location is 13.38 miles/ 21.41 km from start of Section 1.