

# Spanish Peak

By Shawn Wilson



Photo by Greg Meyer

Spanish Peak and the surrounding area offers fantastic views to the east over Quincy and Meadow Valley.

**History:** The area was home to the Beckwourth Trail, a trail made by James Beckwourth over the mountains for early settlers to cross to the Sacramento Valley. It was first used in 1851 and continued to be used up until 1855 when the railroad supplanted it. The Spanish Peak and Meadow Valley areas were once a heavily mined. The scars from old hydraulic mines near Meadow Valley can still be seen from the top of Spanish Peak. The tailings still fill Spanish Creek in many places as well.

**Description:** Spanish Peak sits atop a granite basin which holds several small lakes including Gold Lake and Silver Lake. The peak itself is situated within Bucks Lake Wilderness. A number of trails run through the area including the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). The abundance of granite in the area provides great opportunities for rock climbing.

**Directions:** From Quincy, head west on Bucks Lake Road. Just past the small community of Meadow Valley, a dirt road heads north toward Silver Lake. It is labeled by a small sign indicating the miles to

Silver Lake. Follow this road to Silver Lake. The road can present interesting obstacles for cars with little clearance but most vehicles can make it to Silver Lake with little trouble.

**Time Needed:** Climbing Spanish Peak can be done in an afternoon, but is far more enjoyable when a whole day is reserved to do it.

**Sun Exposure:** The Gold Lake area gets plenty of sun most of the day, but the sun sets behind the ridge early so be prepared for cool evenings.

**Elevation:** Spanish Peak is 6,975 ft.

**Best Times:** Spanish Peak can be done any time of the year, however the route given here is a fair weather route; it does not take snow into consideration.

**Rating:** I rank this hike at a 4 because of its great views.

**Gear:** Sunscreen, hat, jacket, Gold Lake topo map, compass, food, and plenty of water

**The Hike:** There are many ways to reach the top of Spanish Peak. I highly encourage finding a unique way up to the top as it will make for a great adventure. The peak and the surrounding areas are very interesting, and the Gold Lake area is always a cool spot to scramble around amongst the granite.

I present here my favorite way to get to the top. Once you are parked, head across Silver Lake's dam. Right after the dam there is a fork in the trail. Stay to the left (the right fork leads around the edge of Silver Lake). The trail will head up and away from Silver Lake. Follow this to another fork marked by a 4x4 post. Again, stay to the left. This trail will lead you to Gold Lake. At Gold Lake, you can look up and see the northern tip of Spanish Peak. Here the trail ends and the cross country part of this hike begins. This is also the last place to get water, so tank up if you are running low. Walk to the southern edge of the lake and begin working up a talus slope toward the tree-line above. It is a fun combination of rock hopping and scrambling to reach the tree-line. If you are with a group or there are other people below you, be careful of rock-fall. Once at the top, follow the edge of the trees to the nondescript tip of the peak. A concrete slab lies at the top, all that remains of the lookout. Write a comment in the register and admire the views. Once again, there are many ways back down. Simply to see more country, I prefer to head east on a trail from the peak. This trail connects with the PCT. Head north through old stands of Red Fir along the PCT until you reach the junction with the Granite Gap Trail. This trail can sometimes be hard to spot so keep a lookout for it as it heads down to your right. Due to its infrequent use, it can be hard to follow but the basic idea is to head back down through the granite to Gold Lake. Once there, follow your steps back to the trailhead.