



CRANER PEAK - WEST DESERT



Rating: Easy hiking.

Length: 2-3 hours (about 2 miles)

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear

Maps: Craner Peak, UT;

Water: None, bring all you will need.

Season: Winter

Notes: For some reason the USGS maps for this area are heavily shaded and a bit hard to read. Navigation is pretty straightforward however. 4wd is recommended to get all the way to the trailhead, however those with high clearance or 2wd can drive as far as comfortable and hike the rest.

Waypoints:

Trailhead

12T 347634mE 4526657mN
N40° 52' 37" W112° 48' 30"

Summit

12T 346597mE 4527030mN
N40° 52' 48" W112° 49' 14"

Hype

Is Craner Peak the most dangerous mountain in Utah to hike?!?!? A bit sensational, but from my experience, quite possibly. At a mere 2019 m (6625 ft.), this is an easy peak to bag and probably of interest to most people only because it is close to the Wasatch Front, and #82 on Utah's list of 100 peaks by prominence. The hike is unremarkable, and the summit a bit humdrum, though the views along the way of the Great Salt Lake and West Desert are pretty.

So what makes this one so dangerous? Diane, Lucy and I hiked it one winter day, ignoring the road side kiosk on the way in. As we descended back to the trailhead, we noticed a smoke in the air and wondered if there was a brush fire somewhere, though it had a bit of an odd smell. I blamed a cough on the mix of dry air and smoke, and we headed back to Salt Lake, this time stopping at the information kiosk to see what it said. Craner Peak is very near MagCorp, a magnesium refining plant on the shore of the Great Salt Lake. The information kiosk warns potential public lands users to limit time spent in the area due to Chlorine and Hydrogen Chloride gas releases. Yikes! Turns out Craner Peak is within a stones throw of an EPA superfund site. (<http://www2.epa.gov/region8/us-magnesium>)

I don't recommend hiking Craner Peak, and if I had stopped at the kiosk on the way in, probably would not have continued. That being said, if your trying to summit the 100 highest prominence peaks in Utah, this one will be on your list and described here is the shortest route up. Good luck!

Tags: *peak, hike, access: high clearance*

Trailhead

From the Wasatch front, go west on I-80 toward Nevada. Take exit 77 and go north off the highway. Follow the paved two lane road (Rowley Rd) as it follows the highway west for a short distance before heading north and passing the BLM warning sign as it heads toward the magnesium processing plant.

At mile marker 12.5, a dirt road goes off on the left. Reset your odometer as you leave the paved road.

- 0.9 miles - Corral on the left, at a junction. Go right at this junction. Stay on the main road as it heads north along the foot of the mountains.
- 3.7 miles - 4-way junction. Go left here.
- 4.0 miles - road enters a gravel pit. Stay on the right here.
- 4.1 miles - side road goes off on the right. Take this. If you reached the gravel pit, you have gone too far.
- 4.8 miles - Go right at the junction. The road deteriorates a bit from here. Those without 4wd may need to stop short of the trailhead and hike part of the road.
- 6.5 miles - End of the road at Craner Spring. This is the trailhead.

Note: The junction at 4.0 miles crosses private property. The BLM has an easement. **Be sure to NOT end up in the gravel pit or you will be trespassing.**

Route

Summit: 2019 m (6625 ft.)

Trailhead: 1588 m (5210 ft.)

From the spring, it is easiest to follow the cow trail up the ridge just to the south of the spring. The trail follows the ridge, then descends north into the drainage and works its way west up to the ridgeline that runs to the summit of Craner Peak. Once at the ridge line, take in the amazing views of the west desert, then it is an easy and short hike north to the summit. Return the same way.

