

Starting Route From Downtown Los Altos To Westwind Community Barn.

1. Stay in the right lane to continue straight at the Main Street and Foothill Expressway intersection.
2. Continue straight past the first stop sign where the Community Farm Stand II¹ is located, then turn right at the second stop sign.²
3. Pass under the I-280 ramp.³
4. Take a sharp right onto the steep road with the view of the city.
5. Stay on this road as it twists and turns.⁴
6. Continue as the road straightens out.⁵
7. Turn left at the corner where the monastery⁶ is.
8. Follow this road as it veers left.⁷
9. Turn right onto Black Mountain Road.⁸
10. Continue down Black Mountain Road as it curves left.⁹

You have arrived.

¹ You and your friends once bought a bag of walnuts from the stand after walking through the redwood grove at Shoup Park, which you would find upon taking a left at the first stop sign.

² Remember to look for the rickety, wooden address signs around one of the bends. Although weathered and covered by a verdant blanket of moss, you imagine that those addresses belong to some wealthy retiree or local tech millionaire who reads those signs everyday as they floor it up their private driveway.

³ Your car picks up speed as it passes under the ramp, and the sound of the wind and your music amplify then press back onto your ears.

⁴ One particular bend reveals the entrance of a hiking trail. The trees at the mouth of the trail form a perfect archway, and white-hot sunlight conceals the remainder of the pathway; your younger self deems it the perfect place to build a fairy house. Sometimes, when no one is driving behind you, you press down on the brake pedal just to admire how the beams of sun illuminate the sprawling tree branches and grassy patches.

⁵ After much deliberation, you and your friends have decided that this is the best place to gun it. However, all of you are too afraid to try it for more than two seconds, and perhaps rightfully so.

⁶ Wildlife Management - Los Altos Hills, California. Accessed May 30, 2023.
<https://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/182/Wildlife-Management-PDF>. The monastery feels like an anachronism in a valley of silicon; it appears to be inhabited by overgrown greenery and wildlife (though not by monks). While driving, you often see turkeys, deer, or even horses grazing where asphalt meets grass. You realize that Westwind would be even more beautiful were you not there at all.

⁷ "Byrne Preserve Restoration." Grassroots Ecology. Accessed May 30, 2023.
<https://www.grassrootsecology.org/byrne-preserve>. You recall having seen an overall-clad warrior here battling the browning weeds with giant pruning shears. Eventually, they triumphed and carried overflowing piles of leafy corpses to their wheelbarrow.

⁸ This is the only street whose name you actually have memorized. Turning left here leads to the entrance of the trail wherein lies the rickety zipline that some Los Altos Hills resident probably built in their excess of free time. Whenever you and your friends attempt the zipline, you always return to the car with shoes caked in mud and with a sense of sated accomplishment.

⁹ Web, CNR. "How Green Spaces Can Improve Your Health." College of Natural Resources News, April 20, 2022.
<https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2022/04/parks-green-spaces-improve-health/#:~:text=These%20spaces%20are%20especially%20important,cholesterol%20levels%2C%20hypertension%20and%20obesity>. When you round the final bend, that vast expanse of rolling hills finally materializes in glorious technicolor. The tension in your shoulders disappears, and although you are right here in the present, you are also time traveling into both past and future. You think about everyone who's seen this view with you— the ones you speak with daily, the ones you have fallen out with, and the ones who are no longer alive. Even though you are alone right now, all of these people are with you; they are ingrained in the bitumen intersections and in the whispering oak trees, and when you glance in your rearview mirror, you can almost see ghosts in the backseat of your car.

Annotated Bibliography

Wildlife Management - Los Altos Hills, California. Accessed May 30, 2023.

<https://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/182/Wildlife-Management-PDF>.

The wandering wildlife you encounter on the way to Westwind is a result of habitat fragmentation. Habitat fragmentation is the process by which residential development, fences, and roads inhibit wildlife from migrating across land to find food, mates, and shelter. Much of Los Altos' deer and turkey populations are displaced, and they are constantly endangered by cars.

“Byrne Preserve Restoration.” Grassroots Ecology. Accessed May 30, 2023.

<https://www.grassrootsecology.org/byrne-preserve>.

That “overall-clad warrior” you saw was likely a volunteer for Grassroots Ecology, an organization which focuses on removing invasive plant species along Moody Creek– which runs through Byrne Preserve (Westwind). Due to the unprecedented levels of rain this past year, invasive plants and weeds have been able to thrive. Grassroots Ecology mitigates this by encouraging the growth of native plants, preventing soil erosion, and supporting local wildlife.

Web, CNR. “How Green Spaces Can Improve Your Health.” College of Natural Resources News, April 20, 2022.

<https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2022/04/parks-green-spaces-improve-health/#:~:text=These%20spaces%20are%20especially%20important,cholesterol%20levels%2C%20hypertension%20and%20obesity>.

Urban and suburban sprawl in recent decades have overtaken natural spaces; work and stress have overcome the modern person's daily life. According to research, spending time in nature effectively reduces this stress, provides opportunities for exercise, and increases happiness. Therefore, the creation and preservation of green spaces is essential to promote a happy, functioning society. You agree that Westwind provides much-needed breaks from homework or your family, and it always inspires some level of self-reflection.