

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK

El Montañón

1,808'

Location: Santa Cruz Island, 26 crow miles SW of Ventura

Maps: Eastern Santa Cruz Island

Topo: Eastern Santa Cruz Island

Primary Route: 4.5 miles o/w, 1,800 gain. Time: 4 to 6 hours.

Driving Instruction:

This is dependent on your form of transportation to Santa Cruz Island. Most people will charter a ride with Island Packers out of Ventura Harbor. (<http://www.islandpackers.com>) The rangers at the Channel Islands National Park Headquarters in Ventura recommend them. The boat will usually delay to view whales or dolphins.

Pick up a paper road and trail map (free) either at Island Packers or at the Scorpion Anchorage dock.

Hiking Instructions (from Scorpion Anchorage):

From the pier you can see a road climbing up to the top of a ridge south of the dock. This is the road to Smugglers Cove. Hike WSW up the Scorpion Canyon path for about 1/4 mile, then turn left at a junction to gain access to this road. Follow this road as it climbs to the top of the ridge. Soon it curves to the SE and meets a signed junction (Montañón Ridge) with a road on the right. Turn right and follow this road to an abandoned oil derrick and a signed junction with the Scorpion Canyon loop trail. Continue southwest on the road as it climbs toward High Mount (1581'). The road soon becomes a trail and gains El Montañón ridge just SE of High Mount. Follow the ridge SE up to the summit. There is a small building and a radio site on the summit.

Many hikers will be able to complete the hike and return home in a single day, but there is a certain risk in this and many interesting sites and plants will be missed.

Alternate Routes:

Take the path up Scorpion Canyon past two campsites, then continue along the path for about 0.6 mile, where the trail turns south out of the canyon, then east, then southeast up to the junction at the oil derrick. Continue as described above. This trail and the road can be combined as a loop without significantly increasing mileage or time. If you are camping overnight, it is possible to hike the road to Smugglers Cove and climb the peak from there. Most people will not have enough time to do this on a day visit to the island.

Notes:

1. There is no water on the trail, but there is potable well water in the two campgrounds in Scorpion Canyon.
2. A Park entry/use fee is included in the boat ticket if traveling with Island Packers. Check with them for their boat schedules. A typical day visit will allow you about 5 hours on the Island. Be sure to ask them about typical weather conditions at the island for different times of the year. The early summer months have a lot of fog.
3. An extra permit is required for camping. See the Island Packers Website for details or call then at: (805) 642-1393
4. There is an incredible view from the summit. You get a great view of Anacapa Island to the southwest. The mainland is visible from Boney Ridge in the Santa Monica Mountains to Gaviota Point. To the northwest you get a panoramic view of the bulk of Santa Cruz Island. This part of the Island is owned by The Nature Conservancy and is off limits to the public. Behind this you may be able to make out part of Santa Rosa Island.

The National Park Service and the Nature Conservancy is in the process of returning Santa Cruz Island to its natural state. All sheep and cattle have been removed from the old Ranchos and the wild pigs are now being removed. The Nature Conservancy has about a 10 year head start on the Park Service. There are some buildings and other construction on the park land. These will be left in place for historical purposes until they degenerate to a point where they become a public hazard. With the exemption of a ranger residence, they will not be maintained.

Original: Charlie Knapke 2002

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