

## Eagle Crag 31A

Lat/lon 33.3872549,-116.9561372  
UTM 11S 504079E 3694220N

Elevation: 5077'

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Eagle Crag on [Peakbagger.com](#)

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Location: San Diego County, 13 miles southeast of Temecula, 112 miles from Los Angeles

Nearby peaks:

Land Manager: Cleveland National Forest, Palomar Mountain Ranger District (760) 788-0250

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

### About the peak

As indicated by the grueling HPS routes to the summit, Eagle Crag (5077') is a very remote and isolated mountain at the edge of the Agua Tibia Wilderness. Fortunately, the hike's length also makes it beautiful. Something rare in San Diego Country, hikers pass through desert, oak forests, pines, chaparral, and cross many streams on the way to the peak. The summit views are also beautiful and span from San Diego to San Bernardino on a clear day. Once on the summit, the peak's namesake rockpile offers a unique resting spot with a sheer 1000' drop below.

All three HPS routes for Eagle Crag are I-rated and strenuous. Route 1 (18 miles, 4200' gain) requires offroad travel and seasonal gates to be open, so be sure to check with the Forest Service for current conditions. Hiking begins at the Cutca Valley trail head and travels up roads and trails to eventually reach a cross country gully through thick brush to the summit near the top. Route 2 (26 miles, 4900' gain) starts at the Dripping Springs Campground, which is often closed. The hike follows various trails and roads for 11 miles and eventually reaches the same gully as in Route 1. Route 3 (26 miles, 5500' gain) also begins at Dripping Springs Campground but approaches from a different trail system to eventually meet the same gully as the other two routes.

Alternate routes: A former route from Palomar State Park over Morgan Hill passes through private property (Weber Ranch) and the Mission Indian Reservation. Neither the rancher nor the Indians give permission to hike through their land. Unauthorized use of this route jeopardizes the efforts of trail crews to gain access along it.

Special conditions: All three routes in this guide pass through the Agua Tibia Wilderness. Wilderness permits are not required for day hikes but are required for overnight trips. For permit information, contact the Forest Service Station at Oak Grove or:

Palomar District Headquarters

1634 Black Canyon Road

Ramona, CA 92065

(760) 788-0250 (voice)

(760) 788-6130 (FAX)

Eagle Crag has 3 official HPS routes:

## Eagle Crag Route 1- Cutca Trail

Distance: 18 miles round trip on trail, road,  
and cross-country

Difficulty rating: Class 1, strenuous

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Adventure Pass may be required

Gain: 4200

Time: 9-10 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Intermediate

Road type: Dirt

### Driving directions:

- Take I-15 south to Temecula.
- Take the South SR 79 exit. This is the second of two SR 79 exits. It says 79 South. Please make sure you have enough gas. There are plenty of gas stations along SR 79 for the 2 miles or so.
- Continue south on SR 79 to Aguanga (junction with SR 371). This is about 18.2 miles east of Temecula.
- Continue southeast on SR 79 for 0.4 mile to High Point Truck Trail on the right. There is now a sign that says Rancho California RV Resort. The road is labeled 8S05. Turn right on to this road. Note your odometer and go as follows:
- At 0.2 mile, fork with a dirt road (High Point Truck Trail). Go left.
- At 3.1 miles, seasonal gate.
- At 5.4 miles, saddle with parking space for several cars and the (signed) Cutca Valley trailhead. Park here.

### Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (3794'), hike about 0.6 mile down the Cutca Valley Trail (1E01) into Cottonwood Canyon. Cross a stream.
- About a mile from the trailhead, the trail reaches a small saddle and becomes a road. The road continues across Section 16 and into the southern part of Section 17, staying between 3400' and 3600'. It joins the Cutca Truck Trail at the boundary of Section 17 at a sign "Cutca Truck Trail" and "2.3 Section 16". (This is about 2 hours at a moderate pace from the parking area).
- Turn right (north) on the road, cross a stream after about 50 meters, then continue about a mile, where there is a sign "Trail" on the left. The trail is shown on the topo.
- Turn left and follow this trail up a canyon and into the Aqua Tibia Wilderness, past a saddle at 4200', and to a junction with the Palomar Divide Truck Trail (2W01) at 4720'.
- Turn right (west) and follow the road about 300 meters to an obvious gully on the left.
- The gully may have a duck; if not, please place one. Leave the road here and go up the gully staying in trees to the left as much as possible to avoid brush. Continue up to where the gully divides, and take the right (west) fork or the center ridge staying above and close to

the right fork, finding the most open path possible, to the top of the ridge where a long clearing (old firebreak) through manzanita leads to a saddle, then work your way through thick manzanita to the summit. The register can is located on the rocks just south of the high point.

- Note: Eagle Crag is not the highest point on the ridge.

**Additional Route notes:**

Notes: The gate at 3.1 miles from SR 79 is a "black gate", meaning that it is open except for major problems such as a washout. For information about this gate, contact the Forest Service Station at Oak Grove at: (951) 767-9144. Driving this road is not advised when wet, due to the adobe surface, which turns to a slippery quagmire, together with the slope of the roadbed toward the canyon. There is a lot of poison oak. Also, seasonal tick blooms have been observed in the area. Light-colored clothing and frequent inspections are recommended.

## Eagle Crag Route 2- Wild Horse Trail

Distance: 26 miles round trip on trail, road,  
and cross-country

Difficulty rating: Class 1, very strenuous

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Adventure Pass may be required

Gain: 4900

Time: 11-12 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Intermediate

Road type: Paved

### Driving directions:

- Take I-15 south to Temecula.
- Go east on SR 79 (this is the second SR 79 exit) for about 10 miles, cross a narrow bridge and turn right to Dripping Springs Campground. Park in the lot on the right near the entrance (no fee) or in a campsite (\$7 a day).

### Hiking directions:

- Walk to the south end of the campground where a sign and trail register are located. Sign the register, then proceed across a seasonal stream (flooded after heavy rains). Just past the "Agua Tibia Wilderness" sign, the trail reaches a trail junction with the Wild Horse Trail on the left and the Dripping Springs Trail on the right.
- Turn left and go 7 long miles as the trail contours 200' above Arroyo Seco then ascends the east shoulder of Wild Horse Peak passing through the saddle west of Agua BM, and then descends to a former dirt road.
- Turn left and descend about 1/4 mile to a switchback on the right, which leads to a seasonal stream. Cross the stream and a very distinct cow trail and ascend the south side to a road at 2800'. From here to Crosley Saddle the trail is likely to be very vague and difficult to follow.
- Cross the road (private property in both directions) and pass through a gate. Continue 3 miles on the former Crosley Truck Trail (now a trail) to Crosley Saddle (3931') and a signed junction with the former Palomar-Magee Truck Trail (now a trail). The right fork leads to Agua Tibia Mountain and the Dripping Springs Trail.
- Turn left and go 1.5 miles (1/4 mile past the saddle at 4468') to a small gully on the right sometimes marked by a duck. Continue up this gully as in Route 1.

### Additional Route notes:

Notes: The Forest Service is considering a seasonal closure of the Dripping Springs Campground because of the endangered green toad. This may prevent the use of Routes 2 and 3 during closure periods. Please contact the Palomar Ranger District Office at 760-788-0250 for current closure information.

## Eagle Crag Route 3- Dripping Springs Trail

Distance: 26 miles round trip on trail, road, and cross-country

Difficulty rating: Class 1, very strenuous

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

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Gain: 5500

Time: 12 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Intermediate

Road type: Paved

### Driving directions:

- Same as Route 2.

### Hiking directions:

- Walk to the south end of the campground where a sign and trail register are located. Sign the register, then proceed across a seasonal stream (flooded after heavy rains). Just past the "Agua Tibia Wilderness" sign, the trail reaches a trail junction with the Wild Horse Trail on the left and the Dripping Springs Trail on the right.
- Turn right onto Dripping Springs Trail (1W03) and follow it for 7 miles to where it joins the former Palomar-Magee Truck Trail (now trail 2W01) at a signed saddle just west of Agua Tibia Mountain (near the "T" in "Tibia" on the Vail Lake topo): One may want to climb to the summit of Agua Tibia Mtn (Lower Peaks list), a very short but very brushy climb.
- Turn left and follow it 2 1/2 miles as it contours on the northwest shoulder of Agua Tibia Mountain and descends to Crosley Saddle, junction with Wild Horse Trail. This portion of the road is often poorly maintained.
- Continue as in Route 2.

### Additional Route notes:

Notes: The Forest Service is considering a seasonal closure of the Dripping Springs Campground because of the endangered green toad. This may prevent the use of Routes 2 and 3 during closure periods. Please contact the Palomar Ranger District Office at 76

