

Strawberry Fest

April 25, 2001

Strawberry - peaks, springs, and berries - what could be finer on an April morning.

Our trailhead is Red Box, at the junction of the Angeles Crest Highway and the Mt. Wilson turn off (about 14 miles from the 210 freeway). About 100 feet beyond the parking lot, our trail begins angling northeast above the highway. The trail turns left, up a deep oak covered canyon, and then left again up a firebreak. At a little less than 1 mile, we reach a small saddle due South of the Mt. Lawlor summit.

The trail then gains very little elevation as it contours from Mt. Lawlor's South to West flank. As we begin this slightly more than a mile traverse, we have views of the Clear Creek drainage and the highway winding several hundred feet below us. A ridge that culminates in the antenna festooned Mt. Lukens dominates the westward view, in front of us. Later as we round a major ridge, Strawberry Peak is before us. At 6164 feet Strawberry Peak is the apex of the San Gabriel Front Range. At the 2-mile point we reach the major saddle point between Lawlor and Strawberry. It's probably a bit early, but this is a good place for a cookie break and to ponder our individual destinies - are we a springer or a peaker.

Springers will continue on the main trail, through the gap, and will begin a modest northward decent along Strawberry Peak's East flank. We will encounter a couple of downed trees but they are only a minor impediment. Shortly after a major rocky dry canyon, we will encounter a more heavily oak and pine forested one, that is home to Strawberry Spring. The signed, mini-torrent is 410 feet below and 1.1 miles from the saddle. While at the spring ensure that there is some quiet time, so that the medicinal values of the sound of running water can be fully absorbed. Return via the same trail.

Peakers will follow the "use" trail up the somewhat left sweeping ridge to the Strawberry summit. As with many use trails, ours has the characteristics of uneven grade, steep sections, step-ups, foliage issues, and mini trail decisions. The end result is that the 1200 feet and 1.25 miles past the saddle are a bit deceptive. On the positive side the ridge has numerous small knolls and saddles that supply good views, a place to take a deep breath, and a logical turnaround point should one decide that they are a "partial peaker". Summiteers should register and find time while on top, to go an additional 150 feet West, for views down into Colby Canyon and of the North side of Strawberry. These observations will convince one that we have achieved the summit the only easy way. (The path to the summit from Colby Canyon is discussed in at least one guidebook, but it is characterized as being class 3.) We will descend via the accent route.

Summary:

Strawberry Spring or Peak from Red Box.	Start at 9:30, Ron Obert leader
Spring round trip, 6.2 miles,	1000 feet elevation gain
Peak round trip	6.5 miles, 1800 feet elevation gain