



MOUNT WATSON - WESTERN UINTAS



Rating: Moderate Hike

Length: 3-4 hours

Gear: Standard Hiking Gear

Maps: Mirror Lake, UT;

Water: Filterable along much of the trail.

Season: Summer, Fall

Waypoints:

Trailhead	12T 503097mE 4503433mN N40° 40' 54" W110° 57' 48"
Jct - Right	12T 502706mE 4503598mN N40° 40' 60" W110° 58' 05"
Cliff Lake	12T 502780mE 4504018mN N40° 41' 13" W110° 58' 02"
Clyde Lake	12T 502298mE 4505518mN N40° 42' 02" W110° 58' 22"
Divide Lakes	12T 502242mE 4505872mN N40° 42' 14" W110° 58' 24"
Summit	12T 501704mE 4505278mN N40° 41' 54" W110° 58' 47"

Hype

An extension to the Cliff/Clyde Lake hike, Mount Watson is a very worthwhile addition for the motivated hiker. The peak, looming above the many lakes in the area, offers fantastic views. See the Cliff/Clyde Lakes hike for more information on looping back via Twin Lakes. An ascent of Watson and out via Wall Lake makes for a pleasant 3/4 of a day for fit groups.

Though very highly recommended, I would rate this an intermediate hike. The peak has no clearly defined trail in many sections and requires decent route finding skills. The mountain offers many options for reaching the summit, but with a little care, a straightforward and safe path of least resistance can be found. Be prepared for some potential boulder hopping and/or steep loose sections depending on the route you choose. Two routes are described here, our up route which had big talus hopping, and our descent route which was steeper and more loose.

Note: Be very mindful of afternoon thunderstorms! They are common in the Uinta Mountains and this is not the place to be when lightning begins popping. I'd recommend an early start.

Note: Though you'll notice Abseil "Abby" McGee in the pictures, this is NOT a recommended hike for dogs. The loose and big talus are incredibly difficult for them. Though Abby did an admirable job on our visit, it was not without a bit of carrying over the difficult spots and helping her route find down. Had I known the difficulties ahead of time, I would not have brought her.

Tags: peak, wildflowers, fall colors, advanced, access: paved

Trailhead

Note: The Mirror Lake highway that is used to access this hike is closed in the winter. The gate is typically open from Memorial Day until late October, but if planning this hike on the shoulder season, call the forest service to see if it is open. ((801) 466-6411)

The trailhead is the Crystal Lake Trailhead off the Mirror Lake highway. This is at milepost 25.5, which is 25.5 from Kamas Utah on highway 150 or about 52 miles south of Evanston Wyoming on Highway 150. The trail will likely be very snowy until late June in most years.

At milepost 25.5, turn left onto the paved road signed from Trial Lake and Crystal Lake Trailhead. Stay left a short distance from the highway, but take the second right 0.7 miles from the highway. Follow this 0.5 miles to its end at the Crystal Lake Trailhead.

The trailhead has a pit toilet and a large parking. There are also several campground in the area.

Route

The Clyde Lake / Divide Lakes (2.1 miles / 1 hour) :

Follow the wide trail that used to be an old road west from the trailhead. It reaches a signed junction in a few minutes. Go right toward Cliff/Clyde Lakes. The trail meanders past Cliff, Petit, and Watson lakes before climbing above treeline to Clyde Lake and the nearby Divide Lakes. The Divide Lakes are situated on the northeast ridge of Mount Watson.

To The Summit (0.7 miles / 1 hour):

From the Divide Lakes area, the northeast ridge of Mount Watson is very evident. Begin by climbing up the east side of the northeast ridge. It is easy passage up to the ridge on social/game trails. Pick the path of least resistance aiming for the ridge.

Once on the ridge, we crossed over to the west side of the northeast ridge and hiked a shallow talus filled gully as high as possible. Once the gully runs out, exit up and left to the ridge and a social trail. Follow the social trail to the summit. This section is fairly well-traveled and easy to follow.

The summit offers excellent views of the many lakes below Watson Peak, North Peak to the north, Bald Mountain to the northeast, and even Mount Timpanogos far in the distance along the Wasatch Front.

Alternate Down (0.6 miles / 30 minutes):

From the summit, social trails work off the summit to the east. Be sure to give the route a good look before heading down. We traversed down and a bit north, then zig-zagged down through the upper cliff sections. With route finding, this is class 3 or class 4 and not terribly exposed. If you end up on an exposed section, reverse your steps and find a better route!

Once down the first steep section, the paths tend to coalesce a bit and descend a steep, loose gully. Carefully work down this, then the slope lessens and there are many options down to the base.

Return via the approach trail.

