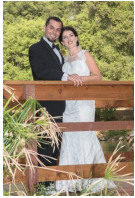




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Hiker's Paradise: Iron Mountain



Views of the nearby foothills and San Vicente Reservoir may be enjoyed from the summit.

By Angela McLaughlin - Julian Journal • Thu, May 17, 2018

With a recognizable yet imposing name, Iron Mountain may be one of the most identifiable landmarks in the area, and many of us pass the trailhead on our way "down the hill," without a second thought.

There are residents who have lived in the area for years and never climbed to the top — myself included, until recently. But with dramatic views of the surrounding landscape, distant ocean panoramas and ocean breezes from the top, Iron Mountain is certainly not an experience to miss.

Though the name suggests an arduous excursion, this hike may be considered moderate in terms of difficulty. To reach the trailhead, follow

Highway 67 until you reach the intersection at Poway Road; the parking lot will be on the left, and there are restrooms available.

A large, ornate metal sign labeled "Iron Mountain" greets hikers at the start of the trail. After going through a dense grove of trees, the trail soon opens to a wide dirt pathway, and there is almost no shade after this point.

The path is rocky in several places, and sturdy shoes with ankle support are suggested. Many hikers also choose to use trekking poles for more stability and to reduce the impact on the knees and leg muscles.

Hikers should be sure to follow signs for the Iron Mountain summit — there are several other trail options that intersect with the main trail, and there are other starting points that may be chosen to reach the top that will offer a longer trek. Though the elevation gain of 1,000 feet may seem daunting, the numerous switchbacks make for an easier climb. Some rocky areas of the trail may require more delicate maneuvering, but it is very manageable overall.

As you wind your way up the east and northeast sides of the mountain, you will be rewarded with gorgeous views of the rolling foothills and large rock formations. Partially through the climb, hikers will enjoy a refreshing cool-down as the ocean air reaches the side of the mountain. On a clear day, the ocean is easily visible from several segments of the hike.

As the trail is without much shade, it is very important to pack enough water for the entire hiking party, including pets. Hike on a cooler day or when the sun is less intense. Keep in mind that the rocky path may be hard on some dogs' feet, and this — as well as the temperature — should be considered before bringing your dog. In addition to water, pack food, sunscreen and a first aid kit. Proper footwear and clothing will make for a more enjoyable adventure.

Snaking your way up the mountain will eventually bring you to the summit, which sits at an elevation of 2,696 feet. Jaw-dropping sights of the ocean are accompanied by views of the surrounding foothills, San Vicente Reservoir, the community of Ramona and distant glimpses of downtown San Diego. A metal viewfinder allows hikers to enjoy the sights even more, as they recuperate before their descent.

Oftentimes, the trip down the mountain takes longer than the climb, as the rocky path forces hikers to be more conscious of their footing. Though it may be tempting to cheat and take shortcuts, it is important to remain on the trail to prevent excess erosion.

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With a total distance of more than five miles, the Iron Mountain Trail offers a demanding yet accomplishable challenge for hikers. On average, it takes about two to three hours to complete.

The manageable climb and distance, coupled with phenomenal views of the area, leave no mystery as to why Iron Mountain is one of the most popular hikes in San Diego County.

It's time to hit the trail!

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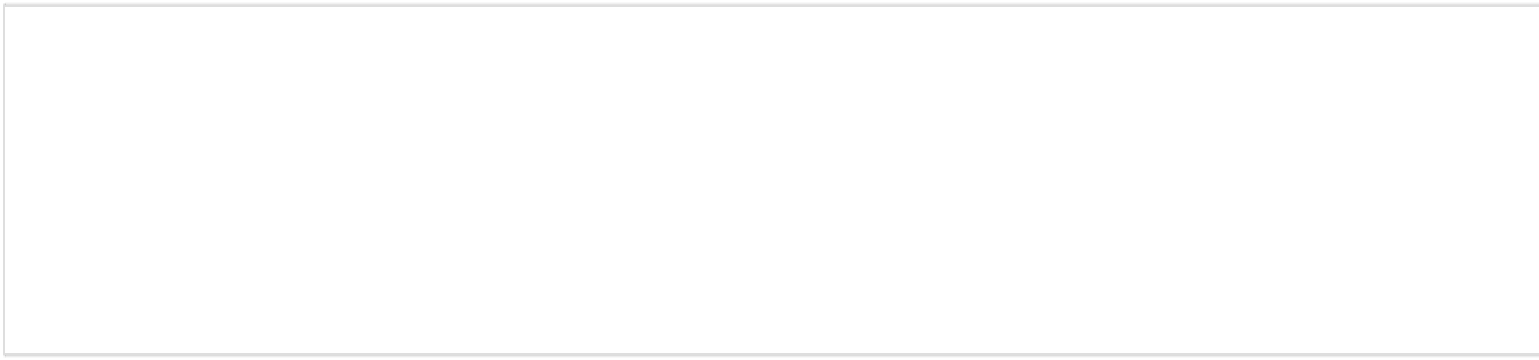
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