

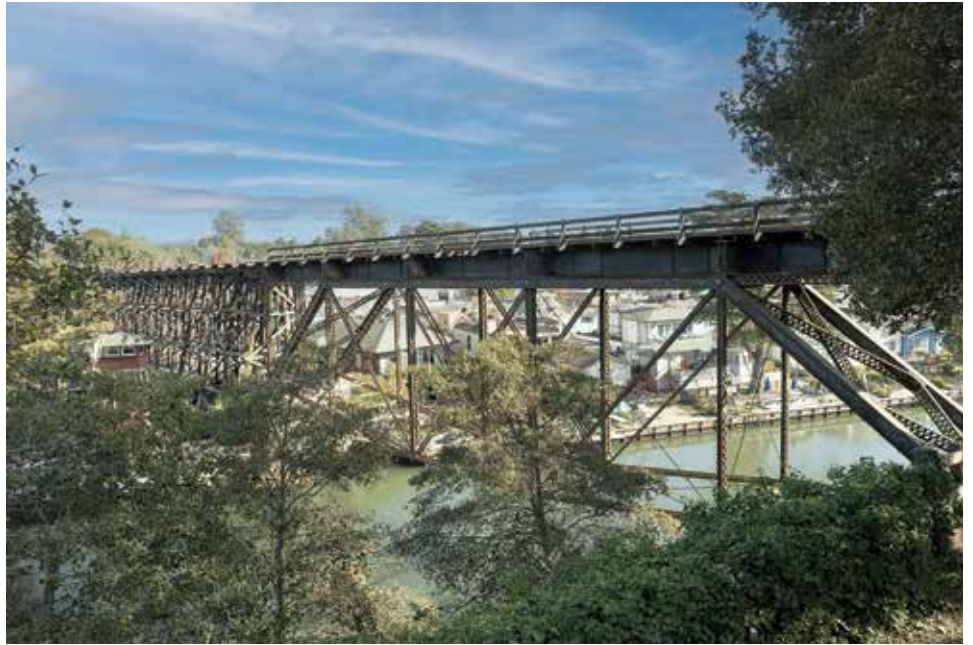
# exploring

## Cool when Cold Capitola Walk Neil Wiley

I found a perfect winter hike. One that takes you through interesting environments in cold, wet weather with a minimum of mud, wind, and fatigue. See some interesting, even unique views, without exhausting climbs. Enjoy a short drive, easy parking, and lots of options, including walking, running, picture-taking, shopping, and eating. All in a walk of less than two miles.

A short drive south on Highway 17 or San Jose-Soquel Road takes you to Highway 1 and a turn right to Bay Avenue, then another right at the Nob Hill Foods parking lot. (You can set your GPS to 809 Bay Avenue.) Drive to the back of the spacious parking lot. (It may be the easiest place to park in Capitola or Soquel.)

A short path takes you up to a set of bridge switchbacks that make climbing the forested





hill easy while crossing over Soquel Creek. At the top of the switchbacks, turn left to walk along a street to see old, tall eucalyptus trees, and views of thick forest, the creek, and hillsides of homes surrounded by dense green vegetation. Follow Wharf Road along sidewalks past my favorite restaurant: Shadowbrook. Walk downhill under the old train trestle and emerge on Cliff Drive in the center of Capitola.

Turn left to walk over Soquel Creek on the Stockton Avenue Bridge. You could follow the dirt trail back to your car just past the bridge. You may also be tempted to walk across the street to downtown Capitola to see the colorful cottages, shop for gifts, or walk out on the beach. At the least, you may want to eat at one of the oceanside restaurants. My favorite outdoor eatery is Zelda's.

This part of the tour may be a little expensive, but think of the money saved. Your parking is free and easy to find at Nob Hill.

To return to your walk, go back to the Stockton Avenue Bridge. Follow the trail, sometimes dirt, sometimes paved, along the east side of Soquel Creek. You may feel you are intruding on private property, but the neighbors expect tourists and are usually friendly.

The path ends at Riverview Avenue. Follow it to Riverview Drive and up the road. Ignore the no-outlet signs. In a few steps, bridge switchbacks will take you down to your car. Hungry? Grab something at Nob Hill.

This may not be your conventional hike, but it is a comfortable alternative, especially in the winter.

Enjoy!

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