

Angel's Be Alive!



Angel Gomez,
Director of
Member
Services

... this was easily the hardest hike I've done since I started "Be Alive!"

... if you don't take it seriously, you could be in a world of hurt.

— Angel Gomez

Mt. San Jacinto



Hello again!

This month I decided to attempt a summit of Mt. San Jacinto, the second highest peak in Southern California. How high is it? Check out the graphic!

There are several ways to summit Mt. San Jacinto. The easiest, which is what I did, is to start the hike from where the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway drops you off; the other is to hike various trails from the valley floor.



Mt. San Jacinto, as seen approaching from the west.

ABOUT

San Jacinto Peak

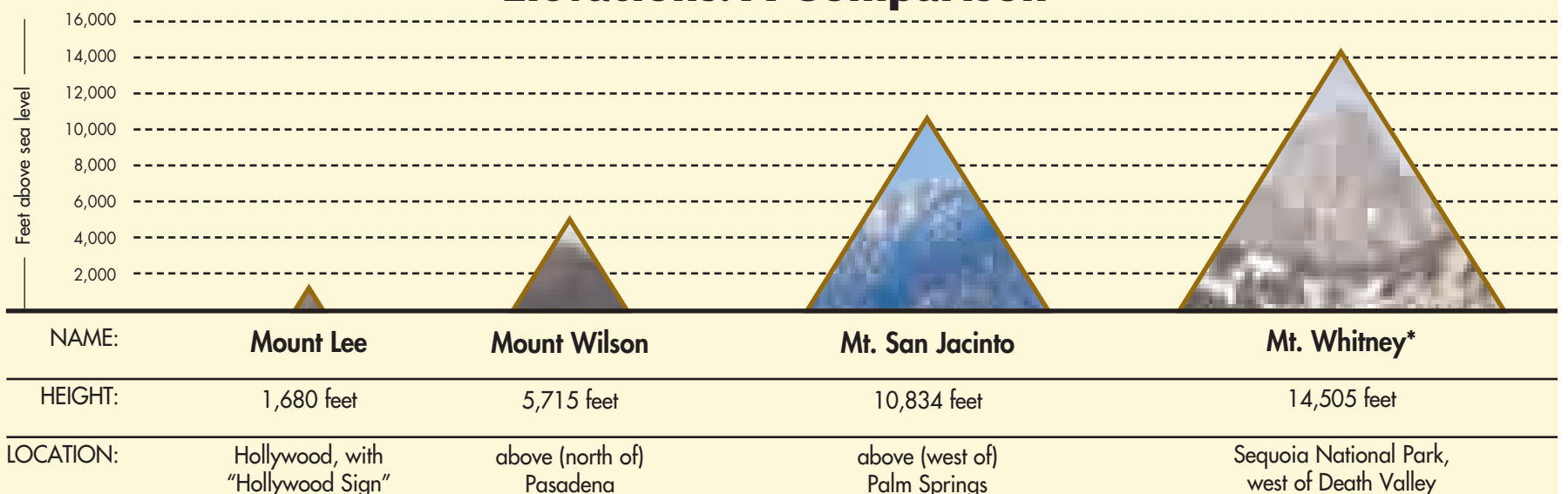
ELEVATION:
10,839 feet above sea level

LATITUDE/LONGITUDE:
33(degrees) 49' N;
116 (degrees) 41' W

DISTANCE FROM DOWNTOWN:
109.46 miles

INFORMATION:
www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=636
www.pstramway.com

Elevations: A Comparison



*The highest summit in the contiguous United States



On the way

Before you get to the Tramway, I recommend a couple simple deviations. The first is to stop by Hadley's Fruit Orchards for a "date shake" and a hearty supply of nuts and dried fruit. My boss, John Hawkins, said his family has been going there for more than 30 years, and it's a must for trips to the Palm Springs area. It's right off Interstate 10. Simply take the Cabazon exit, turn left at Apache Trail and left on Seminole. You can't miss it as you can see the sign from the 10.

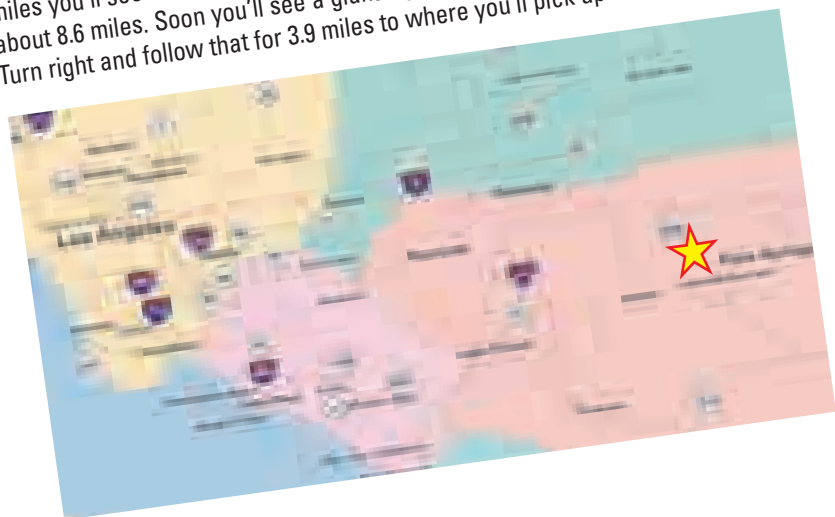
Also, whether you're a kid or not you have to make a pit stop at the huge life-size dinosaurs East of Hadley's. You can't miss them, and make sure you check out the gift store inside the giant Brontosaurus.



Make sure you stop by to pay a visit to "The Dinosaurs" near Cabazon.



Directions: From Downtown L.A., hop on the I-10 towards San Bernardino (east). After 94.8 miles you'll see the Palm Springs exit — the 111 south. Take that and go for about 8.6 miles. Soon you'll see a giant sign for the Tramway (Tramway Road). Turn right and follow that for 3.9 miles to where you'll pick up the tramway.



Here I am inside Hadley's, watching Diana make fresh gourmet peanut butter.

My photographer, John Hawkins, said that it's mandatory to make a pit stop at the famous Hadley's fruit orchard and get a "date shake." He said that for 30 years his family has been visiting Hadley's, to stock up on dates and to get a date shake.

And here I am with Debra, getting my first-ever "date shake," made famous by Hadley's.



On to San Jacinto

Okay, so after visiting Hadley's and the dinosaurs, make a bee-line to the Aerial Tramway. You want to get started from where the tram drops you off no later than noon. Otherwise you'll be hiking back from the summit in the dark (during Standard Time).

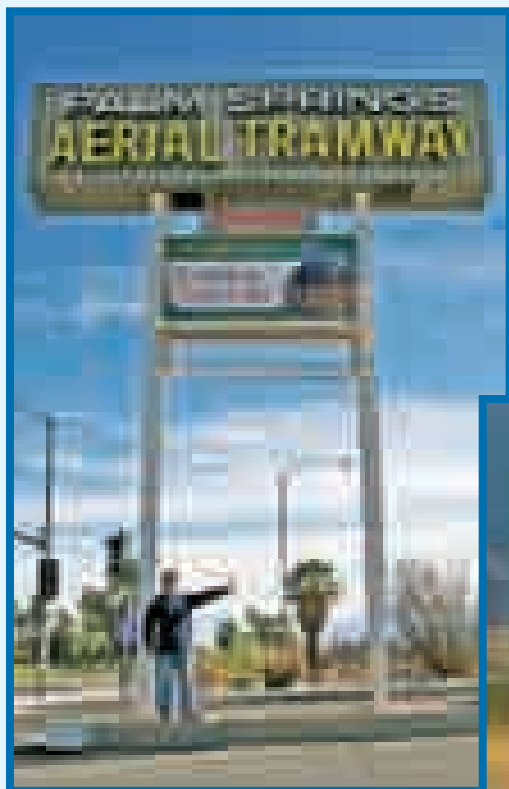
Here are the operating hours:



Now, regarding San Jacinto Peak, to the east, the peak towers over the city of Palm Springs; to the west, it borders the mountain community of Idyllwild. The peak is also frequently called Mount San Jacinto. The steep escarpment of its north face, above Snow Creek, climbs more than 10,000 feet (3.0 km) in 7 miles (11 km). This is one of the largest gains in elevation over such a small horizontal distance in the contiguous United States.

From the peak, Mount San Gorgonio can be seen across the San Gorgonio Pass. Also easily visible below is the Coachella Valley and the Salton Sea. In addition, much of the Inland Empire to the west can be viewed on a clear day.

Mount San Jacinto is one of the "Three Saints," a slang term used by hikers to refer to the three tallest peaks in Southern California: San Jacinto Peak, Mount San Gorgonio and Mount San Antonio.



Here's what you'll see off Highway 111. Make a right here.

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EQUIPMENT LIST

Here's some of the equipment we took. It's all available at REI.



EMERGENCY BLANKET: "Heatsheets Emergency Bivvy." This is used when you are stranded in the cold — you wrap it around your body, preserving 90 percent of your body heat.



KNIFE: A small knife with serrated edge.



GLOVES: A good pair of gloves, preferably wind- and waterproof. Getting gloves with a removable liner is the best way to go. Here's a picture of the glove liner.



MATCHES: Matches in a watertight match container.



HEADLAMP: A good headlamp. This one is a Petzl. Make sure you get one that will give you plenty of light.



GPS NAVIGATION: GPS is a definite must. It will keep track of every step you take, so when it's time to go back you can just follow the path you made. It really comes in handy when the sun starts going down and the trail starts to look very different. This one is the Garmin 65CSx, definitely the best I've ever used.



SNACKS: Take plenty of snacks.



BACKPACK: I used a small backpack that has a water bladder. This one's the North Face "Chameleon." It's light, durable and holds everything I need for an eight-to-12-hour hike.



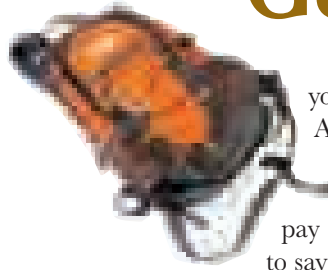
HIKING BOOTS: Good hiking boots are a must! I use Asolo's with Gore-Tex integrated into them for waterproofing and breathability.



JACKET: Make sure you take a windproof, waterproof and fairly warm jacket. Be prepared for anything.

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Getting Started



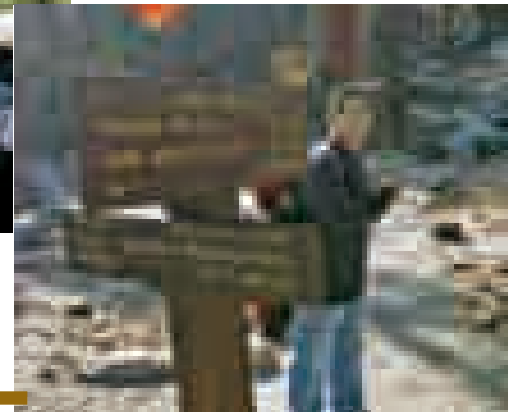
So now that you have your bearings, let's get started. First, as you know by now, you have to get yourself to the Palm Springs Arial Tramway. Once there, you'll have to buy a roundtrip ticket. They cost \$22.25 for each adult and \$15.25 for kids from 3 to 12 years. Big kids who are 60 years old and older only have to pay \$20.25. The tram ride itself is quite an adventure; in fact I'll dare to say it's a little frightening, especially when you go over the support towers and the car starts rocking! But don't let me scare you away. It's definitely a SoCal must-do!

Now, once you get off the tram at the top, go to the back of the building, out the door and down the long cement walkway. Head toward the Ranger Station (you can't miss it) and fill out a hiking permit. The permit is free, and I think its main purpose is to let them know you'll be on the mountain just in case you don't return by nightfall.

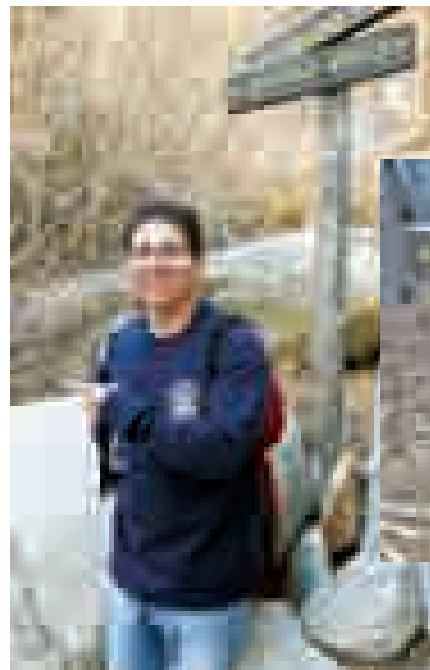
The hike was just amazing: steep, rocky, ice hanging off the leaves, and very thin air. And that sunset! Wow! Well, you can see the pictures.



And here's where the trail to Mt. San Jacinto begins.



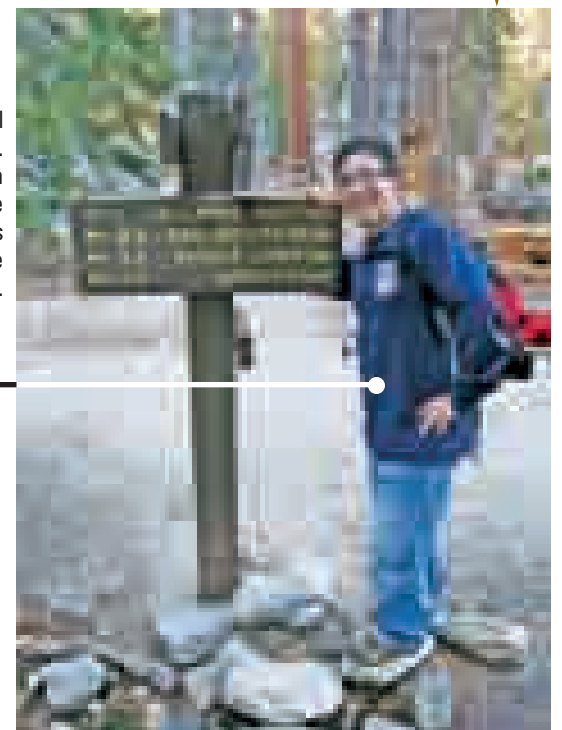
Find this sign, and you're on your way to the summit!



At exactly one mile you'll come to this sign; go in the direction of Round Valley. Elevation at this point is exactly 8,425 feet above sea level.



You'll see this sign at two miles. Keep going towards Round Valley. At this point you'll be at 8,949 feet above sea level.



At 2.41 miles you'll come to this sign. Only 3.3 miles to San Jacinto Peak! The elevation at this point is 9,045' above sea level.

Stay warm and show your pride like I did!

Get the Club's exclusive City Hall Long Sleeve Shirt at the Club Store for only \$12 (3XLs are \$13 and 4XLs are \$14).

Go to: www.cityemployeesclub.com

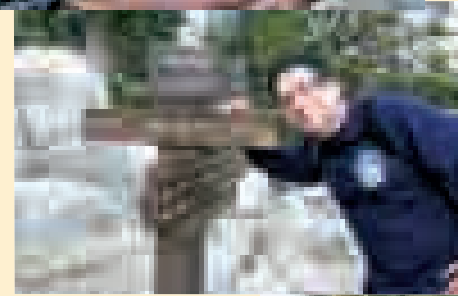
or to our store at 120 W. Second St. (just a block from City Hall).

Angel's *Be Alive!*

Amazing views!

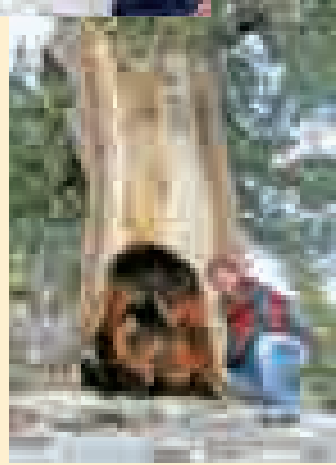


At this elevation, all the pine trees have ice built up on the ends of their pine needles.



RIGHT: At this point you've hiked 3.34 miles, with only 2.3 miles to go! It's time to rest, grab a snack, drink some water and dig out some warmer clothing. The elevation at this point is 9,715 feet above sea level. The temperature has dropped to below freezing. If you keep moving you'll be fine, but if you stop moving for too long you'll really feel the cold (trust me).

The Summit!



From a distance this looked like a bear, but it turned out to be just a hole burnt out of a tree.

The summit!
10,834 feet in altitude.



A Side Note

Keep in mind, though, this was easily the hardest hike I've done since I started "*Be Alive!*" The mountain is quite rugged in places, with several outdoor hazards that hikers may be unprepared for, including high altitude, severe weather, steep rock faces, and wild animals. Hikers and climbers die or are harmed every year.

Make no mistake, it was well worth it. But if you don't take it seriously, you could be in a world of hurt.

Near the summit of San Jacinto peak is a stone hut that was built in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. In the 1930s, Idyllwild staged an annual race from the town center to San Jacinto Peak and back. Contestants could choose any route they wished to get to and from the peak. Now, in that stone hut, hikers and others leave provisions for those who find themselves overextended. It's a really nice gesture, and needless to say, I put it to good use.

I highly recommend hiking to the summit of Mt. San Jacinto. But don't do it casually, or on a whim. Take it seriously, and you'll be rewarded.



On the descent I decided to check out the emergency shelter a couple hundred feet below the summit. Here I signed into the visitor book.

About the Photographer



As on all my "*Be Alive!*" adventures, I have my trusty photographer, John Hawkins, with me. Here we are on the summit using the camera's timer feature. You can't tell, but he's actually in grave pain from a leg muscle spasm. He got it the moment we reached the summit. What a dedicated photographer!