

USE AT YOUR OWN RISK

Keys Peak

4,483'

Location: Joshua Tree National Monument
Maps: AAA San Bernardino County
Topo: Twentynine Palms 15 or Indian Cove 7.5

Primary Route: 3 miles o/w, 450' gain, class 2-3 rock scrambling

Driving Instructions:

From the junction of I-10 and State Highway 62 north of Palm Springs, take Hwy. 62 East to the Park Entrance on Quail Springs Road, turn right and drive 5 ¾ miles to the West Entrance Station (fee). Continue on the road for 6 miles to the Back Country parking area on the left (East) side of the road (4037'), just past the Quail Springs Picnic Area.

Hiking Instructions:

Hike north on the signed Scout Trail starting at 4,142' to a post, take the left fork (NW) and continue on the good trail to the West side of Keys Peak (4,120'). This is not the highest peak in the area! A trail post is just across from the peak. At a point NW of Keys summit climb directly up the class 2-3 slope to the summit. Continue climbing directly toward the summit; then go around the left (West) side to avoid class 3 rock. Return the same way

Alternate Route: 5 miles o/w, 2,000' gain and 800' loss, class 2-3 rock scrambling
combines Keys Peak with Mt Mel

Hiking Instructions:

Refer to the Mt. Mel Peak guide. From saddle 3,650' descend the class 2 gully NW to join the Boy Scout trail. Hike this trail East, then South up the (soft sand) wash following signposts for about 1.3 miles (3600' contour) where the trail leaves the gully and climbs for another 1.5 miles to about 4,120'. At a point NW of Keys summit climb directly up the class 2-3 slope to the summit. Continue climbing directly toward the summit; then go around the left (West) side to avoid class 3 rock. Return the same way you came.

If you want to avoid scrambling up the class 2 gully at Mt. Mel, continue on the trail past Mt. Mel, and then cross-country along the North and the East side of the cliffs, first to the East, then to the South, generally through flat open desert, to the parking area. You can also stay on the trail to the beginning of the Boy Scout Trail, where you could leave one car. Both options add 1 more miles to the trip. Navigational skills help!

Notes:

No water on route.

The peak is named after the early pioneer William F. Keys, who raised his family on the Queen Ranch, where he grew crops, grazed cattle and worked nearby mines. He died in 1969, still living on his ranch. The summit provides excellent views to the Wonderland of Rocks. There are remains of an old beacon site on the peak and a Benchmark.

Near-by Peaks: Mt. Mel, Mastodon Peak

Original: Jack Grams 1991

Alternate: George Wysop 2003