

Hike: Black Velvet Peak — route
Trailhead: Black Velvet parking area – not marked
Distance: 8 miles — loop hike
Elevation gain: 2,288 feet
Elevation of peak: 6,234 feet
Time: 6 to 8 hours – up and down
Difficulty: 5
Danger level: 5
Class: 3
How easy to follow: 5
Children: no
Waypoints (WGS84): See Page 7
Fees: None
Best season: Spring and autumn

Driving directions: From the Las Vegas Strip head south and turn right (west) onto State Route 160 (Blue Diamond Highway). Drive 15.3 miles on 160 and turn right onto an unmarked paved road on the right. Turn. (If you pass mile marker 16, you've gone too far.) Just past the bathrooms the road changes to gravel. Drive 1.9 miles to a gate. Make a left just before the gate and follow the road 0.7 miles to Black Velvet parking area ([Waypoint 1](#)). If coming from State Route 159, turn right onto 160 and drive 4.6 miles to the paved road. Photo 1 is Black Velvet Peak.



Photo 1

Comments: Quite simply, one of the best hikes in Red Rock Canyon. Black Velvet Wall towers almost 2,000 feet. You'll hike past the base of the wall and stand at the top of the wall looking down 2,000 feet to the canyon you hiked through! A GPS is recommended to follow this route.

Lodging: Numerous hotels in Las Vegas, NV. The Red Rock Hotel and Casino is the closest.

Camping: Red Rock Campground. Very sparse. \$10 per night.
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/blm_programs/blm_special_areas/red_rock_nca/recreation/red_rock_campground.html

The hike: Follow the obvious, but unsigned gravel road, as



Photo 2

it heads west toward Black Velvet Canyon. The road forks in a couple hundred yards; take the right fork, which narrows to a single-track trail. When the trail forks again, follow the left fork, which soon goes across red dirt before descending into the wash ([Waypoint 2](#)). Scramble through the wash about 300 yards until you see a class 5, 30-foot dry fall. To bypass the dry fall, go left and follow a path that leads to the start of the exposed

third class ledges. (See Photo 2.) These are the famous Black Velvet Ledges, exposed but easy class 3.



Photo 3

Once above the ledges, drop back into the wash and boulder **several hundred** yards up the canyon encountering several class 3 sections. When the canyon divides ([Waypoint 3 – a little before the divide](#)), go west (left) into the largest fork. (See Photo 3.) Scramble about 300 yards up this steep **sandstone** canyon (it will feel much longer) to the 50-foot log in Photo 4. You'll leave the wash at this point. Head south up the steep dry waterfall, which can be seen behind the log in Photo 4.

Up to this point, the route was easy to follow. Now it becomes tricky in certain places. Look for cairns if you lose the route. Scramble up the waterfall toward the three trees in Photo 5. ([Waypoint 4](#)) A 40-foot wall sits about 50 yards behind the trees. To get to the top of the wall go right along the bottom of the



Photo 4

along the famous Keystone Thrust Fault. Notice how the terrain changed from sandstone to limestone. Follow



Photo 5

the path as it goes around the heads of Black Velvet Canyon. The path traverses without gaining or losing much elevation. You past [Waypoints 6 and 7](#) as you follow the path. It becomes hard to follow at times, but keep heading toward the peaks. Once you're within about 100 yards of the first peak, you'll descend ([Waypoint 8](#)) to a section of reddish dirt and rock. Photo 9 shows the route **around** the first peak.

The route becomes harder to follow from the reddish dirt to just beyond the first peak. Look for cairns. Hike NE out on the white sandstone until you can easily climb off to the north (left) ([Waypoint 9](#)). Go north about 25 yards to a wall with black varnish at the bottom. (See Photo 10.) Turn west (left), hike up the brushy slot to a drop-off. About 15 feet **before**

wall, to a point where you can climb the six foot wall in Photo 6.

Hike south along the sandstone ledge in Photo 7 to a **faint** path that travels up loose, red-chipped, sandstone. At the top ([Waypoint 5](#)), you'll see Black Velvet Peak and two other unnamed peaks. (See Photo 8.)

From here, you'll walk



Photo 6

the stunning views of Black Velvet Peak; however, there's a sign-in book.

To the north about 200 yards and 100 feet less in elevation stands Black Velvet Peak. Continue east along the same ridge 15 yards to a large cairn and path that leads to Black Velvet Peak. Go north (left) on the path and descend the slope toward Black Velvet Peak. Once at the low point scramble up to Black Velvet Peak ([Waypoint 13](#)).

You made it! You can admire the view from here, but for an awesome view head NW toward the very top of Black Velvet Canyon Wall. You are looking

the slot ends find a hole on the right. Squeeze through the hole. Once up ([Waypoint 10](#)), walk NE toward the first peak. There's a huge drop-off to your left. Walk about 50 yards until you come to the head of the drop-off. Go north (left) climbing over boulders. You are now on the other side of the drop-off. A few yards ahead off to the right is what appears to be a very tricky traverse. See Photo 11. It's not as bad as it looks. Once past the traverse, the second peak comes into view. (You are now past the first peak. - See Photo 12) From here, your direction of travel is obvious. Approach the second peak, which is the highest peak, from the south side. Scramble along the **crest** of the ridge ([Waypoint 11](#)). There are two short down climbs before reaching the peak ([Waypoint 12](#)). This peak does not have



Photo 7



Photo 8

Veer slightly SE as you climb onto the ridgeline. Once on the ridge, hike east several hundred yards. There's an occasional path and numerous cairns. Veer south (right) of the first peaklet you come to. Again, head south (right) to avoid climbing to a second peaklet. Once past the peaklet, head up to the ridgeline and pick up the



Photo 9

lies about 600 feet below. The path is easy to follow and well cairned. About halfway down to the desert floor,

down 2,000 feet at the canyon you were hiking through early in the day. You might see climbers on the wall.

To Descend: If you do not have a gps, make a note of the time. This will help you find the path that travels down the ridge. Start by heading south retracing your steps back up to the **same ridgeline** near the highest peak.

path as it heads east. Now, look at your watch. Once 25 minutes has past since you left Black Velvet Peak, start looking for a path that heads north (left) down the slope. It's marked by two large cairns and a third cairn off to the left. Also, a log sits about 10 yards down the slope next to the path. [Waypoint 14.](#)

The path heads north toward Whiskey Peak, which



Photo 10

the path stops descending and starts traversing due north. Look to your left for large cairns marking the traverse. In about 150 yards Whiskey Peak comes into view. From that point, you'll be scrambling down class 2/3 sandstone.

Descend into the gully that lies **before** Whiskey Peak. Go to the north side of the gully and pick up the path that weaves NE toward the desert floor. There're numerous paths, luckily they all avoid the brush and are easy to navigate. About halfway down, the main path leaves the gully, heads north (left) and traverses a reddish alluvial fan. When the path divides head down the switchbacks. Do not continue north on the path. (You'll end up back in the canyon.) Make sure to descend an easy class 2 chute. Follow the path

down to the desert floor. When the path intersects the main trail, go east (right) following it back to your car.

Waypoints:

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| 1. 36.03452N | 115.44966W |
| 2. 36.03600N | 115.46224W |
| 3. 36.04117N | 115.47472W |
| 4. 36.04075N | 115.47991W |
| 5. 36.03924N | 115.47951W |
| 6. 36.03678N | 115.47909W |
| 7. 36.03569N | 115.47864W |
| 8. 36.0336N | 115.47647W |
| 9. 36.03367N | 115.47476W |
| 10. 36.03389N | 115.47462W |
| 11. 36.03373N | 115.47051W |



- 12. 36.03364N
- 115.4699W
- 13. 36.03459N
- 115.46876W
- 14. 36.0311N
- 115.46504W

Photo 11



Photo 12