

Hike: Cathedral Rock — trail

Trailhead: Parking Lot before Cathedral Rock Picnic Area — unmarked

Distance: 2.5 miles — round trip

Elevation gain: 900 feet

Elevation peak: 8,600 feet

Time: 2 to 3 hours — up and back

Difficulty: 1

Danger level: 1

Class: 1

How easy to follow: 1

Children: Yes

Waypoints: Not needed

Fee: None

Best season: Summer

Driving directions: From the Mirage on Las Vegas Boulevard (the Strip) go north 1.5 miles and turn west (left) onto Sahara. In less than one mile, turn north (right) onto I-15. Take I-15 two miles to US 95 north. Take US 95 north 14 miles to State Route 157. Turn left on 157, drive 20 miles passing a hairpin turn, and park near the stairs in **Photo 1**. There's no parking fee. A restroom is located at the trailhead. Do NOT park in no parking zones. You will get an expensive ticket. There's additional parking along the road before the stairs.

Comments: Cathedral Rock, the second most popular trail in Mt. Charleston, is the perfect hike for beginners. You can see Cathedral Rock, the huge pinnacle that looms above the Mt. Charleston Lodge, by looking at the

imaginary 10 o'clock position as you approach the hairpin turn on 157. From the peak, you enjoy fantastic views of the Lodge and Kyle Canyon.

The Hike: Walk up the stairs (**Photo 1**) and turn left onto the trail, which starts out with a moderate incline and continues to climb until it intersects Cathedral Rock Trail in less than a half mile. The trail turns south and heads toward the magnificent Echo Cliffs. The Cliffs have a sheer drop of almost 1,000 feet. As the



Photo 1

trail snakes to the west of Echo Cliffs, a side trail leads to a small seep. Water flows from the seep in the spring.



Photo 2

through a forest, and you forget that you're 8,000 feet above sea level.

Save your energy for the last quarter mile of the trail—it's steep. When the trail divides, go right on the **unmarked** footpath. (See **Photo 2**.) About a half- dozen switchbacks leads to the top of Cathedral Rock. The view becomes more spectacular with every step. On the far NE side there's a place to sit and admire the view. Mt. Charleston Lodge lies 1,000 feet below and farther to the east you can see the desert floor. To the north is Mummy Mountain; to the NW is Mary Jane Falls, and to the west is Charleston Peak.

If you eat lunch, you may have a visitor or two. This is the only place in the world you'll have the opportunity to see the Palmer Chipmunk. As hard as it is, resist feeding them. By feeding them they become dependent on humans for their food. In the winter the chipmunks must rely on their food-gathering skills or perish. Watch children closely at the top; the drop-offs are more than 500 feet at the edges.

To Descend: Retrace your steps.

Once past Echo Cliffs, the trail heads west and the grade becomes steeper as it makes its way across a slope. As you traverse the slope, you can see the destruction an avalanche can wreak on a mountain. Many trees and boulders are still misplaced by an avalanche that happened years ago.

The trail flattens out as it heads toward the backside of Cathedral Rock. This is the easiest and most enjoyable part of the trail, a cakewalk