

Tip Top Mountain 23C

Lat/lon 34.2516738,-116.6914128
UTM 11S 528413E 3790105N

Elevation: 7623'

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Location: San Bernardino County, about 9 miles east of Big Bear City, 118 miles from Los Angeles

Nearby peaks: Granite Peaks, Mineral Mountain, Black Mountain #4

Land Manager: San Bernardino National Forest, Mountaintop Ranger District (909) 382-2790

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK. CONDITIONS MAY CHANGE, AND UNEXPECTED HAZARDS MAY BE PRESENT.

About the peak

Tip Top, like its neighbors Mineral and Granite Peaks, lies in the Bighorn Mountains Wilderness, a transition zone between the mountains of the San Bernardino National Forest and the desert and Joshua Tree National Park. It is named for Tip Top Mine that once produced lead and silver ore on its slopes. The peak offers extensive views of the Granite Peaks Wilderness to the south, and panoramic views of the Mojave Desert.

Route 1 is a drive up, slow going on very rough road requiring a 4WD vehicle and a skilled driver, if one likes this sort of adventure, or not at all. Route 2 follows use trails and old road remnants over a bump to the summit.

Alternate routes: Tip Top can also be climbed from Mineral Mountain by going northwest along the ridge, over bump 7393'. Proceed from there as in Route 2. Distance is about 2 miles from Mineral Mountain and gain is about 450'. Return to vehicle as in Route 2, adding a southeast hike along the road to the parking place for Mineral Mountain.

Note: Tip Top Mountain is just outside the Bighorn Mountain Wilderness area.

Tip Top Mountain has 2 official HPS routes:

Tip Top Mountain Route 1

Distance: 150' round trip

Gain: 100

Difficulty rating: Class 1, easy

Time: 3 minutes round trip

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Adventure Pass may be required

Road type: High-clearance

Driving directions:

- Northern approach:
- From Big Bear City, drive northeast on SR 18 about 6 miles, 0.3 mile past the 61.00 mile marker, to 3N03 (dirt) on the right, signed "Cactus Flats". Turn right. High clearance recommended on for all dirt roads in this area. Note your odometer and go as follows:
- At 1.3 miles, fork with 3N07Y to the right. Keep straight.
- At 3.3 miles and 3.6 miles, forks on the left to Smarts Ranch. Keep straight.
- At 5.0 miles, you cross Arrastre Creek.
- At 5.1 miles, fork. Go left.
- At 5.2 miles, fork. This is the turnoff for Granite Peaks. Keep straight.
- At 7.4 miles, fork in a saddle with 2N02 on the right. Keep straight.
- At 7.7 miles, fork with 2N90 on the left. Turn left.
- Drive 1.4 miles farther on 2N90, keeping right at all forks. At this point turn left.
- Go 0.4 mile to the end of the road. Park here.
- Note:
- 2N90 is in very poor condition and may not be passable with many 4WD vehicles. Parking at the beginning of 2N90 adds 3.6 miles rt.
- Western approach:
- From Big Bear City, drive east on SR 38, and where it turns south to ascend to Onyx Summit, turn left (east) on Shay Road. Reset your odometer.
- At 2.7 miles, Shay Road becomes Baldwin Lake Road, as it goes around the east side of the (dry) lake.
- At 3.5 miles, intersect Vail Drive on the right (east). Turn right.
- Continue on Vail Drive about 100 yards, then turn left on 2N02 (signed). High clearance recommended on for all dirt roads in this area. Reset your odometer.
- Go 7.0 miles on 2N02 to a junction with 3N03 at mile 7.4 of the north driving route. Turn right and continue as in the north driving route.

Hiking directions:

- From the parking area, hike up the ridge a short distance to the summit. Another trail to the top goes up the southeast ridge, past the remains of a building.

Additional Route notes:

3N03 is in poor condition east of Arrastre Creek and the turnoff to Granite Peaks. Travel is possible slowly with AWD and a skilled driver, otherwise 4WD is necessary.

Tip Top Mountain Route 2

Distance: 1.5 miles round trip

Gain: 900

Difficulty rating: Class 1, easy

Time: 1-1.5 hours round trip

Trailhead location on [Google Maps](#)

Navigation difficulty: Easy

Adventure Pass may be required

Road type: Dirt

Driving directions:

- From Big Bear City, drive northeast on SR 18 about 6 miles, 0.3 mile past the 61.00 mile marker, to Forest Service 3N03 (dirt) on the right, signed "Cactus Flats". Turn right. High clearance recommended on for all dirt roads in this area. Note your odometer and go as follows:
- At 1.3 miles, fork with 3N07Y to the right. Keep straight.
- At 3.3 miles and 3.6 miles, forks on the left to Smarts Ranch. Keep straight.
- At 5.0 miles, you cross Arrastre Creek.
- At 5.1 miles, fork. Go left.
- At 5.2 miles, fork. This is the turnoff for Granite Peaks. Keep straight.
- At 7.4 miles, fork in a saddle with 2N02 on the right. Keep straight.
- At 7.7 miles, fork with 2N90 on the left. Keep straight.
- At 8.8 miles, fork to the left. Park here.

Hiking directions:

- From the parking area (6870'), hike north to the saddle between hills 7462' and 7393', going around the east side of 7462', then north to a saddle and across a road.
- Continue north up a ridge to the summit.

Additional Route notes: