

## **Beachwood Canyon**

**Duration: 1 hour**

**Distance: 2.6 miles**

**Steps: 861**

**Difficulty: 4**

**Bus: #180, 181; Hollywood**

**Dash Bus**

*This is a vigorous hike through Hollywood history, utilizing some of the steepest and most charming staircases in the city, and affording breathtaking views from Downtown to the sea.*

Begin your walk up Beachwood Canyon, near the Village Coffee Shop at 2695 N. Beachwood Drive, just beyond the stone arches built to celebrate the creation of Hollywoodland. This was one of Hollywood's first premier housing schemes, organized by a consortium of men including Harry Chandler, of the *Los Angeles Times*, and General M.H. Sherman, after whom Sherman Oaks is named. It was intended as a gated community—hence those arches—with tennis courts, swimming pools, and riding stables for its well-heeled residents. (These would include, over time, Busby Berkeley, Humphrey Bogart, Bela Lugosi, Bugsy Siegel, and many others.) To advertise the scheme, the consortium built a huge sign reading “Hollywoodland,” framed in thousands of light bulbs. The mountainside calling card became more famous after the “land” part fell off and left behind the “Hollywood” known around the world.

Start walking due north on Beachwood Dr., on the right side of the street. Just after the house at 2800, find the first staircase going up. This is an elegant, shaded set of very steep stairs, cut from the same granite as the stone Hollywoodland gates, rising a sharp 143 steps to Westshire Drive. Take a right, climb a little more, then bear right, and follow Westshire as it loops downhill. Just after 2748 Westshire on the left, take the next set of stairs going up.

These are even steeper and shadier than the previous set, complemented by nice wrought iron handrails, rising 149 steps—the last 84 in a single unbroken run. Land panting at the top on Hollyridge Drive, and turn left. Across the way is the crenellated wall of a faux Hollywood castle. Up ahead, following Hollyridge along the ridge, there is a hidden elevator inside the tower at 2922. Further along, another crenellated wall up to the right announces yet another fake castle—the hills are full of them.

Just after 3057 Hollyridge, find the more recently constructed staircase to the left. This is a rapid drop of 178 steps, through shaded backyards, very narrow but with double handrails, that lands you at 3020 N. Beachwood Dr. Take a left, and head downhill. Admire the very odd Prince Valiant mural on the front of 2925—complete with archer's bow and falcon. At the corner of N. Beachwood and Woodshire Drive, locate the next set of stairs.

This is the granddaddy of Beachwood stairs, a towering double set separated by a stone wall that used to contain a running stream. Now it holds planter boxes and, further up, provides useful benches for resting. At the bottom is a plaque, declaring the staircase

Historic-Cultural Monument No. 535 and giving its date of construction as 1928. Mull that over as you

march up 148 very steep steps, perhaps pausing to enjoy one of the benches as you go.

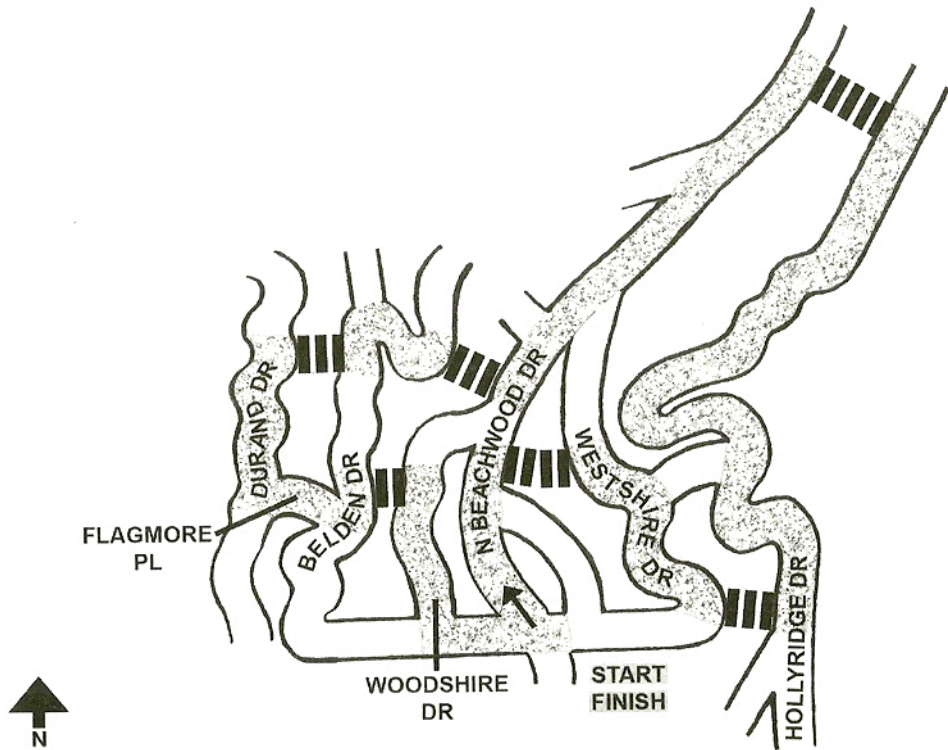
Turn left at the top and follow Belden Drive around a couple of bends. Then find the walkway on the right, just before the house at 2917, marked by a pair of white wooden posts. Between the houses is the bottom of the next staircase—another set of granite steps, again with fine wrought iron handrails, charging up 118 individual risers to the top. Land at 2954 Durand Drive, and take a left.

Walk down and around, enjoying views of the Hollywood sign behind you, the Griffith Observatory to your left, and downtown Hollywood straight ahead. As Durand drops and passes the left hand turning for Flagmoor Place, take a little detour and continue up the other side of Durand. On your right is the granite wall, reminiscent of the parapets at Le Mont-Saint-Michel,

of Wolf's Lair—a three-acre Norman-style chateau, complete with heart-shaped swimming pool and a guesthouse designed by famed Silvertop architect John Lautner. For sale in 2009 for \$7.5 million, the house feels very Errol Flynn, but is said to have been home to film star Debbie Reynolds and *The View* star Debbie Matenopoulos. It was originally built for L. Milton Wolf, one of Hollywoodland's original investors. In 2011, the house underwent a substantial restoration, at the hands of its new owner – the musician Moby.

At the hairpin corner, which is the intersection of Durand and the unpaved fire road section of Mulholland Drive, enjoy a fine view of Lake Hollywood. You can extend your walk by taking Mulholland down and around to the reservoir itself.

Trot back down Durand, turn right on Flagmoor, and turn left again onto Belden. Walk up one short stretch, and look for the amusing sign saying "Slow. Adults at Play." It features a jolly party animal, clutching a wine bottle. Just after the house at 2872, find your final staircase, another granite set with wrought iron rails, dropping 125 steps down to Woodshire. Enjoy the Antonio Gaudi/Simon Rodia-style bottle-walls on your left as you go. And, at the bottom, witness a profusion of amateur artwork. To the left is a pair of topiary rabbits. Straight across is a totem-pole garage door design. Turn right, down Woodshire, and follow it until it meets Belden. Turn left and walk to Beachwood, and the end of this walk.



## SECRET STAIRS WEBWALKS

Music Box Loop  
Duration: 55 minutes  
Distance: 2.5 miles  
Steps: 705  
Difficulty: 3  
Bus: #2, 4, 302, 704

*This is a vigorous walk built around the only officially designated stairs in Silver Lake, the famous location where Laurel and Hardy made their 1932 Academy Award-winning short *The Music Box* for producer Hal Roach. The two comedians had to carry a piano up the steep flight of steps between Vendome Street and Descanso Drive. All you have to do is walk it—once up, once down—and conquer the surrounding hills.*

Begin your walk near the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Parkman Avenue, perhaps with a café con leche at Café Tropical. Heading south down Parkman, you may appreciate the Cold War reminder offered by one of the city's few remaining air raid sirens across the street. Enjoy, too, the peculiar Moorish apartment building at 933 Parkman, from whose minarets the *muezzin* will never call. At the corner of Silver Lake Boulevard, turn right. (To your left, you can see the attractive brick-faced bridge where Sunset passes over Silver Lake. It does so because both boulevards once featured electric streetcar lines, and it was easier to run one street under the other than to make them into intersections. Glendale Boulevard ducks under Sunset, in Echo Park, for the same reason.) Just before the corner, you might note the private dwelling that used to be a church at 800 Silver Lake. At the corner itself, turn right onto Marathon Street.

Walk past the nice Florida palms, past Vendome Street and Dillon Street, and turn right onto Robinson Street. Just after the house at 830—careful, because it's easy to miss—watch for the first staircase on your right. It's a clean, well-maintained set of stairs, with a handrail and a pair of overhead streetlamps, that falls 66 steps through a pair of backyard gardens (one with an impressive collection of garden gnomes and *tchotchkes*) and lands at 837 Dillon. Turn left, and walk up and around the corner.

At the end of Dillon, use the crosswalk to get to the median strip separating the two halves of Vendome, and take the 13 steps to the downhill side. Turn left. Enjoy the odd triangular park to your right and, at the stop sign, cross Vendome again to face the *Music Box* steps.

In that 1932 classic short film, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy were obliged to deliver a piano to the top of a steep, barren hillside, up a series of concrete stairs. Today, the hillside is covered with apartment buildings, but the stairs remain—133 steps across multiple landings, with a handrail and some overhead lights, often littered with debris, and very ill maintained for such a landmark.

At the top, you land on Descanso Drive. Continue directly across the street and take the eight rickety wooden steps to the other side of Descanso. Admiring the giant carobs (street-wrecking trees whose roots have turned the asphalt into a rippled, undulating wave), turn right and walk downhill. Along the way, you'll get nice vistas across Sunset, with good views of the steps from Hamilton Way to

Elevado Street and the locked public staircase that used to carry pedestrians from Parkman Ave. to Westerly Terrace.

At the bottom of the hill, where Descanso meets Larissa Drive, catch the next staircase, going up on your left. This is a shaded, slightly crumbling staircase with a stencil at the bottom that commands, "Give Me Love." Climb the 139 steps, with a handrail and overhead lighting and a resting bench half way up, until you land on Descanso once more. Turn right, and head uphill.

At the corner, pause to admire the wild tile and sundial display on the far side of the intersection, and the more subtle tile fountain just to your right. Then turn right onto Micheltorena Street. Walk one block.

There, at the street's elbow, if you're tired or running out of time, you can cut this walk short. Go straight ahead and drop all the way down the majestic Micheltorena steps until you land on Sunset. Turn right, and walk back to Parkman. But if you are not tired or running late, turn left, onto Winslow Drive, and continue walking.

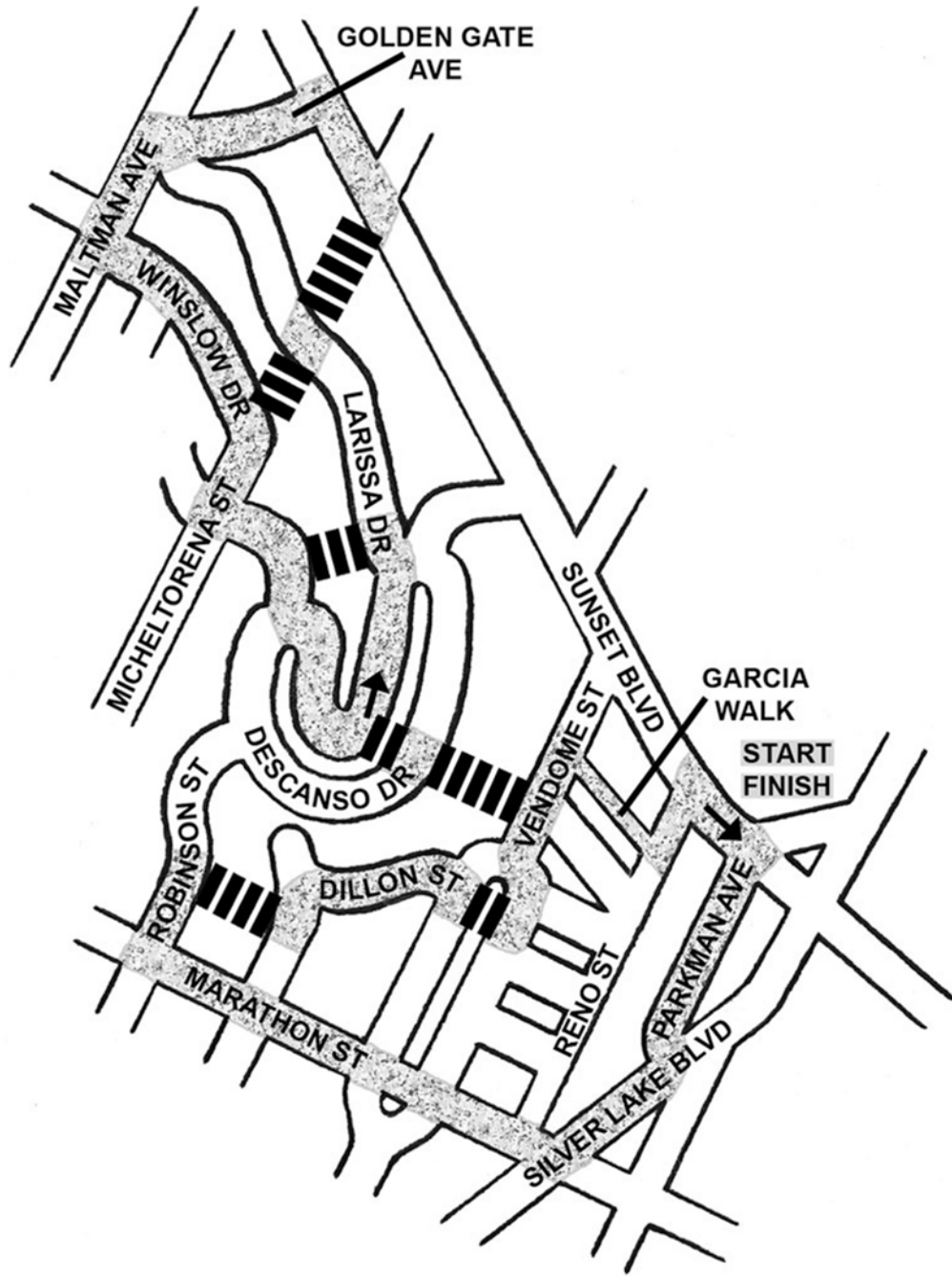
This is a charming street filled with eccentricities. Admire the asbestos-sided Craftsman at 3418 and, next door, its sign-festooned Craftsman sister. (You could spend half an hour here reading the signs warning against flooding or advertising rat poison.) Straight ahead on, at the corner of Maltman Avenue, turn right and begin your descent. After one block, bear right, still heading downhill, onto Golden Gate Avenue, and walk one more block until you hit Sunset. Turn right and head east—unless you are hungry. In the mini-mall to your left is the terrific Cuban restaurant El Cochinito, and a few doors past that is a Baskin Robbins. Go ahead. You've earned it.

Heading east on Sunset, just past the next traffic light at the corner of Sunset and Micheltorena, you will find the magnificent staircase whose top you saw a few minutes before. Now you must climb it. Enjoy the unexpected grapevines to the left and the bougainvillea overhead, and give thanks to contractor George Nichols, who built this staircase in 1925, as you go up 109 stairs to land on Larissa. Continue across Larissa as you go up the 96 stairs that return you to the top of the hill. Here again, you get a handrail and some overhead lights. (But you might want to think twice about walking here after dark. The gathered detritus suggests unwholesome nighttime activity.) Go straight on, turning left at Descanso, and beginning to retrace your steps downhill.

You'll get good views of Downtown Los Angeles on a clear day, with City Hall visible to the far left horizon. Stay on the left side of the road. Just after the house at 3279, take the wooden steps back across the divided road, then find the top of the *Music Box* staircase and climb down the 133 steps to land back on Vendome.

There's one more curiosity waiting. Cross the street, and head left. Half a block on, just past 946 Vendome, step into Garcia Walk. This is a delightful, narrow walk-street, running right through the front yards of a string of small bungalow houses. It's like the walk-streets of Venice, but with a decidedly Latino air. Admire the fine citrus, avocado, and fig trees, the roses, and the *norteño* ballads. You'll emerge at the other end onto an alley known as Reno Street. Take this to the left one block, to Sunset. Turn right and go a block to return to Parkman and Café Tropical.

MAP 18



## SECRET STAIRS WEBWALKS

Pacific Palisades—Castellammare

Duration: 1 hour, 15 minutes

Distance: 3.2 miles

Steps: 518

Difficulty: 3.5

Bus: RTD Bus #2, 302, 430

*The most scenic of all the city's stairwalks, this hillside stroll offers sweeping Pacific views, ocean breezes, and grisly Hollywood film lore. Its handsome hidden staircases are adjacent to the Getty Villa, the Self-Realization Fellowship, and Topanga Park, making it an ideal all-day recreation destination.*

Find yourself by bus or car at the doorstep of Gladstone's of Malibu, the popular seaside seafood restaurant at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway. You may enjoy a few sunny moments on their patio, whether you are a customer or not—the patio is public property. You may picnic here, and even bring your own food, as long as you first request a table from the host station at the Gladstone's entrance. The restrooms here, and coastal access, are also open to the public, though the parking is not. (There is, however, a warning: Across the street, on Sunset, is a sign saying, "Entering Tsunami Hazard Area." What you're meant to *do* with this information, I don't know, but there are similar signs in Santa Monica Canyon and as far south as Laguna Beach, and as far north as Humboldt County. The community of Port Hueneme, in Ventura County, has a tsunami warning *siren*.)

Begin walking north, on the ocean side of PCH, through the parking lot behind Gladstone's. You'll notice remnants of old staircases and an old promenade on the eastern side of the highway—wiped out not by tidal waves, but by the landslides that have plagued the area. Continue past a bank of public restrooms (fitted with outdoor showers), and past lifeguard tower #2 to the pedestrian overpass crossing PCH. Take the stairs up and over—35 steps up, a walkway across the highway, then 40 steps up again—to land on Castellammare Drive.

The big white Spanish structure you've just walked over was once known as Thelma Todd's Sidewalk Café, a roadhouse-speakeasy operated by the silent film actress of that name. Ms. Todd, who died nearby under suspicious circumstances in 1935, was the blonde beauty featured in the Marx Brothers' *Monkey Business* and *Horsefeathers*. She was found dead in her Lincoln Phaeton, killed by carbon monoxide poisoning. Suspects in the case included her boyfriend, her business partner, her ex-husband, and the gangster Lucky Luciano. The building now houses the inspirational film company Paulist Productions.

Cross Castellammare and walk a short few steps uphill to the next staircase, a steep construction with green handrails, rising 69 steps and lifting you to Posetano Road. Across the street, behind a wooden barricade, you will see evidence that the steps used to continue on up the hill. A series of landslides wiped out that staircase, and several others, and closed pieces of roadway all over the Castellammare hillside. You can still see some staircase wreckage rising behind the barricade.

So, turn left onto Posetano and walk to the next corner. Here, another stair remnant. There is a lovely flight of finely maintained stairs rising straight up from the intersection. These stairs end on a platform, and serve nothing—except to deliver a better view of the sunset, perhaps. Turn left down Revello Drive instead, and just after the house at 17712, find the nearly hidden staircase going down on the left.

Like most of the staircases in the Castellammare area, this set is marked with a contractor's stamp reading "Braun, Bryant + Austin," and is dated 1927. This one is two flights, 91 steps total, and quite steep, but fitted with handrails. It deposits you at the corner of Breve Way and Castellammare. Follow Breve down to the right, to where it meets Porto Marina Way. Across the road, you can see the remnants of yet another fine old staircase. This one is broad and beautifully built, and delivers you more or less into the traffic on PCH.

You don't want that. Instead, climb Porto Marina to just past the house at 17737, and find your next staircase. This one, another Braun, Bryant + Austin, rises 86 steps and drops you back on Castellammare. Turn left, and continue uphill. High above on your right, you may see the pilings supporting the enormous villa at 17800 Tramonto Drive, and above them, a cantilevered tennis court and gravity-defying patio. Enormous efforts have been made to hold the hillside together here, including, at street level, sheets of raw iron that look like a Richard Serra construction.

Past this, and just past the house at 17878, hidden in bougainvillea in the vacant lot below, you can see the remnants of yet another abandoned staircase. This one is still in good working order, though it is entirely overrun. It drops down through some underbrush, and past the concrete foundations of a ruined house, dropping down 61 steps to Porto Marina Way. There is an unlocked gate at the bottom and the stairs are open, but not recommended.

Instead, continue up Castellammare a little further, enjoying the ocean breezes and mountain views. At the first corner, turn left and walk downhill a bit. Here at the edge of the bluffs is Villa de Leon, the Italianate mansion designed in 1928 by architect Kenneth MacDonald for wool magnate Leon Kauffman. The 12,000-square-foot limestone residence features marble floors, a circular ocean-view dining room, nine bedrooms, 11 bathrooms, and a seven-car garage with its own car wash. Four naked wood nymphs watch over the road. Over the door is the head of a fierce looking ram, keeping an eye on the wool-bearing sheep that made the Kauffman fortune.

Turn around and go back up the hill. You're on Tramonto Drive now. Down and left, across the canyon, you will catch glimpses of the magnificent Getty Villa and surrounding glades and gardens. Continue uphill, then turn right onto Vicino Way. At the next corner, bear right back onto Tramonto. Though a contractor's stamp on the pavement sets the date of the street at 1927, most of the houses here are of more recent construction. Pause at 17800, the 6,000-square-foot confection, built in 1931, whose cantilevered tennis court you admired from below.

Press on along Tramonto. Near the houses at 17646 and 17612 the Pacific spreads out before you. The ocean views are magnificent, and on the hillsides below you can see evidence of the landslides that put some of the now-defunct staircases out of business.



Down and around you go. Turn right at the T-intersection where Tramonto meets Revello Drive, and follow Revello down until it crosses the narrow bridge and approaches its cul-de-sac end. But, just before that, you'll find another Braun, Bryant + Austin staircase on the left. It's a nicely balanced set of 122 steps, over four staircases, 25 steps each, bottomed out with a set of 22.

This will land you on Posetano Rd. once again. Turn right, go to the corner of Stretto Way, and stop. Here is Castillo Del Mar, a looming blue and brown structure that was the home of Thelma Todd at the time of her asphyxiated death. Take a deep breath, enjoy the sea air, and continue down Stretto. Where it meets Castellammare, turn right. Follow this down to the end of the road.

Castellammare used to continue, and return to its meeting with Breve and Porto Marina. But those 1960s landslides shut it down. Today, there's a nice little path going where the road once led. Take this path, down one side and up the other. After you are back on pavement, just past the house 17560, find the final staircase to cross PCH once more.

For one final stairwalk thrill, walk down the last 14 steps (more or less, depending on how much sand the tide has pushed onto the beach), take your shoes off and complete this walk along the shore. You can access the Gladstone's parking lot from the beach side, and you are back where you began.

