

Mt. Wilson Climbing Directions

Take hwy 159 to First Creek Canyon trailhead, after the Middle and South Oak Creek trailheads, just before the entrance to Spring Mountain Ranch State Park.

Follow the signed trail SSW toward the mouth of First Creek Canyon. When it forks, take the left (south) fork. Rocks block the right fork. In about a quarter of a mile, the trail goes down a hill and passes under a branch of a 20-foot desert scrub oak. From this point the trail divides into numerous paths. Follow any path that stays near the creek. Just before the path enters the creek, take the south (left) fork, which climbs a hill. (I placed a cairn and a row of rocks at the start of the left fork.) At the top of the hill, the path merges with other paths. Continue west toward the canyon. The path divides at a 20-foot juniper. Follow the north (right) fork down a hill. At the bottom of the hill, a log has fallen across the path. Eventually the path goes across a band of red sandstone. About 15 feet after the path changes back to dirt, it forks. Take the north (right) fork.

The path weaves between two boulders and then heads west (left) into the canyon. Numerous cairns help keep you on course from here to the wash. Follow the path through the brush to a large low-angled boulder. Scramble up the boulder and continue on the path. A row of rocks outlines the path as it heads north to the wash. Instead of dropping into the wash, turn SW (left) and hike 40 yards to the large cottonwood tree. You're finally in the wash.

From here to the end of the canyon, I'll point out key landmarks that you should pass while bouldering in the wash. Look for footprints in the gravel, and cairns to keep you on route. Boulder up the wash past numerous class III sections. When you come to an enormous boulder, veer left, and scramble up to a path. Another landmark to look for is a patch of prickly pear cacti about 15 feet up on the right (north) wall.

The steep path forks within 10 yards; take the right fork. It levels and crosses a small boulder field. The path resumes on the far side of the boulder field and passes just to the left of a dead tree. About 40 yards beyond the dead tree, the path heads down toward the wash. A huge, reddish boulder divides the path; take the left fork and descend into the wash. You get a short break from the boulders as you head up the wash. The boulders return and class III climbing resumes. The wash divides twice (not the canyon); both times go into the left forks, which are free of brush. Soon after the second divide, you'll hike alongside the south (left) wall of the canyon until the wash narrows and you come to a chimney.

The chimney is a class III climb. At the top of this chimney a 100-foot, dead tree leans against the north bank of the wash. The canyon divides just past the tree. Hike NW into the right fork of the canyon, which heads directly toward a 200-foot wall. Hikers encounter brush in this fork, because they stay in the fork too long. Boulder about 50 yards up this fork to the obvious opening through the brush on the west (left) side. Once through the opening, go left a short distance to the "Brush-Free" Wash (locally named). Head west and boulder a couple hundred yards to the start of the "Cascading Waterfall". Climb 40 yards up the steep sandstone wall along north (right) bank. A large ponderosa pine stands at the top of the waterfall. It's a great place to take a break.

The wash always has water in this part of the canyon. Continue up the wash about 75 yards to a boulder you have to straddle to climb over. Once past the boulder, scramble up the right side of a small, low-angled waterfall. Hike 100 yards up the canyon and follow a path to the south wall of the canyon. Don't be tempted to scramble up the boulder field to the north (right). As you continue along the south wall, you'll see a couple of tall ponderosa pines at the top of a hill. The route eventually passes both of them. Climb the jagged wall. This is a tough climb. If it's too tough, follow the path that starts to the right of the wall. The wash heads back into the center of the canyon and soon passes to the left of the first ponderosa pine. Follow the path south, passing the second ponderosa pine, to a giant boulder. Hike along the right side of the boulder to a spot where you can climb onto it. Head south about 40 yards following the path and footprints through the brush to a forking juniper. Continue 25 yards on the path to the log.

The canyon divides just after the log; hike into the right fork. Follow the path into the wash and scramble to the conglomerate boulder. A path travels to the right of the boulder and intersects a prominent path. Head left on this prominent path. It crosses the wash and disappears. Scramble up the slabs on the left

side of the wash. Drop back into the wash and follow the path to the huge ponderosa pine. About 30 yards past the pine, look for a path that leads out of the creekbed to the north (right). You're out of the canyon! A cairn marks the start of the path that heads north and eventually follows the fault line. As the path encircles the reddish bowl, it curves to the NE. Once around the bowl, head east up the sandstone to the dead tree. You'll see a peak off to the east (right) -do not head in that direction. Instead, head NE toward the false peak. Continue NE making sure to stay on the sandstone. It's much faster than hiking on the desert terrain. Eventually, you'll see a giant bowl to the east (right). Head north around a huge gorge that's part of the bowl. Once around the gorge, two sandstone crags lie in front of you. Hike NNE around the first crag and into a narrows that goes between the two crags. The narrows shrinks to four feet wide before you climb the steep ramp at the end.

Head north (left) about 20 yards onto a wide ledge. Go east on the ledge and up the slope. The slope levels in 75 yards and ends at another overlook into the giant bowl you saw before. Head north (left) up the sandstone to a high point. Continue north to the false peak. Don't be lured to the peak to the right. Once on the false peak, you can see the real peak, which lies about 200 yards north of the false peak. It's the only red-tipped peak.

Congratulations, you made it. A sign-in book sits in the cairn. As you can see by the few entries, not many people have made it to this peak. It's over 3,000 feet straight down to the desert floor. Relax and enjoy the view, you have earned it.

To Descend: Retrace your steps. Descending the route is much faster, because you're able to climb down obstacles you couldn't climb up. To be safe you should have at least four or more hours of daylight left. This means leaving the peak by 12:30 if you're doing the hike in late fall, winter, or early spring.

Note: The hike description on my Web site has 13 color photos, which makes following the hike description much easier.