

**Hike:** Griffith Peak via South Loop Trail — up and back

**Trailhead:** Cathedral Rock Picnic Area — marked.

**Distance:** 9.5 miles — round trip

**Elevation gain:** 3,470 feet

**Elevation peak:** 11,056 feet

**Time:** 5 to 6 hours – up and back

**Difficulty:** 3

**Danger level:** 2

**Class:** 1

**How easy to follow:** 1

**Children:** no

**Waypoints:** See Page 2

**Fees:** None

**Best season:** Summer

**Driving directions:** From the Mirage on Las Vegas Boulevard (the Strip) go north 1.5 miles and turn left (west) onto Sahara. In less than one mile, turn right (north) onto I-15. Take I-15 two miles to US 95. Take US 95 north 14 miles to State route 157. Go left on 157, drive 21 miles, and turn right into Cathedral Rock picnic area. The signed trailhead is located one-tenth of a mile past the fee booth on the right (west) side of the road. (See **Photo 1** - [Waypoint 1](#).) The entrance fee is \$8 per car. Parking is available across from the trailhead; however, it may be full on weekends. If the parking areas are full or closed, parking is also available just before entering the picnic area on the right (west) side of the road. It is a quarter-of-a-mile walk to the trailhead from the entrance of Cathedral Rock picnic area.

**Comments:** Griffith Peak offers one of the best views in the Mt. Charleston Area. There are numerous



**Photo 1**

fossils found in rocks around the peak.

**The Hike:** The South Loop trail starts at an easy pace as it heads in SSW. The grade increases rapidly as the trail heads east and passes to the east of Echo Cliffs. It winds through ponderosa pines, white furs, and smaller aspens. The aspens are colorful during the fall months. As the trail turns back to a SW direction, it



**Photo 2**

passes through the two sets of cliffs. To the north is Echo Cliffs; to the south is an unnamed cliff range. A small cave is located near the bottom of the unnamed cliffs. Off to the south is Springs Fork where water flows year round. It is a short 0.25-mile trek to the springs. The trail becomes a series of moderate switchbacks as it climbs up the backside of Echo cliffs. A great overlook is at the top of Echo Cliffs; Kyle Canyon, Mummy Mt., and Cathedral Rock are all in view. The overlook is two miles from the trailhead.

The trail leaves the overlook and heads west with a gradual incline. It crosses a dry drainage and starts a series of moderate switchbacks that takes you to the South Rim Plateau. Many of the switchbacks on the north end offer great views of

Kyle Canyon, Cathedral Rock, and Mummy Mt.

The landscape changes into a delightful meadow before reaching the plateau. The last quarter mile is steep, but offers a good view of Griffith Peak. Upon reaching the South Rim, a sign indicates the distances to Charleston Peak, Harris Saddle, and back to Kyle Canyon — the trailhead. Griffith Peak is not listed. The elevation is 10,700; the distance to this point is four miles.

Go left onto the trail and head toward Griffith Peak. In about 400 yards the trail divides. Follow the path up to Griffith Peak. (See **Photo 2**.) It's a short, strenuous trek to the peak. (The trail goes around Griffith Peak and back down to Harris Saddle. It does not go up to Griffith Peak.) The wind and lower temperature makes Griffith Peak refreshing in the summer and cold in the winter. There are numerous fossils in the rocks at Griffith Peak. Look at them, but leave them so others can marvel at ancient history. Millions of years ago, the entire area was underwater.

**To Descend:** Retrace your steps.

**Waypoints:**

001 36.25405N 115.64356W 7,646 feet Trailhead