

## **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.

