

Madulce Peak 06L

Lat/Lon 34.6910967,-119.5912396
UTM 11S 262631E 3841844N

Elevation: 6536'

View Caltopo [map](#) or download [GPX](#)

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Madulce Peak on [Peakbagger.com](#)

Current Weather on [NOAA](#)

Location: Santa Barbara County, about 20 miles north of Santa Barbara, 145 miles from Los Angeles

Nearby peaks: Samon Peak, Big Pine Mountain, West Big Pine

Land Manager: Los Padres National Forest, Santa Barbara Ranger District (805) 967-3481

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK. CONDITIONS MAY CHANGE, AND UNEXPECTED HAZARDS MAY BE PRESENT.

About the peak

Madulce is the Catalan Spanish word for strawberry, and wild strawberries still grow there. An old trail served a fire lookout that once stood on the summit, and has benefited from past HPS service outings. But the steep north facing terrain also nurtures trees, thick shrubs, and blackberry vines and makes the climb to the summit a route finding challenge in spite of the trail. Cuts in downed logs offer hints where ducks are scarce. The summit overlooks the Dick Smith and Matilija Wildernesses.

Madulce Peak is generally climbed with Samon, Big Pine and West Big Pine on a 3 day backpack trip in spring or fall. Together these peaks are known as the "Big Four," and the whole experience is strenuous. There is water at Chokecherry Spring. It may be possible to hike these peaks as a car camping trip by organizing a service trip with the Los Padres Forest Association, which HPS sponsors periodically. Route 2 to Madulce follows a trail that begins 0.7 miles before the locked gate at the parking area for Route 1. It follows Santa Barbara Canyon with multiple creek crossings to a junction near Madulce Guard Station and Camp, where the right fork heads east to join Route 1 at a signed junction. Route 2 to Madulce follows a trail that begins 0.7 miles before the locked gate at the parking area for Route 1. It follows Santa Barbara Canyon with multiple creek crossings to a junction near Madulce Guard Station and Camp, where the right fork heads east to join Route 1 at a signed junction.

Madulce Peak is in the Dick Smith Wilderness. Campfire permits are required.

The road that goes past Chokecherry Spring separates Dick Smith Wilderness, on the east, from San Rafael Wilderness, on the west. The road itself is not Wilderness and is suitable for mountain bikes.

Madulce Peak is generally climbed with Samon Peak, Big Pine Mountain and West Big Pine on a 3-day backpack trip called "The Big Four". For all four peaks, the distance is 45 miles, the gain is about 8000', and the whole experience is very strenuous.

There is water at Chokecherry Spring most of the year but it often dries up or has very low flows in drier years; hikers should check on its status before a backpack trip to this area.

If you camp at Alamar, you must carry overnight water 3 miles and about 1000' of gain from Chokecherry Spring. Bears frequent the area, so it is advisable to bear proof foodstuffs and other consumables when leaving your campsite.

Descending Route 2 is not recommended after dark.

Statistics for the Big Four:

Trailhead to Chokecherry Spring: 19 miles round trip, 9 hours, 2400' gain with 300' on the return.

Chokecherry to Samon Peak: 6 miles round trip, 1900' gain.

Chokecherry to Madulce saddle: 3.5 miles round trip, 700' gain, 1.5 hours.

Madulce saddle to Madulce Peak: 7 miles round trip, 4 hours, 1600' gain.

Madulce saddle to Alamar Station: 2.5 miles round trip, 1.5 hours, 600' gain on the return.

Alamar station to Big Pine junction: 5.5 miles round trip, 2.5 hours, 800' gain with 100' on the return.

Big Pine junction to Big Pine Mountain: 1 mile round trip, 1 hour, 500' gain.

Big Pine junction to West Big Pine: 5 miles round trip, 2.5 hours, 300' gain with 100' on the return.

Madulce Peak has 2 official HPS routes:

Madulce Peak Route 1

Distance: 31 miles round trip on road and trail

Difficulty rating: Class 1, very strenuous

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Adventure Pass may be required

Gain: 4700

Time: 15-16 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Road type: Dirt

Driving directions:

- Drive north on I-5 past the Grapevine to the SR 166 off-ramp. Turn left (west).
- Head west 36.5 miles, passing through Maricopa, to the junction with SR 33 south. This junction may be reached by a slower route via SR 33 north from Ojai. (There is a junction with SR 33 north in Maricopa that you will pass in Maricopa.) Turn left (south).
- Go 2.7 miles to Foothill Road on the right. Turn right (west).
- Go 2.1 miles, crossing the Cuyama River, to the Santa Barbara Canyon Road (9N11) on the left. Turn left, note your odometer, and go as follows:
- At 3.1 miles, just past a ranch house, junction with a dirt road on the left and a paved road on the right with a sign "Santa Barbara Canyon Road". Turn right.
- At 7.5 miles, fork with Santa Barbara Ranch visible ahead. Go right and cross a creek. The pavement ends.
- At 9.5 miles, a cattle guard and gate.
- At 10.0 miles, a hard to see dirt road on right. This is the turnoff for Fox Mountain #1. Keep straight.
- At 10.8 miles, fork with Dry Canyon Road on the left. This is the turnoff for Lizard Head and Cuyama Peak (LO). Keep straight.
- At 12.6 miles, a locked gate. Park here.
- If the Cuyama River is impassable, return to the junction of SR 166 and SR 33 and go as follows:
- Go west on SR 166 for 4.7 miles to a bridge over the Cuyama River, and an immediate junction past the bridge, on your left. This is Kirschenmann Road (paved). Turn left.
- Continue 2.4 miles to the end of Kirschenmann at Foothill Road. Turn left (east).
- Drive 3 miles to Santa Barbara Canyon Road on the right (south). Turn right and continue as above.

Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (3440'), hike through the small gate and continue up the road. At 4 miles there are the posts of a second gate; off the road to the right is a flat area suitable for camping.

- Continue up the road, keeping left at a fork with Sierra Madre Road about 0.5 mile farther, and go about 5 miles farther to Chokecherry Spring (5500'), marked by a water trough and a large water tank. This is the turnoff for Samon Peak.
- Continue south up the road about 1.7 miles (700' gain) to a saddle where the road starts downhill.
- About 30 yards past the saddle, the trail that goes to Madulce Peak starts off to the left, visible from the saddle. Continuing straight ahead on the road leads to Big Pine Mountain and West Big Pine.
- Turn left on the trail and follow it for 1 mile as it crosses over a ridge and then goes along its east side to a trail fork, with a sign on the right reading "Madulce Peak 2". The left fork goes 2 miles down to Madulce Guard Station.
- Take the right fork, following this realigned trail (not shown on the topo map) that begins just northeast of bump 6381', trends downward to a major ridge north of Madulce, and then doubles back steeply uphill with 23 switchbacks to meet the old trail alignment at the main ridgeline near bump 6412'.
- After meeting the main ridgeline, turn south along the ridge to the summit, which is marked by the foundations of a former lookout. The new trail alignment to the summit is 1 mile longer than the former trail.

Additional Route notes:

Madulce Peak Route 2

Distance: 24 miles round trip on trail

Gain: 4800

Difficulty rating: Class 1, very strenuous

Time: 13-14 hours round trip

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Navigation difficulty: Moderate

Adventure Pass may be required

Road type: Dirt

Driving directions:

- Same as Driving Route 1, except the trailhead is about 0.7 mile east of the locked gate at the end of the road, near a spot shown as Willow Campground on the topo map where the road heads west.

Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (3340'), hike south on a trail that follows Santa Barbara Canyon, crossing the creek 34 times. After about 8 miles you will come to the Madulce Guard Station and a trail junction.
- Turn right, pass through Madulce Campground, and continue 2 miles to a trail junction with a sign on the left reading "Madulce Peak 2".
- Take the left fork and proceed as in Route 1.

Additional Route notes: