

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK

Cathedral Peak

3,333'

Location: Santa Barbara County, Los Padres National Forest
Maps: AAA Santa Barbara County, USFS Los Padres National Forest
Topo: Santa Barbara 7.5, UTM 11 250619E 3819240N

Primary Route: 3 miles o/w, 2,300' gain, class 2-3

Driving Instruction:

Take Hwy 101 to Santa Barbara. Exit at Laguna Street, and drive north to Los Olivos Street. Here at the Santa Barbara Mission, follow Los Olivos which becomes Mission Canyon Road. Turn right on Foothill Road at a stop sign, then left at a stop sign by the fire station. Continue up Mission Canyon, staying left at the fork onto Tunnel Road. Park shortly before the turnaround at the end of Tunnel Road. This is the takeoff for the popular Tunnel Trail.

Hiking Instructions:

Pass through the locked gate and walk up the paved Edison Road. At 0.75 miles, cross the creek on a wooden bridge adjacent to an Edison Company concrete arch bridge. Around a bend the road turns to dirt. Continue straight at a junction. Several hundred yards further is the signed Tunnel Trail to the right. Continue past and follow the signed Jesusita Trail as it drops into the west fork of Mission Canyon. Cross the creek at a nice pool. Straight ahead leads to Inspiration Point. Instead look upstream for an unmarked path heading up and away from the left bank.

The narrow path climbs steeply up the slope through high chaparral. As the trail momentarily levels out and turns up canyon, a spur trail leads to the right to a promontory with views down to the Seven Falls. Just beyond the spur, turn left at a junction to Cathedral Peak (straight leads into the canyon). The route continues amid chaparral, even steeper in places. After about two miles, the route emerges from the underbrush and attains the rocky sandstone ridgeline.

The rest of the hike ascends the delightful open crest, bouldering all the way. Trace the path of least resistance. A steep final push leads to the first, lesser summit known locally as Arlington Peak. A nook in a large boulder contains a logbook and camera. The true highpoint clearly lies a quarter mile further, the large jutting crag with a 300 foot rock face. The path continues, albeit fainter, over a rise before arching to the easier backside north of Cathedral Peak. It wends to the top of the ridge 50 feet from the highest summit boulder. This is attained by easy scrambling on either side of the exposed ridge. A register in a baggy lies in a recess at the base of the boulder.

Notes:

There is water in Mission Creek.

Cathedral Peak, part of the Mission Crags, is a strenuous boulder climb, but on route it is fun and does not require a rope or technical skills. The path is brushed-out and quite discernible, but does necessitate some route-finding. The views on a clear day are remarkable. To the North is La Cumbre Peak, with radio towers and an abandoned lookout. Tunnel Trail lies across Mission Canyon. The Channel Islands appear to the south. It is possible to continue from the summit to La Cumbre Peak, and then loop back to the trailhead by way of Camino Cielo Road and the Tunnel Trail. The author has done so. Alternatively, La Cumbre Peak provides a point from which to access Cathedral Peak, by dropping 900 feet to the saddle between the peaks. This is not recommended. The path between the two summits is strenuous and difficult to follow: steeper, looser and brushier terrain than the principal route. The ridgeline trail is simply a far more enjoyable experience.

References:

n/a

Write-up: Erik Siering 2001