

# HART PARK TRAIL GUIDE

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This trail is for those who wish to enjoy some interesting and historical features of Hart Park without leaving their car. The trail runs along the roads throughout the park. You begin at the Hart Monument, shown on the trail map as site number one. Then look down the middle of the road in the area of the next number, until you see a single white reflective road dot marker. The black site number will then be left or right off the road on a three foot white fiberglass stake. The number is placed at a location where your car can pull off the road to view the site and read the guide information. You may view the sites in any order, and you are free to walk around on each site as much you wish. If you enjoyed this trail, tell your friends!

1. HART MONUMENT- This monument was set here in memory of John O. Hart who was a Kern County Supervisor for 27 years. The park's development began under his supervision. It was originally named Kern River Park. He selected this rock from the Kern River for eventual placement in the park. The park was formally opened in May of 1929. Three years after Hart passed away in 1934 people thought that more should be done to recognize all that he had done for this park. The rock was placed near the swimming pool in the center of the park with a plaque on it. County supervisors changed the name of Kern River Park to Hart Park in 1947 in his memory.

2. POOL IRRIGATION- The fenced off area you are now looking at was once a public pool. Every day after the park closed, the pool water would be drained to flood irrigate surrounding areas of the park. Water from the Kern River was used to fill the pool in the early morning so that it would be ready for use during the day. The park didn't have to set up sprinkler lines or chlorinate the pool.

3. ROCK GAZEBO- The rock gazebo you are looking at is the oldest structure in Hart Park. It is the only structure that hasn't been torn down and rebuilt. It has lost a few stones in its lifetime but they were replaced. The drinking fountains you see were once connected to a sulfur spring, which you will see further along the trail. Many people believed that the sulphur water had healthful properties. The observation deck on the top became unsafe so it is no longer in use.

4. ARTESIAN SULPHUR WELL (CAPPED)- If you follow the road and look to your right you will see a white concrete culvert sticking vertically out of the ground. This is a capped sulphur water well. Around 1910 wildcatters dug three exploratory wells in an attempt to find oil. All they found was sulphur water which flowed naturally. The sulphur water at this site ran into a series of pools and bath houses where people bathed in the water for their health.

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5. ZOO BARN AND MIOCENE DIG-The barn in front of you was used to store food and supplies for the zoo that was closer to the river. To your right and up the hill is an area that looks like a road cut but is actually a Miocene archaeological dig. Archeologists from famous universities uncovered many fossils from the Miocene Era.

6. HILL ROAD MONUMENTS-There are many monuments along this road. A few of them are (in order): The Kern County Farm Bureau; N. S. G. W. Bakersfield Parlor No. 42; F. O. E. Bakersfield Aerie No. 93; Valentine Lodge No. 78; Daughters of America; I. O. O. F.; Federated Women's Clubs; Lions Club; W. O. W. 460; and the Kern County Labor Council. There are many other monument stones whose plaques have been destroyed or defaced.

7. OAK GALLS- The oak trees to your left have unusual growths on them. Can you see them? These little balls are called wasp galls because gall wasps lay their eggs on a branch of this kind of oak tree. The eggs hatch into legless grubs around which the tree forms a gall. Scientist think galls are caused by a reaction that happens when the insect injects a chemical into the stem. The mature larvae then drill holes in the galls to escape and the cycle repeats.

8. FREEZE DAMAGE- These trees were partially killed by a very cold winter in 1998/99. These trees and many others in the park suffered from a record six inch snowfall. In addition, lack of sprinkler irrigation in this area caused water stress. The cold temperatures and snowfall made it a difficult winter for park vegetation.

9. ISLAND WILDLIFE REFUGE-From here you can see a big island in the middle of the lake. The fallen trees in the lake, depending on the time of year, are the roost of the majestic Heron. These tall skinny long-legged birds are usually gray or bluish in color. On the island piles of brush-like materials are nesting sites. Other wildlife you might see are: ducks of various kinds, geese, mud-hens, and muskrats.

10. EAGLE PROJECT CANAL BRIDGE- This bridge was built in 1998 as an Eagle Scout project supervised by Boy Scout Jeff Barker. All of the posts and bolts were donated. The postholes were dug by the Scout troop that helped with this project.

11. OLD WATERGATE- This cobblestone watergate to your right was used to control the flow of river water that ran into the canal to Hart Lake. The horse trail and bike trail cross the intake canal over this bridge.

12. ZOO ANIMALS- In this general area were a zoo and kiddie rides that were in operation until the 1960's. A little train ran from here around the eastern end of the park.

13. OLD WATER WHEEL- This water wheel was built in 1932. It was a copy of one that was in operation in Europe. It was built as a WPA project. The wheel is 21 ft. in diameter and 5 ft. wide. With six feet of water upstream in the canal, it revolved seven times per minute and generated 38 horsepower. It primarily pumped water but sometimes generated electricity using the generator that is visible inside. The wheel is held together with 20,728 brass screws instead of nails. There are no current plans to restore it.

14. IRRIGATION STANDPIPE- This standpipe was part of the flood irrigation system. It allowed the water level to be high enough off of the ground to provide the pressure needed to flood irrigate the entire park.

15. PEACOCKS- The peacocks were a free-roaming part of the original zoo. The peacocks were accustomed to living in this area, so when the zoo closed the peacocks were left behind because they could survive on their own. You may feed them, but keep your distance, peacocks bites hurt!

16. SCENERY AND VULTURES- As you pull in to this area drive next to the post and park. From here you can see many wonderful things. If you look over the rapids to the north you will see the rolling hills. To the east you will see a portion of the horse trail. The rapids are typical of many in this stretch of the river. This site shows some of the beauty of this park. Directly across the road are several large trees where vultures roost at certain times of the year. If you are here early on a cool morning you might see a vulture spreading its wings to warm up while waiting for the sun to create an updraft.

17. CANAL- This canal is rich in wildlife. The plant life in this area includes cattails and many other water plants. There are also resident ground squirrels. You might see one poke its head out of its hole or scurry into one. A family of beavers used to live in this canal.

18. HART LAKE- If you pull up to the parking places and look out you will see the other side of the wildlife refuge. You might see a flock of ducks and geese. You can feed them if you want to, but be careful. You might even see mud-hens.

19. BEAVER GUARDS- The beavers that lived in the canal in 1991 caused a problem for some of the big trees in the park. The wire mesh around some of the trees is to keep beavers from chewing the bark off the trees. If you look to the left you will see one of the original cobblestone bridges built during construction of the park in the 1930's.

20. MOTORBOAT RACING- Motorboats used to race around the island in the middle of Hart Lake. As boats got faster, it became too dangerous to race in this small an area, so Ming Lake was built in 1959 for boat racing, although seasonal shoreline fishing and sailing are now allowed. After 1959 Hart Lake was used only for paddle boats and fishing.

21. COTTONWOOD TREE- Notice that the large cottonwood tree by the edge of the lake is missing most of the bark at the base of the trunk. Beavers almost killed this tree. Beaver guards help prevent this kind of damage.

22. SEARCH AND RESCUE MONUMENT- If you have visited the park before, you might have seen this stone but not actually known its purpose. It is a monument for two law enforcement volunteers that died when their airplane crashed into a power line while practicing search and rescue operations.

23. OLD FEE GATE- This 1930 era stone gate that is falling apart now, was the main entrance to Hart Park. The park used to charge an entrance fee which was collected at this gate. Now that the park is free, the road bypasses the gate.

24. SULPHUR WELL- Look into the hole beside the culvert at the running water. Roll down your windows and see if you can smell the sulphur water that runs from the nearby artesian sulphur well. This is the only one of the three wildcat wells where the water flow is still visible in Hart Park. This is one of the most interesting sites at Hart Park and is a great end to our tour. We hope that you will tell others about this trail and come back and visit it again. Thank you.

