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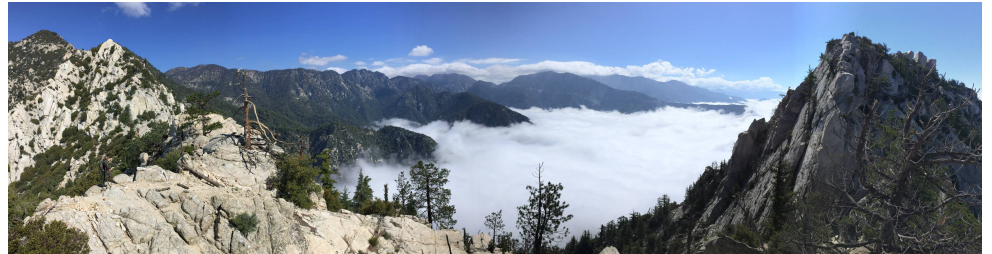
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TRIPLET ROCKS OF THE SAN GABRIEL WILDERNESS | THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE



DISCLAIMER

There are a handful of cross country hikes here in the Southern California Wilderness that push the limits of the word "adventure" for several reasons. They are extremely remote locations that most people will never have the pleasure of seeing. A consequence of their isolated location is that rescue is highly unlikely in the case of an emergency.

That being said, it is the responsibility of the few that are capable of reaching these locations to practice safety when traveling to them.

- Double and triple check your supplies (especially water).
- Check weather conditions right before you lose cell service.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Always let someone know where you are going and what time you intend to return.
- Use the [Leave No Trace](#) principles.

TRVRS Apparel is all for encouraging new and exciting adventures, but part of the adventure is doing adequate research ahead of time to assure a safe and fun trip which is why we've decided to document

these back country hikes. Stay safe!

DIRECTIONS TO THE TRAILHEAD

From the 210 Freeway:

Take exit 20 for CA-2 / Angeles Crest Hwy toward La Cañada Flintridge North

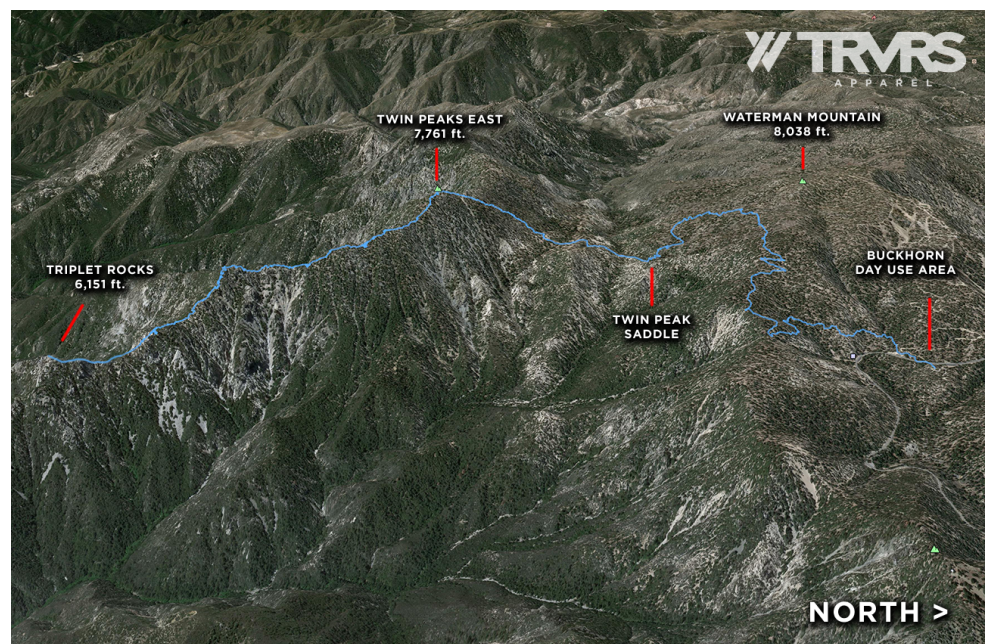
You will continue onto CA-2 for 34 miles before making a left into an East facing turnout just past mile marker 58.

The official Mount Waterman trailhead begins across from this turnout.

(If you can't find it, you can also follow the road a few hundred feet up past Buckhorn Day Use Area where you will see a fire road with limited access. Walk along this road observing to your left and you will eventually see the single track running parallel to it. Take it!)

Alternatively, you can use [Google Maps](#) to route you there.

OVERVIEW



Located in the middle of the San Gabriel Wilderness, towering over the Devils Canyon, West Fork, and Bear Creek is an unofficial summit unknown to most local hikers due to its remote location as well as its tremendously difficult approach. Peak 6151', otherwise known as Triplet Rocks is named after the three enormous boulders that make its prominence. The out-and-back cross country excursion begins on the more "defined" Mount Waterman Trail, just off of the California Highway 2 in the Angeles Forest near Buckhorn Day Use Area. After rounding the South-East side of Mount Waterman via the Kratka Ridge, the trail descends further South onto the Waterman / Twin Peak Saddle before a short but tough ascent to Twin Peaks East. The 3.5 miles that follow are where this adventure gets its reputation. The trek requires consistent focus to navigate a near nonexistent trail laced with dense bush, scree fields, and upper class 3 climbs over degraded boulders that crumble under each step.



The most draining part of the trek is that even when you've successfully summited Triplet Rocks, you will still have no trail to follow back, and unlike most strenuous hikes in the San Gabriel Wilderness, the ascent doesn't start until you've begun to return home. I've completed this route four times with a fifth attempt that excluded the last half mile, the [San Antonio Ridge Traverse](#) twice and a handful of other cross country hikes in the Angeles Forest. I've come to the personal conclusion that this is the hardest known day hike out there. The following write up is (instead of a trip report) an outline of my combined efforts on this ridge as well as information from some other local mountain masochists, because it wasn't until after the third attempt that I was finally able to set a solid route to the peak.

THE MT. WATERMAN TRAIL



For those that spend more time in the front country, the drive past Chilao will be a refreshing start to your day. The San Gabriel Wilderness high country is a beautiful mixture of tall Pines, Cedars, the occasional downed burn victim from previous fires and jutting waves of granite rock formations. The Mount Waterman trail offers more of this elegance, at first teasing you with partial views of Will Thrall and the Pleasant View Ridge as you begin a steady ascent onto the Kratka Ridge (1.2 miles, 500 feet climbed). Although this section is fairly easy and straightforward, it will be hard not to take a short break here as this will be a great opportunity to take in the panoramic views of the full route and end goal. That being said, if you've in any way timed this correctly, you won't see anything quite yet, because you'd be starting in the dead of night with plans of reaching Twin Peaks just before dawn.



At 2.2 miles (after climbing roughly 1,000 feet), you will arrive at a trail junction. The trail to the right is part of the Waterman Loop which takes you up to Mount Waterman (.75 of a mile further, with roughly 300 feet of gain) and finishes on the same fire road from which you started to complete the loop. The sign also states that the route to Twin Peaks continues to your left. All trails indicated on this sign are in fact the Mt. Waterman Trail, so don't get too wound up about which is which. Stay to your left for a 1,000 foot descent in two miles. Easy right? Except there is a small catch. Somewhere in that stretch of fairly straightforward switchbacks is a sign that may or may not be posted which reads "Twin Peaks Saddle | (Dead End)". If this sign is not along the trail, it can be really easy to miss a crucial switchback taking you further West and leading you toward Three Points instead of South toward Twin Peaks Saddle. Regardless of whether or not the sign is there, take care to notice your surroundings and be sure to continue Southeast on any unmarked switchback junctions.

THE TWIN PEAKS SADDLE



After a hopefully quick descent to make up for the time you are doomed to lose later, you'll find yourself out of the tree cover. The Twin Peak / Mount Waterman saddle features an abundance of waist level Green Leaf Manzanita as well as an official sign that reads "Twin Peaks Saddle, Elevation 6,550 ft., Heliport 1/4". Any sign of an official heliport has long been overgrown by chaparral, but if you're interested in taking a look, you can walk directly South from the sign to the top of the small hill on your way to Twin Peaks. Otherwise, look for the remains of a downed tree near the saddle sign and you will find the trail picks back up on the other side of it.

TWIN PEAKS EAST



The next quarter of a mile will further express the tranquil qualities of the San Gabriel mountain high country. Wide open forested flatlands extend endlessly to the East and West creating a humbling feeling similar to what's instilled from standing atop a lone peak. Enjoy this while it lasts because the ascent to Twin Peaks is what follows where you'll climb over 1,100 feet in 3/4 of a mile over some class 2 granite terrain which makes for slow and tiring knee high steps. At the peak (4.8 miles, 2,200 feet climbed), you'll be rewarded with the expansive views you came for. To the East sits Islip Saddle and the abandoned highway 39 project, with Bear Creek at its base. Travel just a few hundred feet to the west and you'll overlook Twin Peaks West with the Devils Canyon stretching out from behind its lengthy ridge. Finally, to the South, you will see a stunning overview of Triplet Rocks and the rugged ridge you will traverse to reach the peak

TRIPLET ROCKS RIDGE



At this point, you will likely start to count the pseudo peaks between yourself and the summit, especially since you'd have come more than half of the total distance to the peak. Wipe the grin off of your face and prepare for a long day because the next 3.5 miles will likely take you over 4 hours (one way). Each of the major hills hides one or two small ridge spurs and saddles made of extremely rugged terrain that will leave you gasping for air after the completion of each section, only to be welcomed by more of the same.

As stated earlier, the lack of a trail can make the return trip as difficult to navigate as the way there, so it would be wise to take note of any landmarks. Someone was kind enough to hang trail tape in a few of the trees which is extremely helpful. However, there are still many strenuous sections that do not include markings. Fallen trees and large oddly shaped boulders are great examples of some things to look out for en route but by far the best way to recall where you came from would be to stop every few minutes and look back at the way you came. This way, by the time you get back, your instinct will be much more accurate and you'll be more focused on climbing.



Starting from the peak, you will follow the Eastern slope of the ridge while keeping an eye out for Cairns that line the quickly diminishing trail. In fact, if you take a look around, you'll notice that the Western slope is covered in dense bush while the East side consists of scree fields and big rocks. The choice is yours but I guarantee you that you will have a much better time steering clear of the brush as often as possible. Move slow and observe your surroundings while keeping in mind that if you're having a lot of trouble or are in an extremely uncomfortable position, you most definitely could have found a better route. Although this peak is difficult to bag, you should be able to avoid most class 4 exposure and a lot of the dense brush.

THE GULLY



The last hill you'll climb before your final ascent (mile 7 or 8 depending on your GPX) will leave you atop a massive rock slab with a clear view of your continued route to the right and those three beautiful boulders in the distance. From this overlook, back track a couple dozen feet and off of the slab to descend the Gully to the West. This is the steepest section of the entire hike and it is filled with a combination of (you guessed it) loose dirt, scree and brush. The most important thing to remember while descending the gully in a group setting is to be extra careful of rockfall. The steep grade combined with the contour of the land will funnel any fallen rocks directly onto anyone below your path.

THE PEAK



Staring at Triplet Rocks from the Gully, you may notice a small plot of flat dirt to the right of the continued ridge with a relatively clear path between you and it. From here it is a straight shot back onto the ridge before a 50' foot near vertical class 3 ascent up some large granite boulders before leveling out. Finally, you'd have made it to Triplet Rocks after 9 long miles, standing at 6,151' feet. Pat yourself on the back because there are roughly 30 names in the register with some repeat offenders and you are one of the few to traverse a strong contender for the most difficult ridge in the Angeles Forest. Alright, enough slackin'. You've still got to get back to the car, and the climb has just begun...



ADDENDUM

On September 11th, 2016, a few local mountain goats set out to become the first group to climb the true summit of Triplet Rocks or the "middle block", which is maybe two feet taller than where the

Summit Register lies. Eric Su was part of this group and wrote a great trip report on his [blog](#), which is a tremendous resource for many Southern California excursions.

March 30th – Ben Broer and I set out to complete the same task after reaching out to Eric about his rope method. A quick lesson in Prusik ascent and rappelling left me intimidated, but I understood the concept and we made for Triplet Rocks. After a long day of tag-teaming the rugged spurs and saddles, we made it to the peak.

Ben quickly devised a plan for our attempt and after a few failures, he was able to anchor the rope to a large rock north of the middle block with some webbing. We hobbled back to the other side of the block and went over the methods once again. By the time I had climbed to the top, I was completely shaken from the thought of falling. We were the second group to summit Triplet Rocks true summit and the first to share a Summit Beer over the matter.



ELEVATION PROFILE



(IMAGE IS BASED ON ROUTE TO PEAK AND DOES NOT INCLUDE RETURN TRIP)

Total Distance : 16-17.5 miles

Total Elevation (feet): 6,500 feet (rough estimate)

Time to completion: The first time I completed this Death March, I was in the best shape of my life having trained as an ultra runner and I did it alone in under 11 hours including a quick stop at Mt. Waterman. The last time I went was with a group and we finished in 17.5 hours. Plan accordingly.

****If you are planning to complete this hike, please be aware of your own abilities and needs. This is not the kind of place to experience additional problems like empty water bottles, bad weather, or a lack of nutrition. Prepare for the worst and do your best.*

RESOURCES

[Triplet Rocks - GPX FILE](#)

[Triplet Rocks - STRAVA ACCOUNT](#)



Eastern Sierra Marmot Short
Sleeve Tee | TRVRS APPAREL

\$28.00



Eastern Sierra Map Women's
Leggings | TRVRS APPAREL

\$45.00



Insigna-slogan Women's
Racerback Tank | TRVRS
APPAREL

\$26.00



RICARDO SORIA JR

Author

1 RESPONSE



MARK SORIA JR

August 08, 2017

Rj.

More than impressed! Happy for you and proud of you.

Mark

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