

WONDERLAND: MT. ALICE RISES ABOVE ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK'S WILD BASIN. HIKE TO ITS BASE VIA THE LION LAKES TRAIL. JUST TWO HOURS FROM DENVER. MORE INFO ON PAGE 72.


Climbing
Get bonus rock routes on these peaks in our sister magazine's current issue.

Backyard *Everests*

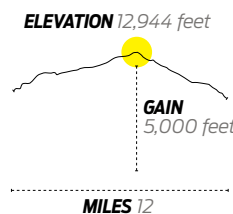
Nothing beats the rush of a good summit. But there's no need to climb Denali to get an eagle's sense of freedom. Just a stone's throw from major metro areas around America, these 15 peaks offer close-to-home heaven-scraping. By Brendan Leonard

[LOS ANGELES]

Lone Pine Peak

INYO NATIONAL FOREST

Climb without crowds to the state's top mountain view.



ROUTE Northwest ridge via Meysan Lake Trail

DRIVE 3 hours, 30 minutes

From Lone Pine Peak's blocky granite summit, you'll score pulpit-in-cathedral views of the jagged mountains of the Sierra, including a full third of California's Fourteeners—and you'll likely have those vistas all to yourself. Although visitors to the town of Lone Pine often gaze up at this peak towering 9,000 feet above the desert floor and mistake it for its taller and more famous neighbor (Mt. Whitney, the state's highest), it sees a fraction of the traffic of the crowded Whitney Trail. The Meysan Lake Trail starts right next door and will feel like the best-kept secret in the range as you climb steeply to campsites

at Grass Lake. Pitch a tent here, just below the Northwest Slope route, your access to the 12,944-foot summit.

DO IT From the Whitney Portal Campground, take the Meysan Lake Trail and ascend 3,300 feet over 4.7 miles on the hillside next to gurgling Meysan Creek. The views open up at tiny Grass Lake, nestled among pines and clean alpine granite. Find quality campsites here,

under the imposing east face of Mt. Irvine. In the morning—with a pre-dawn start to beat near daily afternoon thunderstorms—head south to the class 2 talus chute on the peak's northwest side and climb it for 1,500 vertical feet. Head left at the summit plateau and stay right to avoid the false summits on the ridge on the way to the top. After you return from the 3.5-mile, 2,000-vertical-foot climb, save time for a fishing detour. A short side trail heads upstream from your campsite to Meysan Lake, originally stocked with brook trout in the 1920s by its namesake, homesteader Felix Meysan. Look for grouse and deer in the morning and evening on the Meysan Lake Trail.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS Plan for an epic day on Lone Pine Peak's three-mile long, 5.6 Northeast Ridge route. Most soloists can expect 10 hours of climbing, plus a five-hour class 2 descent from the summit.

→ **GET THERE** From LA, take US 395 165 miles to Lone Pine. Turn west on Whitney Portal Rd. and go 13 miles to its end. **GUIDEBOOK** *The High Sierra: Peaks, Passes, and Trails*, by R.J. Secor (\$33, mountaineersbooks.org) **MAP** USGS quad *Mount Langley** **PERMIT** Required (free in person, \$5 in advance, see Contact) **CONTACT** (760) 876-6200; fs.usda.gov/inynationalforest-home **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/lonepinepeak

[AUSTIN]

Enchanted Rock

ELEVATION 1,825 feet; **GAIN** 550 feet;

ROUTE Loop, Echo Canyon, and Summit Trails; **MILES** 5.8; **DRIVE** 2 hours

See Enchanted Rock's pink granite dome, one of the most famous landmarks in Texas on this overnight loop and side trip to the 1,825-foot summit.

Do it Take the Loop Trail to one of the park's two primitive camping areas, Walnut Springs (1.2 miles) or Moss Lake (1.7 miles). Drop your pack, set up camp, and hike the Echo Canyon Trail to the Summit Trail, which rises 400 vertical feet up the slabby granite to the summit. The rock glows pink at sunset. Next day: Finish out the Loop Trail clockwise (2.6 or 3 miles, depending on your campsite).

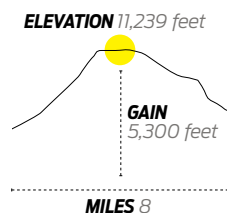
CLIMBING magazine recommends Mark of the Beast, a slabby 5.8 sport climb.

→ **Get there** From Austin, take US 290 72 miles to Fredricksburg. Take Farm To Market 965 17 miles to Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. **Guidebook** *Hiking Texas*, by Laurence Parent (\$17, falcon.com) **Maps** USGS quads Enchanted Rock and Crabapple **Permit** Required (\$12 per 4 people per night, see contact). **Contact** (830) 685-3636; tpwd.state.tx.us **Trip Data** backpacker

[PORTLAND]

Mt. Hood

Get a taste of mountaineering on this classic route.



ROUTE South Side/Hogsback

DRIVE 1 hour, 30 minutes

We love Rainier. So do a million others. For a wilder, less-committing big-summit experience, tackle Oregon's tallest volcano. The classic Hogsback route of this 11,239-foot peak can be done in a day. You'll need entry-level mountaineering skills: the ability to navigate well, even in bad weather, and recognize dangerous turn-back conditions. Gear up with crampons, ice axe, and a helmet and tackle the Hogsback route. Novices should consider roping up before climbing past the bergschrund at roughly 9,300 feet.

DO IT Plan to climb the South Side/Hogsback route from mid-May to mid-July, after avalanche danger has subsided and before too much snow has melted and rockfall turns the south side of the mountain into a bowling alley. Start your summit bid between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. at the Timberline Lodge parking lot. Strap on your crampons and hike up the east side of the ski trails to the top of the lift and climb snow slopes toward Crater Rock. Keep it on your right and the exposed—and smelly—thermally heated rock of Devils Kitchen on your left, to reach the Hogsback, the snow ridge behind Crater Rock. Stay on the Hogsback to the bergschrund, most often passable on the right side. Pick the least crowded snow chute to the summit. Descend before the sun hits the crater and warms the snow, usually by noon in summer.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS Tackle the North Face route in late fall or early spring for a big day of tooling up neve and ice to the summit. Pack eight ice screws and two pickets.

→ **GET THERE** From Portland, drive east on I-84 13 miles to exit 16. Turn south onto 238th Ave. Drive three miles to a left onto Powell Blvd. and go .5 mile. Turn right onto US 26 and follow it 39 miles to a left turn onto the Timberline Highway. Follow the curvy Timberline five miles to the Timberline Lodge parking lot. **GUIDEBOOK** *Climbing the Cascade Volcanoes*, by Jeff Smoot (\$15, falcon.com) **MAP** USGS quad *Mount Hood South* **PERMIT** Required for climbing (free at the Wy'East Timberline Day Lodge) **CONTACT** (503) 668-1700; fs.usda.gov/mthood **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/hogsback

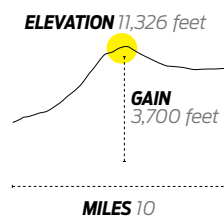


PHOTO BY ED CALLAERT

[SALT LAKE CITY]

Pfeifferhorn

Bag a stout weekend adventure—and vistas from the big lake to the High Uintas.



ROUTE East Ridge via Red Pine Lake Trail
DRIVE 45 minutes

Though BACKPACKER's editors live in peak-blessed Boulder, we still envy residents of Salt Lake City for their access to deep powder and skyscraping summits. Exhibit A: 11,326-foot Pfeifferhorn, a mini-Matterhorn 45 minutes from downtown. Bonus: It's just five miles to a lakeside basecamp, where you'll stage a summit scramble. **DO IT** From White Pine trailhead, hike one mile to the junction for Red Pine Lake. Turn right, and after gaining 1,900 feet in 3.5 miles, you'll reach its blue-green waters. Make camp 200 feet from shore. Next morning: Head

southeast on a climber trail along the stream between Red Pine and Upper Red Pine Lakes, then southwest up talus to a 10,897-foot false summit. Head west along an airy ridge across the saddle, then scramble to the Pfeifferhorn's summit.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS The North Ridge, a one-day winter knife-edge scramble to four pitches of 5.5 climbing.

→ **GET THERE** Head to Snowbird/Alta. Get off at Snowbird Entrance 1, and walk .7 mile west to White Pine trailhead. **GUIDEBOOK** *Hiking Utah*, by Bill Schneider and Ann Seifert (\$16, falcon.com) **MAP** USGS quad *Dromedary Peak* **CONTACT** (801) 733-2660; fs.usda.gov **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/pfeifferhorn



Route Ratings

The steeper the terrain, the bigger the challenge—and risk. Learn to use the Yosemite Decimal System, the accepted standard measurement of difficulty, to tell if your skills match the unique features of the route.

>> **CLASS 1** Walking easily navigable trails

>> **CLASS 2** Hiking cross-country across rough terrain, occasionally using hands for balance

>> **CLASS 3** Scrambling steep terrain (roughly 35 degrees and higher), using hands for support

>> **CLASS 4** Simple climbing (think ladder) with potentially significant exposure (think water tower). A fall would result in serious injury or even death; many parties use a rope to belay the toughest sections.

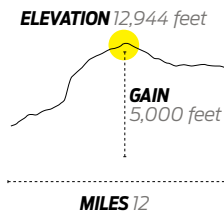
>> **CLASS 5** Technical rock climbing requiring a rope and safety hardware

Get more! Bone up on scrambling skills—and open up a new world of terrain—at backpacker.com/scrambling

[PHOENIX]

Elephant Head

Tackle tricky terrain to gain a solitary alp.



ROUTE Northwest ridge via Meysan Lake Trail
DRIVE 3 hours, 30 minutes

Even people who live in Arizona sometimes need reminding that the state has more to offer than canyons and deserts. Find one wake-up call next to Tucson and just a few hours south of Phoenix, in the Santa Rita Mountains. There, the hulking peak known as Elephant Head rises high above the cactus-covered lowlands. It demarcates the west end of the range, with steep granite walls guarding its summit on three sides. Scramble up the East Ridge to reach views of the rugged and bone dry Santa Ritas and Baboquivari Mountains.

DO IT From the Trail 930 trailhead, hike north .7 mile to a saddle at 4,700 feet, and continue north across the head of Chino Basin, where you'll pick up the old roadbed leading to the Quantrell Mine, an early 1900s old gold and silver mine. As the Quantrell Mine trail begins to circle to the east, then south, look for an unmaintained trail to Elephant Head on the left; it drops steeply into the high desert of upper Chino Canyon before climbing to a saddle east of the summit. In April and May, catch the ocotillo forest in fiery red-orange bloom. It's a 600-vertical foot scramble to the top.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS If you like the sound of a full 1,000 feet of desert mountaineering, head for Elephant Head's West Gully, a 5.6R romp to the summit.

→ **GET THERE** From Phoenix, take I-19 south past Tucson to the Canoa Rd. exit, turning south onto the frontage road on the east side of the freeway. Drive three miles to a left on Elephant Head Rd. Go 1.5 miles to a right onto Mt. Hopkins Rd., then 5.5 miles to FR 183. Turn left and go 2.3 miles to parking. **MAP** USGS quad *Mount Hopkins* **CONTACT** (520) 281-2296; fs.fed.us/r3/coronado **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/elephanthead

PHOTOS BY LEE COHEN (LEFT), GEOFFREY SANDINE

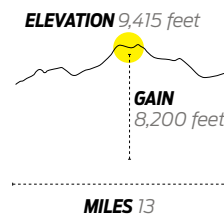


TWO FOR ONE: CLIMB MT. STUART VIA CASCADIAN COULOIR FROM LONG'S PASS, AND GAZE DOWN AT INGALLS LAKE, THE LARGEST IN THE ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS.

[SEATTLE]

Mt. Stuart

Scramble a sneak route to Rainier-worthy views—of Rainier and much more.



ROUTE Cascadian Couloir via Ingalls Creek Trail
DRIVE 2 hours, 20 minutes

To live in Seattle is to have an embarrassment of life-list mountains within a few hours of your door. But only Mt. Stuart couples both the alpine rewards of high-profile peaks like Adams and Rainier with the solitude that most hikers only experience on weeklong trips. This summit rises more than 5,000 feet from the surrounding terrain, testing quads and lungs alike—but you won't need to rope up or pack crampons. Stuart is the highest mountain in the Enchantment Range, overlooking the entire Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Some speculate that it's the largest chunk of exposed granite in the United States. Bonus: You'll be able to see your entire summit-day climb from the hike in.

DO IT From the Esmerelda trailhead, hike the Ingalls Way Trail past several small waterfalls up switchbacks to 6,200-foot Longs Pass at 2.5 miles, then descend a rocky climbers' trail to Ingalls Creek. Cross the creek and find the Ingalls Creek Trail, which parallels the stream. Head southeast along the creek a short distance to a

small meadow on the left to set up camp. Locate the faint climbers' trail heading northeast before settling in for the night (it can be tricky to find via headlamp during your alpine start). It leads to the Cascadian Couloir climbing route. Mountain goats may mingle with you on your way up the rocky terrain in the class 3, 3,500-vertical-foot, 30-degree couloir. At the top of the chute, continue up talus to a notch east of a false summit. Pick your way across the ridge and up a slab to the summit. Pack a helmet—rockfall (usually goat-triggered) is common. **CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS** Find out why the 15 pitches of exposed, often knife-edge 5.9 alpine climbing make the North Ridge one of the fifty classic climbs of North America.

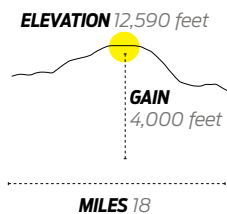
→ **GET THERE** From Seattle, take I-90 82 miles east to WA 970 in Cle Elum. Then go 9.3 miles to a left onto Teanaway Rd. Go nine miles to a Y intersection. Veer right onto FR 9737 and continue to Esmerelda trailhead. **GUIDEBOOK** *Climbing Washington's Mountains*, by Jeff Smoot (\$30, falcon.com) **MAP** USGS quad *Mount Stuart* **PERMITS** Required (free at trailhead register). A Northwest Forest Pass is required to park at the trailhead (800) 270-7504, naturenw.org **CONTACT** (509) 852-1100; fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee/cle-elum-wilderness **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/mtstuart



[SAN FRANCISCO]

Mt. Conness

Walk a scary-narrow rock fin to an airy summit.



ROUTE South Slope via Dog Lake/Young Lakes Trail

DRIVE 4 hours

Want the exposure and views that Yosemite's big wall climbers get, without the risk, ropes, and heavy gear? Tackle Mt. Conness's South Slope for vertiginous cliff-edge walking above the 12,590-foot peak's sheer granite south face with panoramas high above the Cathedral Range. The crux of your climb: a 2.5-mile, class 2 scramble that crosses a breathtakingly narrow stretch of rock with sheer drops. You'll see climbers attempting long technical routes approaching the same summit. **DO IT** The Young Lakes Trail climbs 1,500 feet over 6.5 miles from the Glen Aulin trailhead to Young Lakes. You'll take in IMAX views of Sierra giants, including Mt. Lyell, the highest peak in Yosemite at 13,120 feet, as well as peeks at lupine and monkeyflower blooming in May along Dingley Creek. Campsites at the lower lake are protected from wind (not bears: canisters required). Summit day: Hike 1.5 miles northeast to an unnamed tarn at 10,560 feet. Find a use trail on your right; take it to the summit plateau. Pick your way across a 100-foot-long catwalk, at times only 10 feet wide, with 1,000-foot drops, to the summit block. **CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS** Go light; tackle 12 pitches of 5.6 Sierra granite on Conness's iconic 1,500-foot West Ridge route.

→ **GET THERE** From San Francisco, drive 77 miles to Manteca, and take CA 120 87 miles to Yosemite National Park. Stay on CA 120 to Tuolumne Meadows and park at the Lembert Dome/Glen Aulin trailhead. **BOOK** *The High Sierra: Peaks, Passes, and Trails*, by R.J. Secor (\$33, mountaineersbooks.org) **MAP** Trails Illustrated *Yosemite NE* (\$10, natgeomaps.com) **PERMITS** Required; \$5 up to 24 weeks in advance. Free (first-come, first-served) the day before your hike at the Tuolumne Meadows Wilderness Center **CONTACT** (209) 372-0740; nps.gov/yose **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/mtconness

[ATLANTA]

Looking Glass Rock, NC

ELEVATION 3,969 feet **GAIN** 1,600 feet **ROUTE** Looking Glass Rock Trail
Miles 6.4 **DRIVE** 3 hours, 20 minutes

This granite monolith rises 1,100 feet above the valley, reflecting sunlight off its face, like a (you guessed it) looking glass. Get a view from above the foliage—and see an explosion of colors in fall—on a steep hike to the summit.

Do it Hike the Looking Glass Rock Trail 3.2 miles up an unrelenting 1,660 vertical feet, switchbacking through hemlock. As you approach the summit, you'll hike across open rock slabs. Follow yellow blazes past a large, painted white "H" (a helicopter landing pad), and look for a campsite on the left side of the trail, just before the 3,969-foot summit. Pack water.

CLIMBING magazine recommends *The Nose*, a four-pitch 5.8 → **Get there** From Atlanta, connect I-85, SC 11, US 178, US 64, US 276, and FR 475. **Guidebook** *Hiking North Carolina*, by Randy Johnson (\$20, falcon.com) **Map** USGS Quad Shining Rock **Contact** (828) 877-3265; fs.usda.gov **Trip Data** backpacker.com/hikes/lookingglassrock

POOL TO PEAK: ACCESS YOSEMITE'S MT. CONNESS (LEFT OF CENTER), VIA ITS RIGHT SHOULDER, FROM YOUR BASECAMP AT LOWER YOUNG LAKE.



PHOTO BY DAN MITCHELL



ROCKY TOP: TARGET MT. ALICE (SEEN HERE FROM THE LION LAKES TRAIL) TO BEAT DENVER'S CLIMBING HORDES.

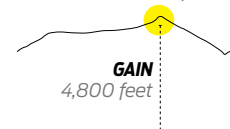


[DENVER]

Mt. Alice

Feel like you've notched a first ascent.

ELEVATION 13,310 feet



MILES 16

ROUTE Hourglass Ridge via Wild Basin Trail

DRIVE 2 hours

Fly under the radar as the vacationing crowds from points east march antlike up Longs Peak, Alice's superstar neighbor a few miles to the north. The route to this 13,310-foot summit is a true locals-only find, with a healthy dose of spicy scrambling to make it even more adventurous. You'll hike past five pristine high-altitude lakes over krummholz and boulders as the terrain changes from subalpine forest to tundra, eventually reaching an easy but exposed ridge to the summit. Choose your own line and make the final scramble to the summit as challenging as you want, and take in views of the steep, rocky walls of Longs Peak and Chiefs Head to the north and Isolation Peak to the south.

DO IT From the Wild Basin trailhead, hike the Wild Basin Trail, passing three waterfalls (Copeland, Calypso Cascades, and Ouzel) in the first three miles. Camp at the Siskin or North St. Vrain campsites at 9,400 feet, and head out early the next morning for a big summit day—by making it an overnight, you'll see the alpenglow on Mt. Alice's east face without the alpine start. Follow the trail to Lion Lake No. 1, then take a path past Lion Lake No. 2, and up the ridge southwest of Snowbank Lake to the saddle between Mt. Alice and Chiefs Head Peak, keeping an eye out for bighorn sheep and marmots. Head south from the saddle over Hourglass Ridge and scramble up talus to the summit. Take the easier descent to Boulder-Grand Pass, down to Thunder Lake, and back to your campsite.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS Solitude on a Rocky Mountain National Park alpine climb is possible—on the 8-pitch, 5.8 Central Ramp on Mt. Alice, one of the longest 5.8 routes in the park.

→ **GET THERE** From Denver, take US 36 for 36 miles to CO 7 in Lyons. Turn west and go 21 miles to Wild Basin Rd. Follow it 2 miles to Wild Basin trailhead. **GUIDEBOOK** *Rocky Mountain National Park: The Complete Hiking Guide*, by Lisa Foster (\$28, west-cliffepublishers.com) **MAP** *Trails Illustrated Rocky Mountain National Park* (\$12, natgeomaps.com) **PERMIT** Required (\$20). Reserve by phone starting March 1. **CONTACT** (970) 586-1242; nps.gov/romo **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/mtalice

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PHOTO BY IMAGESOFMNP.COM



TIMING IS EVERYTHING: SUNRISE FROM THE SUMMIT OF WEST VIRGINIA'S SPRUCE KNOB

[WASHINGTON D.C.]

Spruce Knob

Stand atop *The Mountain State's* most famous peak.

ELEVATION 4,863 feet

GAIN 900 feet

MILES 2.6

ROUTE Allegheny Mountain, Seneca Creek, and Huckleberry Trails

DRIVE 3 hours, plus 1.25 hours for shuttle

There are shorter routes to West Virginia's highest peak, but this 11-mile point-to-point is the ultimate scenic route. It crests the ridge of Allegheny Mountain, dips into Seneca Creek, and shoots 1,400 feet to the summit. Plus: Pass Seneca Rocks, one of the East's premier trad-climbing areas on the drive.

DO IT From Spring Ridge trailhead, head east, climbing three miles to the Allegheny Mountain Trail. Hike it east along a gentle ridge .2 mile to the Horton Trail, leading one mile to Seneca Creek Trail. Take it 1.4 miles to the backcountry campsites at the Judy Springs Campground. Next day, continue .5 mile to the Horton Trail. Walk it 500 feet south to link the Lumberjack and Huckleberry Trails to the ridge of Spruce Mountain, hitting the summit in 4.5 miles.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS The two-pitch Soler, a classic 5.7 first climbed in 1951, tops out on the South Peak of Seneca Rocks, the highest 5th-class summit east of Devils Tower.

→ **GET THERE** Shuttle car: From D.C., take I-66 west 75 miles to I-81 and head south four miles to VA 55. Go 89 miles to a right on CR 33 south of Seneca Rocks. In 2.5 miles, turn right on FR 112 and drive 7.5 miles to FR 104, which leads to parking atop Spruce Mountain. Trailhead: Take FR 104 to FR 112. Turn right and go six miles to FR 1. Take it 11.5 miles (becomes CR 29) to Spring Ridge trailhead. **GUIDEBOOK** *Hiking West Virginia*, by Steven Carroll and Mark Miller (\$16, falcon.com) **MAP** USGS quads *Whitmer*, *Onega*, *Circleville*, and *Spruce Knob* **CONTACT** (304) 257-4488; fs.usda.gov/mnf **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/spruceknob

[BOSTON]

Mounts Webster and Jackson

Claim a rare feat on this classic-in-waiting loop.

ELEVATION 3,911 and 4,052 feet

GAIN 2,152 feet

MILES 6.9

ROUTE Webster-Jackson Trail

DRIVE 2 hours, 30 minutes

Score a New England hat trick with one of the best mountain-top views in the Presidential Range, one of New Hampshire's tallest waterfalls, and two summit climbs—all in one 6.9-mile loop. Bonus: For the effort of an extra 2.6-mile round-trip from mile 4.3, make this an overnighter with a stay at the Appalachian Mountain Club's Mizpah Spring Hut or the Nauman Tentsite next door, both north of Jackson's summit.

DO IT From the Webster-Jackson trailhead, hike east. Plan to make side trips to two overlooks in the first mile of trail, Elephant Head (.2 mile one-way) and Bugle Cliff (50 yards), for views of the steep wooded mountainsides of Crawford Notch. Back on trail, pass the 30-foot Silver Cascade Falls at mile 1.1. From the summit of Mt. Webster .9 mile later, take the Webster Cliff Trail (also part of the Appalachian Trail) north-west toward Jackson, and scramble up granite slabs along

the final stretch to Jackson's summit and unobstructed views of Mt. Washington and the Pemigewasset Range. Gray jays frequent the summit in summer, plying hikers for food. The 3.3-mile Jackson branch of the Webster-Jackson Trail drops south back to the trailhead; a 1.3-mile hike to the north leads to Mizpah Spring Hut.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS Take the hardman winter mountaineering route to the summit of Mt. Webster, with 2,500 vertical feet of snow, ice, rock, and mixed climbing on the 5.6 WI3 Greens Chasm.

→ **GET THERE** From Boston, take I-93 north for 140 miles to US 3. Go 10.5 miles east to Twin Mountain and turn right onto US 302. Drive 8.5 miles to trailhead parking just past Saco Lake. **GUIDEBOOK** *Hiking New Hampshire*, by Larry Pletcher (\$17, falcon.com) **MAP** USGS quad *Crawford Notch* **PERMITS** None, but for Mizpah Spring Hut, reserve a spot at least 2 months in advance (\$121 per person, per night; outdoors.org/lodging). Or call (603) 466-2727 for last-minute openings. Nauman Tentsite has 7 platforms, first-come, first-served (\$8). **CONTACT** (603) 447-5448; fs.fed.us/r9/white

TRIP DATA backpacker.com/hikes/websterjackson

[NEW YORK]

Millbrook Mountain

ELEVATION 1,700 feet **GAIN** 1,200 feet

ROUTE Millbrook Ridge Trail **MILES** 6.5

DRIVE 2 hours

Mountaintop views only two hours from Manhattan? Get them on one of the Mohonk Preserve's toughest trails to this 1,700-foot summit.

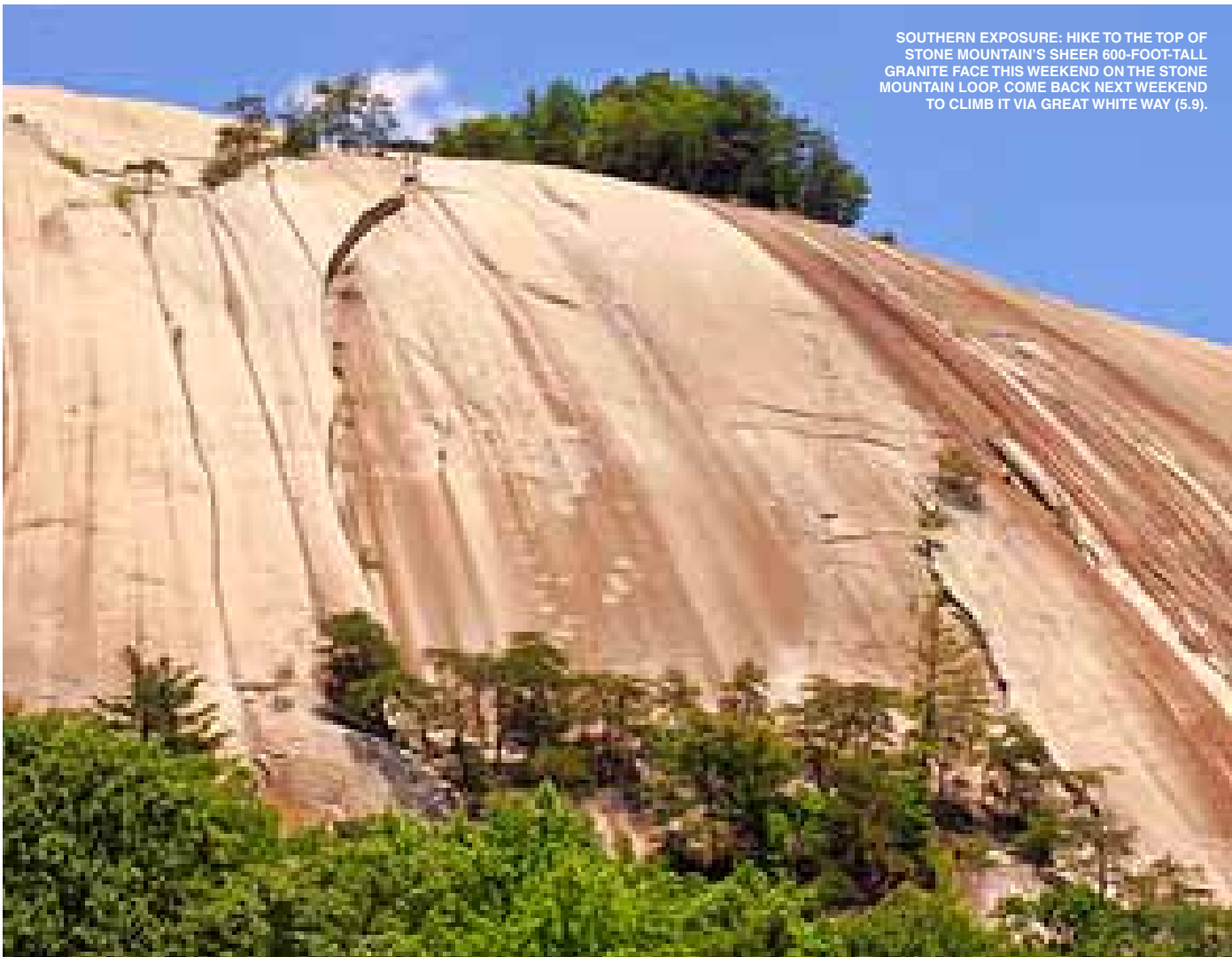
Do it Hike the West Trapps Connector trail .2 mile to the Trapps Bridge. Just past the bridge, follow the Millbrook Ridge Trail's light blue blazes to the ridge and take in the view of the Catskills to the north. Continue toward Millbrook's summit, minding the 300-foot sheer drop to the left. To tag the top, detour on the Millbrook Mountain Trail a few hundred feet.

CLIMBING magazine recommends *Westward Ha!*, a 5.7 two-pitch classic

→ **Get there** From New Paltz, take NY 55/US 44 1.8 miles to the Mohonk Preserve. **Guidebook** Take a Hike New York City: Hikes Within Two Hours of Manhattan, by Skip Card (\$17, moon.com) **Map** Shawangunk Trails (\$11, nynjtc.org) **Permits** Required for non-members (\$12 at trailhead).

Contact (845) 255-0919; mohnk-preserve.org **Trip Data** backpacker.com/hikes/millbrookmountain

PHOTOS BY PAT & CHUCK BLACKLEY



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE: HIKE TO THE TOP OF STONE MOUNTAIN'S SHEER 600-FOOT-TALL GRANITE FACE THIS WEEKEND ON THE STONE MOUNTAIN LOOP. COME BACK NEXT WEEKEND TO CLIMB IT VIA GREAT WHITE WAY (5.9).

[CHARLOTTE, N.C.]

Stone Mountain

Top a Yosemite-like dome in a sea of green.

ELEVATION 2,035 feet

GAIN 1,000 feet

MILES 4.5

ROUTE Stone Mountain Trail

DRIVE 1 hours, 45 minutes

Stone Mountain isn't the highest peak in the East, but its prominence and isolation make it feel that way. You'll nab peerless views of the rolling green Piedmont, see a 200-foot waterfall, and have a chance to fish what locals call the state's finest trout streams. Watch rock climbers on the mountain's slabby south face as you loop around and up to the summit of this granite dome.

DO IT The 4.5-mile Stone Mountain Loop begins at the upper trailhead on the west side of Stone Mountain State Park and quickly descends 300 stairs from the top of 200-foot Stone Mountain Falls. Walk

through the grassy meadow below the steep south face with more than 30 technical rock routes that line the granite wall, and look for some of the giant granite blocks that have exfoliated off the wall over the years. From the meadow, it's a stout 700-foot climb in .6 mile to

the summit through stands of pine and oak. Be wary of how far you wander down the rock slab from the summit—it steepens down slope and is treacherous when wet. Minimal mileage leaves plenty of time for fishing the park's 17 miles of brown, rainbow, and brookie-laden streams. Pack your fly rod and a selection of nymphs and dry flies to cast into Big Sandy Creek.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS Friction climbing and keeping it together during huge runouts are the name of the game on Stone Mountain's water-groove route, Great White Way, a 3-pitch, 5.9 sport climb that requires only 4 quickdraws.

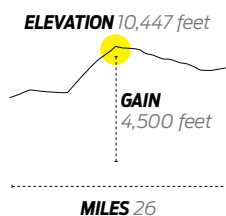
→ **GET THERE** From Charlotte, take I-77 75 miles north to US 21. Go 12 miles, to Traphill Rd. Turn west and drive four miles to the John P. Frank Parkway. Turn north into Stone Mountain State Park and reach the upper trailhead in three miles. **GUIDEBOOK** *Hiking North Carolina: A Guide to Nearly 500 of North Carolina's Greatest Hiking Trails*, by Randy Johnson (\$20, falcon.com) **MAP** USGS quad *Glade Valley* **Contact** (336) 957-8185; ncparks.gov **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/stonemountain



[ALBUQUERQUE]

North Sandia Peak

Summit the Southwest's most European mountain.



ROUTE Sandia Crest Trail
DRIVE 20 minutes

Albuquerque hikers know they're lucky to have the 20-mile ridge of the Sandia Mountains as their rugged eastern skyline, but surprisingly few trek up through the range's four ecological zones and spend a night camping above the city lights. This stout 27.2-mile shuttle hike traverses the length of the Crest Trail and offers an urban-access backpacking experience unique among American cities, with trailheads and a tram from town—and a restaurant on top.

DO IT Start at the Tunnel Spring trailhead at the north end of the Crest Trail and knock out 4,100 feet of elevation gain

in the first 10 miles. Just before the 10-mile mark, take a side trail west to the North Sandia Peak summit, just .35 mile and 250 feet of elevation above the Crest Trail. The entire city of Albuquerque spreads out nearly a vertical mile beneath you. Skip packing dinner

and order the green chile stew or bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin at the High Finance Restaurant (reservations recommended: 505-243-9742, sandiapeakrestaurants.com) at 11.8 miles. Fill your water bottles at the restaurant and find good campsites starting within a mile down the trail after dinner. Finish the almost all-downhill miles the next day, ending at the Canyon Estates trailhead.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS The Shield on North Sandia Peak offers up one of America's only metro-area big-wall experiences on the 5.8, 12-pitch Procrastination.

→ **GET THERE** Shuttle car drop: Take I-40 east 15 miles to NM 337. Turn left onto Arrowhead Trail after .2 mile. Continue .6 mile as Arrowhead Trail turns into Thunderbird Trail (both roads) and ends at the trailhead. Start: Take I-40 back to I-25. Go 16 miles north to NM 165. Head east five miles to Tunnel Springs Rd. Turn left, and drive 1.5 miles to the Tunnel Spring trailhead. **GUIDEBOOK** *Sandia Mountain Hiking Guide*, by Mike Coltrin (\$17, unmpress.com) **MAPS** USGS quads *Placita*, *Sandia Crest*, and *Tijeras* **CONTACT** (505) 281-3304; fs.usda.gov/cibola **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/sandiapeak

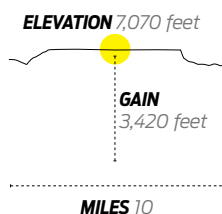


WHAT HAPPENS OUTSIDE OF VEGAS: SUMMIT MT. WILSON VIA TRICKY ROUTEFINDING THROUGH FIRST CREEK CANYON.

[LAS VEGAS]

Mt. Wilson

Navigate a vertical sandstone maze to guaranteed solitude on a high-desert summit.



ROUTE First Creek Canyon
DRIVE 40 minutes

From the floor of Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, the sheer, red-and-tan-striped sandstone of Mt. Wilson's east face appears unclimbable. But if you can handle class 3 terrain—meaning plenty of handholds accompanying holy-crap dropoffs—you'll have the mountain to yourself. (Bonus: You'll also earn an eagle-eye view of the Strip lighting up the night from a campsite below the summit.) The route sneaks around to the south via First Creek Canyon, and is a true navigational challenge.

DO IT Walk First Creek Trail toward the canyon and take the left fork at 1.4 miles.

Watch for Indian paintbrush in late spring and Joshua trees and big-horn sheep year-round. The path eventually divides into many social trails—stay as near to the creek as possible, scrambling over boulders and up chimneys to the back of the canyon. Keep to the right as the canyon splits. When the steep north wall ends, leave the wash on a social trail and walk northeast up sandstone slabs to the summit. Pitch a tent in a small, flat site just south and slightly downhill from the summit (pack water). Allow seven to 10 hours round-trip.

CLIMBING MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS Pack a light rack and tackle a monster day on the 17 pitches of Inti Watana to Resolution Arete.

→ **GET THERE** From the Strip, take Charleston Blvd. 20 miles east to the signed First Creek trailhead on the west side of the road. **GUIDEBOOK** *Hiking Las Vegas: 60 Hikes Within 60 Minutes of the Strip*, by Branch Whitney (\$8, huntingtonpress.com) **MAP** USGS quad *Blue Diamond* **PERMITS** None for camping above 5,000 feet; leave a message at the Red Rock Late Exit Line for overnight stays (702-515-5050). **CONTACT** (702) 515-5050; blm.gov/nv/st/en.html **TRIP DATA** backpacker.com/hikes/mtwilson