



Telescope & Wildrose Peaks



Death Valley National Park

The Panamint Mountains are the largest and highest in Death Valley National Park. Flanked by the vast depth of Death Valley to the east and Panamint Valley to the west, they stand alone in grand isolation. This biological “island” differs dramatically from the low desert.

Pinyon pine and juniper woodlands above 6000 feet provide habitat for mule deer and mountain lion, while rugged canyons and lofty ridges are home to bighorn sheep. The highest summit in the park, Telescope Peak crowns the range at 11,049 feet. Its windswept slopes are

home to ancient bristlecone pine trees, some as old as 3000 years. Maintained trails lead to the tops of Telescope Peak and 9064 feet high Wildrose Peak. They are a cool refuge from the desert’s heat, but can be covered by deep snow in winter and spring.

Telescope Peak Trail

Trailhead: Mahogany Flat Campground

Length: 7 miles one way

Elevation gain: 3,000 feet

Time required: 7 to 9 hours round-trip

Topo maps: Telescope Peak 7.5 min. quad or Trails Illustrated map

Road access: Graded gravel to Charcoal Kilns; final 1.5 miles to Mahogany Flat are rough, gravel road OK for 2WD high-clearance vehicles; may require 4WD in winter & spring.

Cautions: No water available at the campground or along trail; may be snow covered and icy from December to May; dogs and horses are not allowed.

From the trailhead at 8,133 feet elevation, the trail climbs steadily as it winds around the east slope of Roger’s Peak through woodlands of mountain mahogany, pinyon pine and juniper. At Arcane Meadows the trees become scattered and the trail levels out as it meanders across a broad open saddle leading to the final ascent of Telescope Peak. Gnarled ancient bristlecone pines are mixed among stands of limber pine where the trail switchbacks up the east face of the peak. The summit is reached after a short scramble along a narrow

Backpacking

- ◆ Backcountry camping is allowed on these trails two miles beyond the trailheads.
- ◆ Please fill out a free Backcountry Camping Permit at the Visitor Center or any ranger station.
- ◆ Campfires are prohibited, except in firepits provided in developed campgrounds.
- ◆ Most of the Telescope Peak Trail follows an open, exposed ridgeline with few protected campsites; Wildrose Peak Trail offers better opportunities for camping.
- ◆ Remember to leave no trace of your visit.

ridge. Telescope Peak earned its name from the vast area visible from the summit on a clear day. Snow and ice usually make this trail too hazardous for all but well-equipped climbers during winter and spring. For safety it may be necessary to avoid the final switchbacks and stay on the ridge. Winter climbers should be experienced and equipped with ice axe, crampons, winter clothing, boots, and ropes. Be prepared for subfreezing temperatures and sudden weather changes.

Wildrose Peak Trail

Trailhead: Wildrose Charcoal Kilns

Length: 4.2 miles one way

Elevation gain: 2,200 feet

Time required: 4 to 6 hours round trip

Topo maps: Wildrose Peak 7.5 min. quad or Trails Illustrated map

Road access: Graded gravel to Charcoal Kilns

Cautions: No water available at the kilns or along the trail; may have snow from December to April; dogs are not allowed.

Wildrose Peak is the northernmost summit of the Panamint Mountains’ highest section. A rewarding hike on its own, it is also a good alternative when winter conditions prevent hiking Telescope Peak.

The trail starts at the north end of the charcoal kilns and climbs steadily up a drainage thick with pinyon pine and juniper. Watch for weathered stumps of trees cut more than 100 years ago to be made into charcoal at the kilns. The final two miles of trail meanders along a forested ridge and switchbacks up the peak, revealing increasingly spectacular views. Other than a few scattered stands of limber pine, the rounded summit is exposed and windswept.

