

La Madre Peak Trip Report **By Chris Meyer**

This trip can be easily summed up in one word “Windy!!!!”

La Madre Peak is the highest limestone peak to the north as seen from Red Rock. Although, Harlan organized this trip to take us to the peak from the backside originating from a dirt road off Kyle Canyon Rd. We hiked the peak on December 13th. This was the day before the first in a series of snowstorms to blow through the region. Thus we got to experience very very strong winds. We estimate the winds were up to hurricane force if not more.

Jose Witt, Fred Longacre, Doug Hladky, Frank Simpson, Susan Rufkahr, Ali Haghi, and I met Harlan at the Walmart parking lot on the SW corner of Rainbow and Cheyenne at 07:00. We then carpoled into two vehicles. Just as we turned onto Kyle Canyon Rd, we met Courtney Purcell and his girlfriend, named DB, who followed us. We turned onto a dirt road after about 8.5 miles. At this point we noticed the tear dropped like scar below the ridge of a peak. That is a large block slide/landslide below La Madre. Our route is to take us above that slide area following the ridgeline to the peak. The first part of the road was very smooth for any type of vehicle. After about 2.75 miles we turned onto a different dirt road that required a high clearance vehicle and 4-wheel drive. We traveled up that road again for about 2.75 miles until we reached the point where we really couldn't travel safely any further. The road did continue if you had a really good vehicle.

We started the hike at about 08:25. The temperature was about 34 degrees with some light winds. The entire route was through chaparral following hills and ridgelines on the way to the peak. As we continued higher the winds got stronger. Also, the storm clouds over the Spring Mountains kept getting darker, bigger, and moving closer to our direction. We were easily experiencing tropical storm forced winds. At one point while I was taking a movie showing how windy it was I asked Susan for a quote, “Right now Ed Forkos would say – this is what mountaineering is all about!” The winds still continued to increase as we went higher. At one point I was walking on a flat area only to be blown off balance by the strong gust. Good thing I was not on a ridge during that gust. Also while ascending the last stretch a few of us simply stood up straight, put our hands out, and let the wind literally push us up a bit. All of us were having a great time with the hike, amazed with the strength of the winds.

DB and Ali didn't make it to the peak. Ali was a good man by staying behind with DB since she was getting cold and it was only going to be colder on the peak. Courtney went on and summited another peak or two beating us back to the car.

We took our time getting to the top at around 10:55. Most of us hunkered down on the peak trying not to be blown off. We tried to get good pictures, but it was hard. At one point while I was taking a movie, I was blown over. I laughed through the entire experience and I got it all on tape. Any of us taking pictures had very cold hands due to the wind chill. I had discovered later that the weather station at the Red Rock Visitor Center went down at 60 mph winds. Therefore, we have to assume since we were 4,000 feet higher that we were experiencing hurricane force winds at about 8,200 feet elevation. We did not have lunch and only spent about 15 to 20 minutes on the peak. I made a phone call to my wife and parents letting them know I was fine. Even though it was windy and about freezing up there, I was warm.

We descended fairly quickly meeting up with Ali and DB. We got back to the cars about 13:00.

Thanks to Harlan for a great memorable trip. I definitely want to go back up there again when it is not so cold and windy.

If anyone wants to see pictures, then please check out my website at http://www.kcmeyer.com/Mt._Charleston/20081213-LVMC-La_Madre_Peak.