

## Sheephead Mountain 32L

Lat/Lon 32.8211627,-116.4639057  
UTM 11S 550181E 3631589N

Elevation: 5896'

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

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Sheephead Mountain on [Peakbagger.com](#)

Current Weather on [NOAA](#)

Location: San Diego County, about 19 miles southeast of Julian, 167 miles from Los Angeles, 55 miles from San Diego

Nearby peaks: Garnet Mountain, Garnet Peak, Monument Peak #1

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

The southernmost HPS peak, Sheephead Mountain is situated due east from San Diego. Just shy of 6000 feet, a Bighorn Sheep shaped rock formation on the summit gives it its name. Views from this summit are unique because several large deserts that extend for hundreds of miles border the area on many sides. However, the peak itself is still in the Cleveland National Forest and offers pine forests at the start of the hike and beautiful greenery throughout the trip. Because of its location and proximity to many campgrounds, the peak is commonly hiked with the other three nearby HPS peaks in a single outing, driving from trailhead to trailhead in a loop.

Sheephead Mountain is surrounded by private land, which makes reaching the summit complicated and results in a single available route. Route 1 avoids crossing into private lands and follows a serpentine path along several abandoned roads and cross country use trails to avoid trespassing (which many posted signs will make abundantly clear). The route shown on the map avoids private property if followed correctly; do not leave the road beyond the point shown. The route passes through a gate along the way; this is not the property boundary. Once one leaves the road, the route ascends an extremely brushy slope on a use trail to the rocky summit. Also, direct access is at times not possible due to closed gates or ranch activities, making the hike longer by a couple of miles in fall months. Expect the standard route to take 2-3 hours across moderate terrain.

Special conditions: Ranchers in this area are very sensitive about hikers and hunters during the fall months. It is best to plan trips to this peak for other times of the year. Historical notes: This area was formerly an Indian area of great importance. Some of the forest lease ranches in the area have been occupied for more than 70 years, dating back to the time when mining was the major activity of the area.

Sheephead Mountain has 1 official HPS route:

## Sheephead Mountain Route 1

Distance: 3.5 miles round trip on road and cross-country

Difficulty rating: Class 1, moderate

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Adventure Pass may be required

Gain: 1000

Time: 2-3 hours round trip

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Road type: Dirt

### Driving directions:

- SR 78 and Escondido approach:
- 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 6 miles to the junction with Sunrise Highway (S1) on the left. Turn left. Note your odometer and go as follows:
- At 7.4 miles, a paved road on the left with a sign "Kwaaymii Point". This is the turnoff for Garnet Mountain. Keep straight.
- At 9.9 miles a parking area at a gated dirt road on the left. This is the trailhead for Garnet Peak. Keep straight.
- At 11.4 miles, Laguna Campground entrance. Keep straight.
- At 12.7 miles, parking area on the left. This is the trailhead for Monument Peak #1. Keep straight.
- At 15.1 miles, a dirt road on the left just past the Red-Tailed Roost Volunteer Activity Center. Keep straight.
- At 17.1 miles, Kitchen Creek Road (paved) on the left, milepost 20.7. Turn left.
- Continue another 1.5 miles to a gated dirt road on the right. Park in the wide area to the left.
- I-8 and San Diego approach:
- Take I-8 east from San Diego to the Sunrise Highway (S1), about 40 miles from the junction of I-8 and I-805.
- Go left (north) on S1 at the top of the off-ramp about 4 miles to Kitchen Creek Road (paved) on the right, milepost 20.7. Turn right.
- Continue another 1.5 miles to a gated dirt road on the right. Park in the wide area to the left.

### Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (5560'), pass the gate and hike along a badly eroded dirt road keeping left at a fork to where you find a private property sign just short of a junction with Kitchen Creek Road.

- Leave the road on the left side and hike cross-country a short distance until you meet Kitchen Creek Road where it exits the private property. You are skirting around the left side of the private property.
- Turn left on Kitchen Creek Road and follow it a short distance to a gate which is padlocked and posted Private Property - No Trespassing. The road is on USFS property for the next 0.2 miles until the final few hundred feet before turning off into the ascent gully. The private property can be avoided, if you desire, by cutting off the final portion of the road to connect with the use trail in the wash. All of the ascent trail from then on is on public land.
- Continue on or alongside the road to a clipped use trail that is often difficult to find for another 0.1 mile to a wash on the right which comes down on the east side of the peak. This wash is just north of the prominent broad ridge coming down from the summit.
- Turn into this wash and follow a use trail up the wash. (Continuing on the road at this point would enter private property.) Soon this clipped use trail leaves the wash and winds its way up the slope to the summit. Use the clipped use trail to avoid the brush. All of the ascent trail is on public land (USFS property).

**Additional Route 1 notes:**

Special conditions: The posting on the gate reflects the fact that this is the final "control point" prior to the actual private property line. Another gate or fence line is not present at the actual property line. CalTopo and Forest Service maps depict the private and public properties; the HPS route leaves the road at a point just before the private boundary.

Kitchen Creek Road is often closed in the winter months. In this case, park at the locked gate and hike into the parking area; this adds about 3 miles to the round trip distance. The map indicates the private property as shaded (vs. green), and the described route leaves the road before reaching the property line.

