

Trail angels help keep hikers going on PCT

By Chris Erskine, Los Angeles Times

By any measure, the Pacific Crest Trail is a beastly thing, an angry anaconda that slithers up the entire length of California and all the way to Canada, some 2,650 rugged miles. That's approximately 6 million steps – some of them glorious, many of them merciless.

But along the way, mercy is at hand.

Near the southern trail head, Sandy and Barney Mann open up their five-bedroom San Diego home to up to 60 hikers a night. They even pick them up from the airport and ferry them and their gear to the starting point an hour east.

Up the trail, in Agua Dulce, Donna and Jeff Saufley not only provide a night's rest to more than 1,000 hikers a season, they offer food and shelter to their dogs, horses and the occasional llama.

East of the Bay Area, Hank Magnuski functions as a sort of outdoors concierge, erecting a pop-up cafe to provide hot coffee and fresh fruit topped by whipped cream to hikers coming off a particularly grueling 300-mile stretch.

They are all part of a small network of outdoor Samaritans called "trail angels."

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