

Arizona / Wickenburg

## Vulture Peak

DISTANCE: 4 miles

ELEVATION GAIN: 1300 feet

ROUTE TYPE: Out & Back

### Overview

Vulture Peak tops the Vulture Mountains, a small but dramatic range in northwestern Maricopa County, south of Wickenburg. Its block-shaped summit mass is a well-known and familiar landmark visible from miles in all directions and even from distant mountaintops, if you know where to look.

Despite its imposing appearance, a climb to the summit is well within most people's comfort level. A good trail gets you to a saddle below the summit, while the final 240+ vertical feet to the top is a combination of chutes, rock-scrambling and cactus-avoidance. It's not overly technical, and exposure is minimal, but there are a couple spots where care is needed. The views from the top are well worth the effort.

### Getting There

Wickenburg is about 45 miles northwest of Phoenix via US-60/Grand Avenue. The best way to avoid the traffic is to access US-60 from the Loop-101 freeway in Glendale, the Loop-303 expressway near Sun City, or AZ-74 via Lake Pleasant. No matter what, though, you will hit traffic.

In Wickenburg stay west on US-60 past downtown for about 3 miles to Vulture Mine Road. Turn left and drive south about 6 miles (or so... I'm estimating) to a well-marked turn-off toward the peak. Passenger cars park early at the trailhead while 4-wheel drive can proceed another 1.5 mile to a higher trailhead. Vulture Peak will be visible the whole way in.

Wickenburg has full services, including hotels, restaurants and an interesting 'old-west' downtown. There's a major grocery store, discount store and pharmacy at the junction of US-60 and Vulture Mine Road.

For an interesting back way to this point from Phoenix, take I-10 west to exit 103 (339th Avenue). Go right (north) to Indian School Road, then left (west) a couple miles to 355th Avenue. A sign will point to Wickenburg. Follow this fine paved highway about 20+ miles to a junction with Vulture Mine Road. Turn right and go north another 20+ miles to the Vulture Peak turn-off. These roads are paved but rarely traveled. They are not state highways. There is talk that these roads may be expanded as part of the Canamex/Nafta free-trade route, bypassing Phoenix. For now, they are lonely roads through desolate desert country.



