

Hike of the Month



Cuyamaca-Oakzanita Peak Loop—Moderate/Challenging ■ ■
Recommended Level: Cadette, Senior, Ambassador, Adult
Date: April 1-30, 2021
Cost: Free—Self-guided, family hike

Cuyamaca-Oakzanita Peak Loop

Please note that this is a self-guided, family hike (not a troop event.) Please wear masks on the trail if you encounter other people, and follow proper COVID-19 protocols.

Notes:

Because there is little to no tree cover on this route, this hike is best done on a cooler or overcast day. The wildflowers and green meadows should be amazing in May, and ‘The Party Tree’ at Granite Springs Primitive Camp makes an excellent lunch stop. This route can be extended by incorporating other trails (e.g., the Dyer Springs Trail), or shortened considerably by just summiting Oakzanita Peak.

Length: 11+ miles

Difficulty: Moderate—Challenging

Elevation Gain/Loss: 1747’ gain/ 1730’ loss

Driving directions:

Interstate 8 East to Highway 79 north toward Descanso. Follow the signs to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park entrance on Highway 79.

Parking:

No pass is needed for day parking. Parking for Oakzanita Peak is in a dirt lot on the east side of Highway 79, immediately after the signed entrance to the park (and just north of the Oakzanita Springs RV Campground).

General Route:

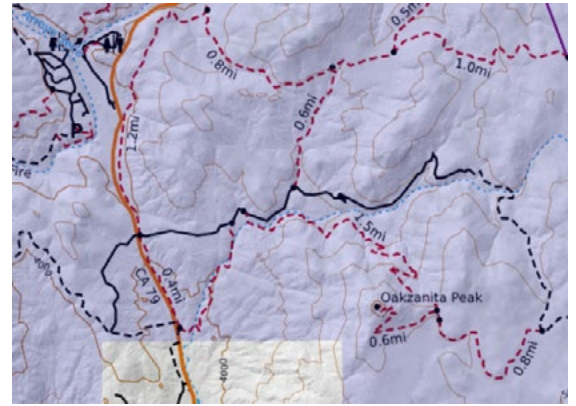
Tackling this route in a counter-clockwise direction is best—climb up Oakzanita Peak while you’re fresh, enjoy the views, and sign the peak register at the top. Continue a mostly flat ramble east and north to the Granite Springs Primitive Camp (great lunch tree). Water at the spring must be treated/filtered. Return via the grassland meadows and the Harvey Moore Trail, and return to your car via the trail that closely follows Highway 79.

Hiking Levels:

■ Easy (all levels of hikers) ■ Moderate (intermediate) ■ Strenuous (experienced only)

Maps:

- **Advanced:** Print your own orientation/size/scale: <https://caltopo.com/m/RS6A/> and type in the name of the hike "Cuyamaca-Oakzanita Peak Loop." At the top of the page, click on "Print", then "Print to a PDF". You might want to print this large map in 2 halves to maximize your view on each section, and adjust to 1:24,000 scale.
- **Easy:** print one PDF map: <https://caltopo.com/p/3U5J>



Bring: [10 +2 Essentials](#)

Specifics: Turn by turn

- From the parking lot, head east on the Lower Descanso Creek Trail.
- At mile 0.7, turn right and join the East Mesa Fire Road for a brief 0.1.
- At mile 0.8, turn right again on the single-track trail and cross Descanso Creek, then continue along the creek for another 1/4 mile or so.
- The trail gently switchbacks up the north side of Oakzanita Peak, and at mile 2.3 turn right at the junction to reach the summit.
- Return to the junction, then turn right (east) to continue onto the Oakzanita-Peak-Trail Connector. Continue straight (north) for 2 miles and follow signs to Granite Springs Camp on the East Mesa Fire Road, passing 3 connector trails along the way.
- Return by re-tracing your steps along East Mesa Fire Road for about 1/4 mile, then head west through the Grasslands to connect with the Harvey Moore Trail. You will pass connector trails for Dyer Springs and the Juaqapin Trail on your right. Ignore the connectors and continue west until *almost* reaching the Sweetwater parking lot. Just before you reach the lot and Highway 79, turn south (left) on the East Side Trail and hike 1.2 miles to your car. You will pass a junction for Green Valley Falls Campground about half way.

Key Risks:

Temperatures have warmed up—be aware:

- Rattlesnakes
- Ticks
- Heat exposure
- Mountain lions

Be safe! Have fun! Share your pictures!

- Send us a picture: [GSSD Backpacking](#)
- Post a picture on the [GSSD Trail Buddies Facebook Page](#) (completion of Wilderness Hiking is a requirement to join this private group. We encourage you to join GSSD Trail Buddies to stay connected to the GSSD hiking and backpacking program, and learn about upcoming hikes, classes, and trips.)

