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Joshua Tree NP - Monument Mountain (//www.explorumentary.com /blog/joshua-tree-np- monument-mountain)

2/19/2018

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**Cross-country hike to summit of Monument Mountain
in Joshua Tree National Park, and some of the oldest
rocks in California**

Trip Stats: (from Pinkham Canyon Road approach)

- 4WD high-clearance vehicle required to travel Pinkham Canyon Road.
- **Distance:** ~ 5 - 6 miles out and back.

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About this blog

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wrote these for friends
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- **Total elevation change** 1,594 feet. Pinkham Canyon Road is 3,240 feet, summit is 4,834 feet .
- **Geology:** Monument Mountain rocks are some of the oldest in California - augen gneiss formed 1.65 billion years ago (bya).
- We found the Trails Illustrated map of Joshua Tree National Park to be suitable for this hike.
- Listed on Lower Peaks Committee (LPC) Peak List - Sierra Club Angeles Chapter.
- Monument Mountain is northwest of South Entrance and Cottonwood Visitor Center in Joshua Tree National Park, in the Hexie Mountains.
- Take Joshua Tree/South Entrance off Hwy 10, about 25 miles east of Indio, California. Continue on Cottonwood Springs Road to the Cottonwood Visitors Center. Turn left onto the gravel Pinkham Canyon Road adjacent to Visitor Center. This road initially travels north, then to the west. Monument Mountain is visible at ~ 3 miles to the north while traveling this road. Drive 5 miles from Visitors Center and park.
- Monument Mountain is due north; cross a series of small washes and climb the hill onto the south ridge of the mountain. There is a faint trail marked with somewhat-regular small cairns that follows this ridge to the summit cone of rocks. The short summit cone is moderately easy to climb and stable.
- Monument Mountain can also be accessed from Porcupine Wash where there is a Backcountry Permit Station ~ 8 miles further north on

I know what my husband, Fred and I were up to on weekends, and also to showcase the incredible land of the west. I hope to hear about your adventures!

The Habitat Restoration page lists organizations that welcome volunteers for various land care and restoration activities. A schedule of current restoration volunteer activities is available on this page.

[Read More \(/habitat-restoration.html\)](/habitat-restoration.html)



About the Author Sue Birnbaum

A trip to Jumbo Rocks Campground in Joshua Tree National Monument 34 years ago sparked my

Cottonwood Springs Road.



Near Pinkham Canyon Road looking east, Joshua Tree National Park

"Mind expanding" is what designer Jonathan Adler calls Joshua Tree. For those who have traveled deserts in Southern California, hiked the dry washes, climbed rust-red and brown rocks and seen valleys that extend nearly to the horizon backed by mountain ranges, Joshua Tree is a special place. It's an expansive wonderland of sublime beauty. It was our long-time friend Scott's idea to summit Monument Mountain in southern Joshua Tree National Park around New Year's Eve 2017. Scott has hiked many peaks on the Desert Peaks Section Peak List, and he has tons of experience hiking cross country.

The views from the mountain's south ridge are incredible, and about 1/2 way to the summit, if you turn around and look to the southwest, you can see the Salton Sea, a large lake formed from overflow of the Colorado river when engineers in 1905 were

passion for hiking, mountain climbing, and learning about desert ecosystems. For the past 20 years, my husband Fred and I have explored the American West together; we love this land and I hope to inspire you to get out and explore through my photographs and descriptions of our trips. In 1992, Ray Wilson and I conceived the first Cactus to Clouds hike which climbs over 10,000 feet in one day to the summit of Mt. San Jacinto near Palm Springs, California.

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CACTUS TO CLOUDS HIKE

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attempting to deliver more water to irrigation canals .
The weather was perfect: sunny, no wind, and 70 degrees. Fred and I had arrived from Boise for our yearly desert holiday fix.

We piled out of Scott's red pick-up 5 miles down Pinkham Canyon Road and stood in a sun-flooded broad valley of yucca, cholla and creosote surrounded by mountain ranges on all sides. Looking north to our destination, we could see our ridge to the summit, but Monument Mountain was not in view. We started walking across the wash to the north.



Hike route to summit of Monument Mountain from Pinkham Canyon Road (black dashed line), Joshua Tree NP (North at top of map)

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From edge of wash, climb up first hill to the south ridge of Monument Mountain

As you look north, you see a rise and it is best to get to the top of it and onto the ridge that will take you to the top of Monument Mountain. The trail on top of the ridge is faint and marked at somewhat regular intervals with small cairns. Once on the ridge, the route is a gentle rolling climb to the summit cone of rocks with washes on both sides. Some dry washes have deep rock cuts at the top.

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Fred ascending to ridge from Pinkham Canyon Road in valley below

writing, Linda tells the story of her unique mother's life; including beautiful photographs

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Looking at Monument Mountain summit

About 2/3 of hike distance, Monument Mountain finally comes into view. You can see faint trail leading up to the ridge after descending slightly down from the ridge into a broad sloping valley on your left and a saddle to your right. The climb up the stable metamorphic rocks to the summit is relatively easy.



Monument Mountain summit - 4,834 feet



Augen gneiss at summit of Monument Mountain, some of the oldest rocks in California, age 1.65 bya (billion

years ago)



Upon reaching the summit, we were somewhat surprised to see 2 people from the San Francisco Bay area that had hiked up via Porcupine Wash. When I exclaimed, "There's the red can!", one of them commented that it was just trash left on a mountain. I explained to him that it was a summit register, whereupon he signed his name. I told him that the register at Cowboy Camp in the Santa Rosa Mountains still had the entry I had written almost 20 years ago!

Mt. San Jacinto, the towering presence over Palm Springs can be seen to the west.

The rock at the summit looks and feels old because it IS old! These rocks record the earliest geologic events in Joshua Tree National Park - originated as sedimentary and igneous rocks that underwent metamorphism and then a couple of continent-building episodes finally to be uplifted during the Mesozoic tectonic events where it became fragmented. There are 4 units of this

metamorphic complex within Joshua Tree. The augen gneiss on Monument Mountain is a metamorphic granite containing elliptically-shaped feldspar porphyroclasts in its layering (augen in German means "eye"). You can see these lighter grains of feldspar embedded in the dark rock. This type of rock has undergone Uranium-Lead geochronology from the zircon grains it contains to arrive at a date of 1.65 billion years ago, making these some of the oldest-known rocks in California.



Scott, Sue and Fred on summit of Monument Mountain



View to the southwest of the Salton Sea from the summit



Scott next to summit register, Eagle Mountains in the distance



Heading down

The way down is straightforward - follow the ridge! This is a good first-time cross country hike for the hiker that wants to get off a well-trodden path and do some fairly easy navigation with a good topo map. There's a smaller ridge to the right (southwest) as you head down and we took it for a little while about 1/2 mile down, but then got back on the main ridge.

Once we finally found the truck on Pinkham Canyon Road, we savored the setting sun illuminating the cholla cactus making them glow among the yucca and creosote.



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I try my best to be accurate with my hike descriptions; please research your adventures, bring a map, be prepared! Please contact me with comments or questions

Thank-you for stopping by!

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