

65 Mt. Williamson from Angeles Crest Highway

5 miles round trip; 1600' elevation gain

Classification: Moderate

Season: June-October

Topo map: Crystal Lake

FEATURES

8214-foot Mt. Williamson stands tall and massive, jutting northward from the main crest of the range like a bold sentinel guarding the green high country from the withering influence of the desert 5000' below. It is buttressed on the south by formidable cliffs, through which the Angeles Crest Highway tunnels, and on the north it plunges abruptly down to that fantastic jumble of whitish rocks known as the Devils Punchbowl.

The mountain is named for Lieutenant Robert Stockton Williamson of the U.S. Army, who led a reconnaissance of the north slopes of the San Gabriels for the Pacific Railroad Survey in 1853. He was looking for a railway route across the mountains. (Williamson didn't fail. He located *two* railway routes across the mountains—Soledad Pass and Cajon Pass.) The report he submitted to Congress contained the first detailed description of the desert side of the range.

From the summit of Mt. Williamson, you get an eagle's eye view of the broken country explored by this army officer more than a century ago. It has changed much, but the strange geological features—the scarps, bee-line valleys, troughs, sag ponds, and most of all the twisted and folded rocks of the Devil's Punchbowl—are the same. Mt. Williamson towers directly above the San Andreas Rift Zone, the most monumental earthquake fault in the United States. Its unique pattern is readily observable to any who walk a short distance north from the summit and look down. The fault line can be seen extending along the entire northern base of the San Gabriels, from northwest to southeast. Only from Mt. Williamson or from high points along Pleasant View Ridge immediately to the northwest do you get this perspective.

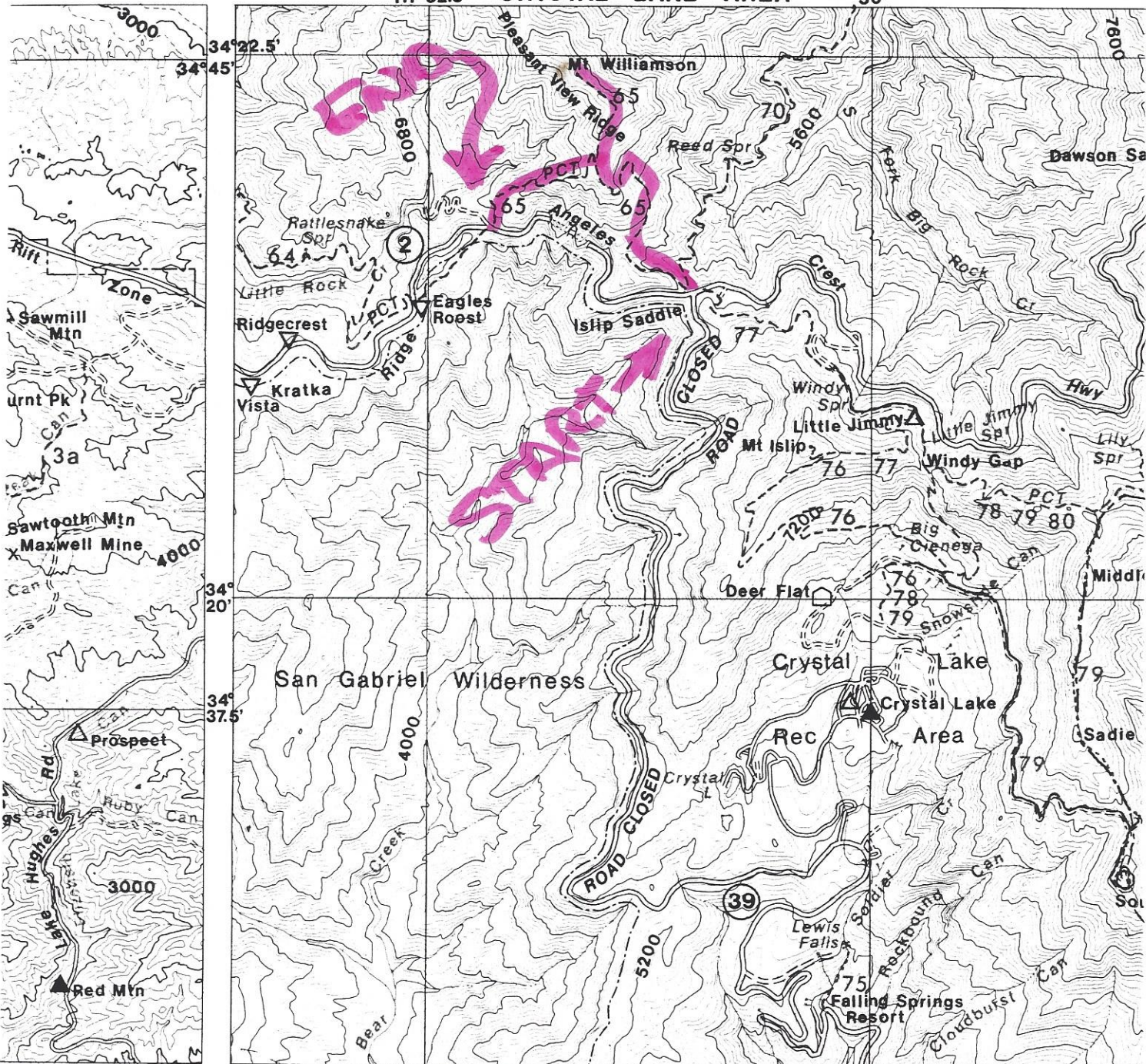
DESCRIPTION

You can start up Mt. Williamson from either of two points along the Angeles Crest Highway, roughly 40 miles from La Canada. One is an unnamed saddle 2.4 miles east of the Kratka Ridge ski area, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west of the tunnels; the other is Islip Saddle, 1.6 miles farther east. From both places trails ascend to the south ridge of Williamson. If you can arrange a car shuttle, go up one way and down the other.

From the unnamed, unsigned saddle beyond Kratka Ridge, follow the dirt road uphill 100 yards, then turn right onto the trail that switchbacks up Williamson's southwest ridge. You pass through an open forest of Jeffrey and ponderosa pine, with white fir becoming more abundant as you near 8000'. In about 2 miles you reach the ridgetop and meet the trail coming up from Islip Saddle. From this point you are rewarded with a superb view southward, directly into the rugged trench of Bear Canyon, 3000' below. To reach the summit, follow a faint trail northward along the ridge, climbing over several bumps to the 8214' high point overlooking the desert. This point is shown as the summit on the topo map, although a bump $\frac{1}{4}$ mile northwest is 30' higher and offers a better view of the Devils Punchbowl country.

If you start from Islip Saddle, take the trail that leads northwest up the ridge. After slightly less than 2 miles of steady climbing, you reach the ridgetop and meet the above-described trail coming up from the west.

117°52.5' CRYSTAL LAKE AREA 50'



118°12.5' 117°52.5' 10' 50' 0'

