

96 *Tom K*
5-29-96 *9:30 AM*
 TRAILS OF THE ANGELES

36 Colby Canyon to Strawberry Peak

6 miles round trip; 2600' elevation gain

Classification: Moderate

Season: All year

Topo maps: Condor Peak, Chilao Flat

FEATURES

Highest of all summits of the front range of the San Gabriels is Strawberry Peak, a lump-shaped mass of granite boulders rising 6164' above sea level. Looming far above the Angeles Crest Highway between the Arroyo Seco and Big Tujunga watersheds, its airy crown commands a sweeping vista over mountain and lowland.

Strawberry is the only peak in the front range whose ascent involves more than a plodding walk-up. Its nearly vertical upper ramparts give you a taste of the alpinist's exhilaration, and once on top you'll really know that you've climbed a mountain. There, with slopes tapering precipitously on all sides, you get that top-of-the-world feeling. Many hikers consider it the "fun peak" of the San Gabriels.

The peak was labeled by wags at Switzer's Camp back in the 1880s, who fancied a resemblance to a strawberry standing on its stem. It has been a popular climb as long as modern man has trod the San Gabriels. During the Great Hiking Era (1895-1938), knapsackers chugging over the well-beaten trail between Switzer's and Colby's often made the airy side-trip to take in the rewarding summit pan-orama. It is just as frequented today. Every fair-weather weekend finds climbers by the score testing their stamina and skill on its steep granite spine.

The climb is not particularly difficult for those in good physical condition who have had some experience on class 3 rock. Using proper caution—testing hand and foot holds and moving slowly—you should have little trouble if you follow the route indicated by green arrows painted at intervals on boulders. Lug-soled boots are strongly recommended. Extra care should be taken on the descent, for that is when most accidents occur.

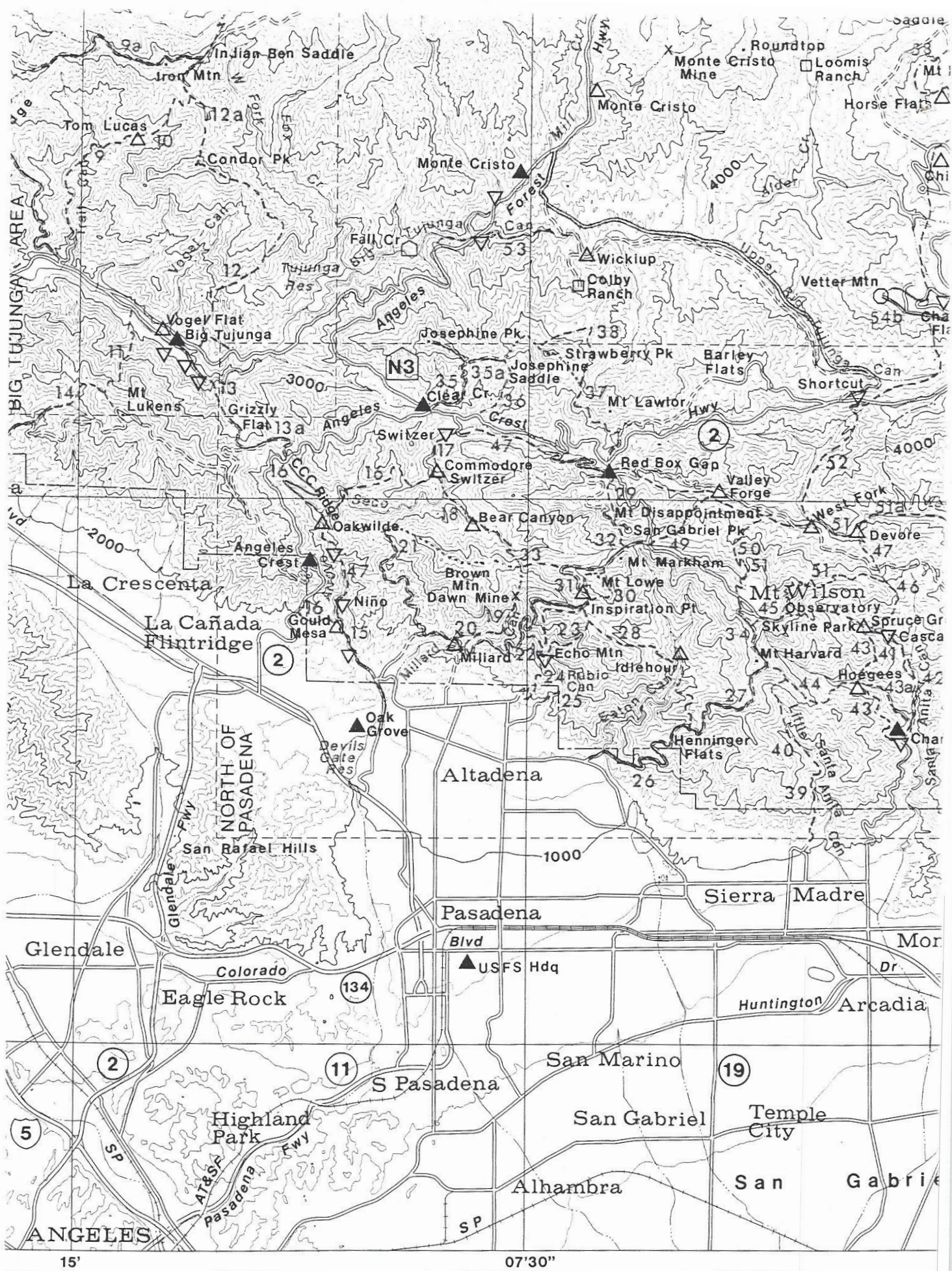
DESCRIPTION

Drive up the Angeles Crest Highway to the Colby Canyon parking area, 11 miles from La Canada and 1 mile

beyond the Angeles Crest-Angeles Forest Highway Junction.

Proceed up the Colby Canyon trail, which starts on the left (west) side of the creek. This trail is one of the historic pathways of the range. It is passable, although eroded in some spots and brushy in others. The trail follows the creek for ¼ mile, then climbs steeply up the right side to bypass several small waterfalls where the canyon narrows. You then drop back into the shady, alder-filled upper canyon before switchbacking up through thorny chaparral to Josephine Saddle, 2 miles from the highway. Here you meet the Strawberry Spur of the Josephine fire road. An alternate way to reach this saddle—½ mile longer but easier going—is to follow the fire road from Clear Creek Ranger Station (see Trip 35).

From Josephine Saddle, the old Colby Trail winds eastward, around the north flank of Strawberry Peak and down to Strawberry Meadow (see Trip 38). Do *not* take this trail; instead climb eastward up a steep climbers' path that ascends the crest of the ridge. About ¼ mile above Josephine Saddle you must negotiate a rocky section of about 75 vertical feet, before continuing along the ridgcrest ¾ mile to the base of Strawberry Peak's imposing granite summit block. Here the faint-of-heart will turn back; the route looks more difficult than it actually is and has some exposure. Follow the faded green arrows painted at intervals on the rock face, gripping firmly and testing hand and foot holds, to the final summit ridge, then scramble a hundred feet to the top.



15'

07'30"