



MOUNT WAAS - GRAND COUNTY HIGHPOINT



Rating: Moderate Hike

Length: 4-6 hours (about 8 miles)

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear

Maps: Warner Lake, UT; Mount Waas, UT

Water: None.

Season: Summer, Fall

Notes: Reaching the trailhead requires a high clearance vehicle, 4x4 strongly recommended. On the Moab jeep road scale of 1-10 (1 being easiest), this road rates a 2. There are several steep and very rocky sections. This could be walked if needed, but will add 2-3 hours to the day (adding about 6 miles round trip, and a fair bit of elevation).

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12S 651654mE 4267038mN N38° 32' 20" W109° 15' 36"
Junction	12S 652270mE 4266221mN N38° 31' 53" W109° 15' 11"
Summit	12S 654448mE 4267119mN N38° 32' 21" W109° 13' 40"

Hype

Between Peale and Waas, the two county high points in the La Sal mountains, Waas is by far my favorite. Good camping at the trailhead, an old mining road that meanders up the majority of the hike to over 12,000', and stunning views make this a winner. The biggest downside to the hike is the approach road that is slow going and a bit difficult.

Miners Basin, where the trailhead is located, has an interesting history. In 1888, copper was discovered in the basin, and in 1898 a mining town was setup. A relatively small number of residents (75-80) called the basin home in the summers until 1908. Copper was simply not profitable enough to keep the town (and mining) in the area going, and the town abandoned. The amount of work that went into carving roads, ferrying supplies, and building a town in such a remote location is astounding.

Note: Some of the basin is private property. A map at the trailhead shows these boundaries.

Tags: county highpoint, peak, hike, wildflowers, fall colors, dog friendly, access: high clearance, access: 4x4

Trailhead

From Moab, go NORTH out of town on US-191. Just outside of town, turn right on UT-128E just before crossing the Colorado River.

Follow UT-128E for 15.5 miles to a turn on the right signed La Sal Loop road or Castle Valley. 10.7 miles from

UT-128E is a junction, go right to stay on the Loop Road. At 15.4 miles from UT-128, the Miners Basin is signed and goes off on the south (left) side of the road.

Follow the jeep road to its end in 3.1 miles, keeping your fingers crossed you don't encounter anybody coming down in the narrow sections. There is a parking area and pit toilet at the trailhead, as well as good camping near a small pond. Beware of bears, there had been sightings in the area when we visited.

Route

Summit: 3758 m (12330 ft.)

Trailhead: 2958 m (9705 ft.)

From the east side of the parking area, follow the trail and it meanders south, joins an old mining road and crosses a stream. Continue on the road (Trans La Sal Trail / Miners Basin Trail #040). After a short 20-30 minutes, the road begins making a hard right (west) around a gully. An old mining road takes off just before this curve. Follow it, going left at the first minor junction.

The old mining road climbs steadily before a switchback. Stay right at the second switchback. The old mining road is visible ahead as it switchbacks up to the ridge. Follow it, ignoring the lesser used side roads. Once at the ridge, go left (north) to the summit of unnamed 12,183 and an old weather station.

From the summit of 12,181, the route descends to the saddle, losing about 300 feet in elevation before many switchbacks lead up the steep, rocky ridge of Waas re-gaining the 300' and an additional 300' of elevation to the summit.

From the summit of Waas, Mt. Peale is just visible to the south west. To the north is Castle Valley, with the prominent skinny tower being Castleton Tower. Return the same way.

