

# COYOTE RIDGE AND TARWATER LOOP

Length 5.8 miles • Climbing 1100 feet

California > San Francisco Bay Area > Portola and Pescadero parks

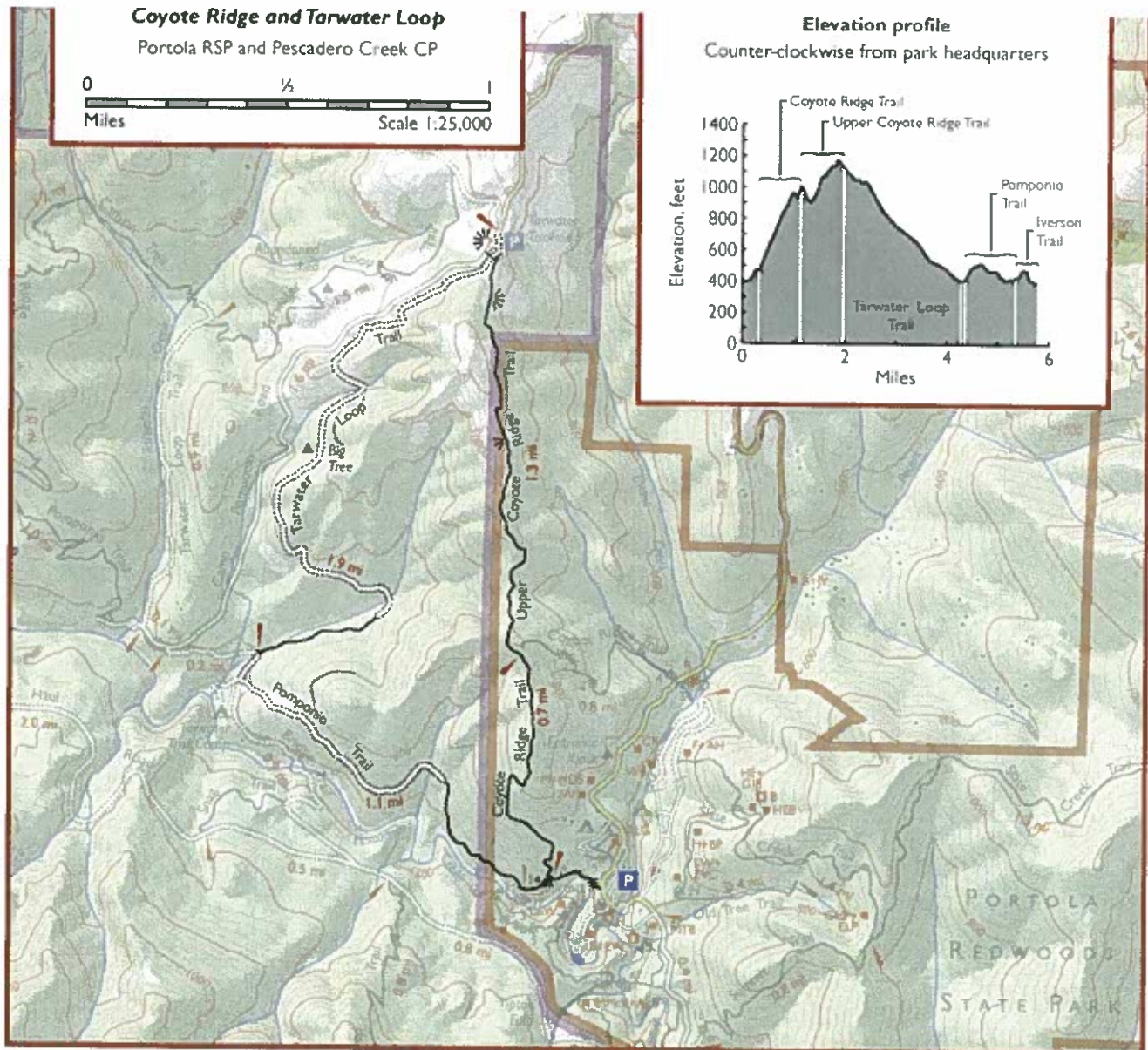
## Upper Coyote Ridge Trail

This popular loop hike combines trails from Portola and Pescadero parks and showcases the slightly different characters of the two parks: Portola feels a little more wild, while Pescadero feels a little more groomed. The route is entirely wooded but is less redwood-intensive than other area hikes - maybe about a third of the hike is in the redwoods. Even though I'm a big redwood fan, I have to admit the variety helps make the hike more interesting. If you haven't hiked in the Portola/Pescadero area before, this is a perfect introduction.

### Directions

Click [here](#) to see the trailhead location in [Google Maps](#) or in [Google Street View](#).

From Skyline Road, take narrow, twisty Alpine Road to Portola State Park Road, which descends into Portola State Park. Park at the Madrone picnic area, near the Portola Redwoods visitor center; you'll have to pay a parking fee in the visitor center. You can also start at the Tarwater Trailhead, where the parking is free, but then you'll be starting at the highest point of the hike instead of the lowest.



---

, which starts just across from the Madrone picnic area, a few steps north  
er. After just a few yards you come to an overgrown vista point, perched  
Creek but with the view obscured by trees. The trail is more or less level  
a mile, the Iverson Trail breaks off to the left. Continue straight on the  
immediately begins to climb at a 14% grade. The redwoods quickly  
ed-species woodland, although you'll continue to encounter pockets of

er Coyote Ridge Trails have the best scenery of the hike, but depending  
the distant sound of gunfire from the Los Gatos Rod and Gun Club may  
quiet. Fortunately these sounds can never be heard from the visitor's  
a.

n with the Upper Coyote Ridge Trail, after which point the trail is less  
scenic. The trail crests over a redwood-covered knoll and descends  
cent. At one point the woods open up and there are some nice glimpses  
ge rising high over Pescadero Creek to the south, and Skyline Ridge  
ows to the north. Near the end the trail becomes somewhat overgrown,  
hanging the trail.

#### Upper Coyote Ridge Trail

nds from the Tarwater Trailhead parking area. Turn left onto the Tarwater  
oad, that narrows in places to a single-track trail. The sounds of gunfire,  
, disappear almost immediately.

rough attractive woodland. Two large trees stand by the side of the  
imense redwood. Eventually the trail descends into a grove of heavily-  
; normally dark and gloomy, after a rainfall, this area becomes a lot more

/ to much more scenic, possibly old-growth redwoods just a few yards  
end of the trail, turn left onto the dirt road. The woods here are fairly  
e views of redwoods rising arrow-straight toward the sky. The redwoods  
e the noble look of old growth.

the Tarwater Trail camp junction; turn left onto the Pomponio Trail.  
that scenic, it does go through an interesting and rather sudden  
bright, open forest into the dense, huckleberry-clogged forest that's

re Iverson Trail. For a quick return to park headquarters (as shown on the  
ght.

the hike by turning right onto the Iverson Trail and descending to  
al footbridge takes you across the trickling waterway, which in winter  
t. The trail climbs through redwoods on the south bank, ending up high  
e right at the first intersection. After undulating a bit, the trail descends  
n left and wade through the creek, which is only about 6-12" deep in  
n the opposite bank and stay to the left at the next intersection. Turn  
re main park road, and continue along the road to return to the starting