

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK

Sugarloaf

3,227'

Location: Santa Ana Mountains
Maps: Cleveland National Forest
Topo: Alberhill 7.5, Sitton Peak 7.5 and Canada Gobernadora 7.5

Primary Route: 4 miles, 700' gain/900' loss one way

Driving Instruction:

From the San Diego Freeway I-5 in San Juan Capistrano exit on the Ortega Highway Hwy. 74 and drive North for 21.6 miles to just before reaching the El Cariso Ranger Station. Turn left onto a paved road signed 'Los Pinos Camp' and continue 1.8 miles to a T intersection. Keep right and continue another 0.8 miles on the dirt road to a turnaround and signed TH, park here. The paved road leads to the Blue Jay Campground, just around the corner. If the lot is full, park on the road, not in the campground! Note: The TH (3400') is higher than the peak.

Hiking Instructions:

Start on the good trail to the left (South-West) and follow it. After about 1 mile, you get to a 4 way junction: the Old San Juan Trail crosses the New San Juan Trail. From this point there are two alternatives:

1. For the shorter route turn left (South) on the Old San Juan Trail and follow it steeply downhill about ¼ mile to a second junction. Continue straight on the signed Old San Juan Trail. This trail follows a dry creek almost to Chiquito Spring, then runs along a wide ridge to the base of Sugarloaf. Near the mountain, look for a duck and a use trail to the summit. Turn right on this path and climb class 2 about 0.1 mile to the summit, the last steps through a gap between rocks. The register is located below the class 5 summit block, on the south side. If you reach another junction, you have gone about 100 feet too far. It is important to find this use trail through the thick brush.
2. To follow the longer route, better maintained and more suitable for mountain bikes, stay straight ahead (West) on the New San Juan Trail at the first junction and follow the shady trail, a long switchback to the second 4-way crossing. Again, this time keep straight ahead (East) on the trail, crossing the Old San Juan Trail. Stay right at a junction with the Chiquito Trail, right at the next junction (Viejo Tie) and continue to a third junction. Here the New San Juan Trail meets the Old San Juan Trail. This is a biker's meeting point. Turn right (NE) about 100 yards to find the ducked use trail. Turn left and climb to the summit. This route is 5 miles one way, with 1,000' loss and 800' gain.

Both trails can be combined as a loop hike. Remember, there is 900' (1,000') gain on the return. About ½ mile before reaching the parking, lot take the right fork trail, the left trail leads to the campground.

Alternate Route: 6 miles 2,400' gain one way

Driving Instruction:

As above, but after 12 miles on the Ortega Hwy turn left at the San Juan Fire Station. Drive about ¾ mile to the trailhead.

Hiking Instructions:

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Proceed up the San Juan Trail for about 6.3 miles, just past the crossing with the New San Juan Trail and below the peak. Take the use trail to the summit, as explained above. Come back the same way, or continue to the Blue Jay Trailhead as described above (car shuttle required).

Notes:

Adventure Pass required. Possible fire closure. No water on trail, but sometimes available in the campground. There are good views from the summit. The trails are popular with mountain bikers.

Do NOT park in the campground. If parking lot is full, park on the paved road farther down.

Usually, Old Sugarloaf and Sugarloaf are hiked together.

Nearby-Peaks: Old Sugarloaf

Write-up: Ken Crocker 1976, rev. 2004