

# **Mt. Tipton & Grand Wash Cliffs Highpoint (i.e. Ynnnek Peak)**

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## ***Mt. Tipton:***

I have driven by this notable peak outside Dolan Springs, AZ almost 500 times on the way to the Grand Canyon West Rim as a tour guide for Pink Jeep Tours. Recently, I decided I really need to say I've hiked to the top of that peak. Therefore, I organized a multi-day trip to climb this peak along with other peaks I found interesting that again I've passed by often.

Peppe Sotomayor, Ed Forkos, Luba Leef, and Tom Gallia joined me for this trip. We all left Las Vegas in three different vehicles about 06:00 arriving at Hwy 93 and Pierce Ferry Rd about 07:30. The trip is faster now that the Hoover Dam Bypass and road expansion construction past the Dam is complete saving about 20 minutes each way. From that point we drove further up Pierce Ferry Rd turning right on 5<sup>th</sup> St. For reference, there is a large Joshua Tree just after the road. We traveled on the dirt road for 4.4 miles before turning left onto another dirt road for .3 miles reaching a BLM gate. A worn sign tells you to travel no more than 1.2 miles beyond the gate. There is a chain with a clip holding the gate closed. Simply close it after the last vehicle. Along the way to the trailhead we noticed a very nice open spot on the left to use as our campsite. It is actually a parking lot since there is a trail marker with a register to the right. We continued until a metal gate prevented any vehicle from proceeding further.

We started the hike at 8:26 traveling up this old 4x4 dirt road for about 1 mile. At that point we all debated as to which route to follow. Harlan (from a past trip) had indicated we should follow a wash a little further up the road and to our left when looking at the peak. Instead, we proceeded to push through the brush for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile paralleling the wash until finally dropped into the wash. On the way back, we went through the wash which was much nicer and prettier. Therefore, for future trips make sure you follow the wash.

A very important fact to consider on this trip is to wear long pants and a long shirt. Otherwise, you have to be very masochistic since this is a very brushy route.

We continued up the wash to the low point of the ridgeline leading to the peak. There was a little climbing to reach that point. The wind was picking up in advance of the major cold front rolling into the region soon. The weather was mostly overcast making the trip cooler. Layers were also very important for this trip.

We then went up the ridgeline which required some climbing mostly class 2 with minor class 3. The south wind was making the climb more difficult. Therefore, we dropped down to the right for a less precarious route. Couldn't go down to the left of the ridgeline because there were cliffs. Although, the right side was very brushy. We should have continued along the ridgeline. On the way back we went down the ridgeline the entire way. An advantage to our route was finding a very horny young tarantula at 6,400 feet looking for a mate late in the season. We also came across very large old manzanitas with half their trunks smooth red and the other half devoid of red. Interesting sight at this elevation.

After the ridgeline we all of a sudden came upon a Ponderosa forest. Didn't really expect to find those trees on this trip. Makes sense though since this is their proper elevation. Soon we saw the peak and then summited. Peppe pushed ahead of us and came down quickly saying he couldn't find a registry. He was thus going to climb another minor peak as a bonus. The rest of us went to the peak reaching it at 12:04. We found and signed into the registry. The last entry was in March. Definitely a not so well visited peak. The views weren't good due to the overcast clouds. It was also windy and cold. We stayed on the peak for 16 minutes and then descended quickly. There was still time for me to make my customary call to my parents whenever I have cell reception on a peak. I'll have to come back again on a clear day for fantastic views. Although, I was able to make out the northern portion of the Grand Canyon West Rim.

On the way down I was quite hungry, but no one else was. We stopped, away from the wind, for me to have my typical 'complex sandwich'. The descent on the ridgeline was also very windy. We had to be careful on the rocks. After the ridgeline, we traveled down the wash which was a better choice instead of the open desert. We finished the hike at 15:46. The trip took us 7h 20m for 7.8 miles with about 3,500 elevation gain.

We drove back to the campsite settling in for the night. The night skies were disappointing since it was overcast. I was really interested in seeing the stars, but instead enjoyed a very bright and prominent moon. Instead, I (sarcastically) enjoyed the Dolan Springs skyline with the Las Vegas glow in the distance. The main glow was about the size of your hand with your arm extended out while the secondary glow took up a larger part of the sky. The winds were strong and getting stronger throughout the night. They were probably about tropical storm force sustained during the evening. Peppe and I slept in tents, while the others slept in their cars. It was interesting setting up our tents with the wind. Peppe and I didn't sleep well at all that night. Thankfully the wind was coming from the south so it was warm. Otherwise, a northern flow would have made this trip brutal. The rain flap on my tent (even though I staked it down) was flapping against my tent the entire night. Peppe spent the entire night with an ab workout since his tent opening was facing south lifting his tent and legs constantly. He was fighting all night to keep his tent down. By sunrise his tent ripped open. He was struggling to get out. Me, I wasn't any help because I was taking pictures of his tent. :) We had breakfast and then drove into Dolan Springs.

### ***Grand Wash Cliffs Highpoint (i.e. Ynnek Peak):***

We continued to our next peak which was the Grand Wash Cliffs highpoint. We drove up Pierce Ferry Rd turning right onto a paved road at mile marker 42 called Diamond Bar Rd. The first 5 miles of the 14 mile road leading to the Grand Canyon West Rim on the Hualapai Reservation (home of the Skywalk) was paved the Summer of 2009. At mile marker 8, we parked on the north side off the dirt road to start our hike. I picked the spot because it was past a sign indicating private land for the Diamond Bar Ranch everyone passes through on the way to the West Rim.

We started traveling through the open desert with lots (I mean lots-the region has the most I've ever seen in the Mohave Desert) of Joshua Trees at 8:56 heading towards a wash. The route is easy since all you had to do was follow the wash until it ends. There were only two walled obstacles. The first one is noted by a large pinnacle 1.6 miles into the hike. The wall is not climbable without very good skill and perhaps rope. Therefore, we simply went around it. Although, the wind really picked up at this point. Peppe even commented that it almost blew him away.

Along the route before that first wall, Peppe found a very interesting petrified rusted bighorn sheep horn. We admired and left it on a rock as a cairn for future trips. As a matter of fact, we were surprised to find several cairns on the route.

The second walled obstacle was reached about .6 miles later. This one though is climbable as a minor class 3. About .2 miles later, we reached the end of the wash where it forks. It doesn't matter which one to take. We went up the left one and came down the right one. The next part is the only tough section due to its steepness, about 30% in 1/3 mile for 600 feet elevation gain. We were reaching for the left side of the cliff only to realize when we got closer that we could have taken a slightly shorter route up one of the cracks in the cliff.

Upon reaching the highpoint at 11:11, we looked around for a registry, but couldn't find one. We thought it odd to have found a number of cairns along the way, but no registry on the peak. Therefore, we placed our own registry at this highpoint. Someone had the idea of naming it after my son with the original idea of spelling his name backwards. Therefore, this highpoint is now officially called Ynnek Peak. It is located at N35 54.701 W113 58.733 at 6,024 feet.

We didn't spend much time on the peak, only 22 minutes, because it was cold with a wind due to the approaching strong cold front. On the way down again I was the only one hungry so we stopped for me to eat another of my 'complex sandwiches' while the others snacked. Peppe took off as usual and met us at the cars. We finished the hike at 13:37. The trip took us 4h 41m for 5.9 miles with about 1,800 elevation gain.

Afterwards, I had an interest in visiting the Diamond Bar Ranch since I've passed by it so often. It was nice to know what's there. We paid \$15 for their so called Buffalo Burger. It was still good, but not great. We talked with the employees only to find out we were actually trespassing during our hike since that area was still their property. Although, they were fine with day hikers enjoying the area. They simply do not like hunters. I had intended on camping around mile marker 9 at the Joshua Tree turnout figuring that was BLM land. It turns out that was still the rancher's land and they would have not been happy with us camping unless we obtained prior permission from the owner. We watched a western style gunfight and then decided to call the trip short due to the approaching storm. We weren't very interested in camping with near freezing temperatures and strong winds with either snow or rain resulting in muddy conditions and then probably aborting the climb to the other peaks the next day due to bad conditions. It turns out we made the right call, since there was a significant amount of snow on the Music Mountains the next day.

In any case, it was good to bag a couple peaks in the area. I'll have to come back some other day with better conditions and also bag additional peaks.