

Middle Peak 32D

Lat/Lon 32.980325,-116.6000195
UTM 11S 537373E 3649177N

Elevation: 5883'

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Middle Peak on [Peakbagger.com](#)

Current Weather on [NOAA](#)

Location: San Diego County, about 8 miles south of Julian, 150 miles from Los Angeles

Nearby peaks: Cuyamaca Peak, Stonewall Peak, Oakzanita Peak

Land Manager: Cleveland National Forest, Descanso Ranger District (619) 445-6235

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

About the peak

Middle Peak reaches an elevation of 5883', looming over Lake Cuyamaca at its foot to the east. Almost exactly between North Peak (to the north) and Cuyamaca Peak (to the south), the mountain's name becomes a bit more obvious. While not nearly the tallest in the area, Middle Peak still offers worthwhile unobstructed views to the east into the ranges that host other HPS favorites such as Whale Peak and Rabbit Peak. Additionally, the slopes of the peak are scattered with mines from the gold rush era, making for an interesting historical (and financial, if you're lucky) adventure.

Both HPS routes to the summit are direct and short, with 5 miles round trip distance and 1200' of gain for either. Because of this Middle Peak is often grouped with other peaks (such as North Peak and Cuyamaca Peak mentioned earlier) into a longer day hike with a car shuttle. Route 1 approaches mostly on road from the Cuyamaca dam to the northeast. A few hundred feet of hiking due west at the top of the road make this route cross country. Route 2 approaches from Camp Hual-Cu-Cuish to the east and up a dirt road to eventually meet the same cross country point as Route 1. Both routes end into a short but notorious cross country segment that can be quite brushy. This section is regularly clipped by locals and is currently (2024) in good condition, but can be quite harrowing when overgrown. Online trip reports can often give you more information about its current condition.

Alternate routes: Middle Peak and Cuyamaca Peak are often done as a car shuttle or loop trip. It is possible to go south down the ridge from Middle Peak to the five way junction described in Route 2 of the Cuyamaca Peak guide. Continue to Middle Peak via the Route 2 instructions.

Note: The last quarter mile to the peak of Middle can be notoriously brushy if not maintained. Usually it is trimmed regularly by locals or HPS members, but you may wish to investigate its status prior to hiking there.

Historical note: Middle Peak lies within the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park.

Middle Peak has 2 official HPS routes:

Middle Peak Route 1

Distance: 5 miles round trip on road and cross-country

Difficulty rating: Class 1, easy

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Gain: 1200

Time: 3 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Road type: Paved

Driving directions:

- Take I-5 south to SR 78 in San Diego County.
- Go east on SR 78 through Escondido to the junction with SR 79 just past the town of Julian. Turn right (south) on SR 79.
- Go south on SR 79 for 9 miles to the Cuyamaca Dam.
- Continue 0.1 mile to a gravel turnout on the right with log gates at either end. Park here.

Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (4600'), hike up an asphalt road which goes south. Ignore a road that goes off to the right.
- At about 0.1 mile you will come to a locked gate with stone pillars. Pass the gate and continue up the road passing a stone foundation and on to a road junction at 5600'.
- Take the left fork and go a few hundred feet to another fork.
- Leave the road here and hike cross-country west up the ridge to the summit.

Additional Route notes:

Middle Peak Route 2

Distance: 5 miles round trip on road and cross-country

Difficulty rating: Class 1, easy

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Gain: 1200

Time: 3 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Road type: Paved

Driving directions:

- Take I-5 south to SR 78 in San Diego County.
- Go east on SR 78 through Escondido to the junction with SR 79 just past the town of Julian. Turn right (south) on SR 79.
- Go south on SR 79 for 9 miles to the Cuyamaca Dam.
- Continue 1.1 miles to a road on the right side (west) with a sign "Camp Hual-Cu-Cuish". Park on the left (east) side of the highway.

Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (4600'), cross the highway and hike west up the dirt road to a fork.
- Keep right at this fork and pass a gate and continue on to another fork with a barrier on the right fork.
- Turn right and follow this road to another fork at 5640'.
- Turn right and go about 300 yards to the high point on the road.
- Leave the road here on the left and hike cross-country up through trees to the summit.