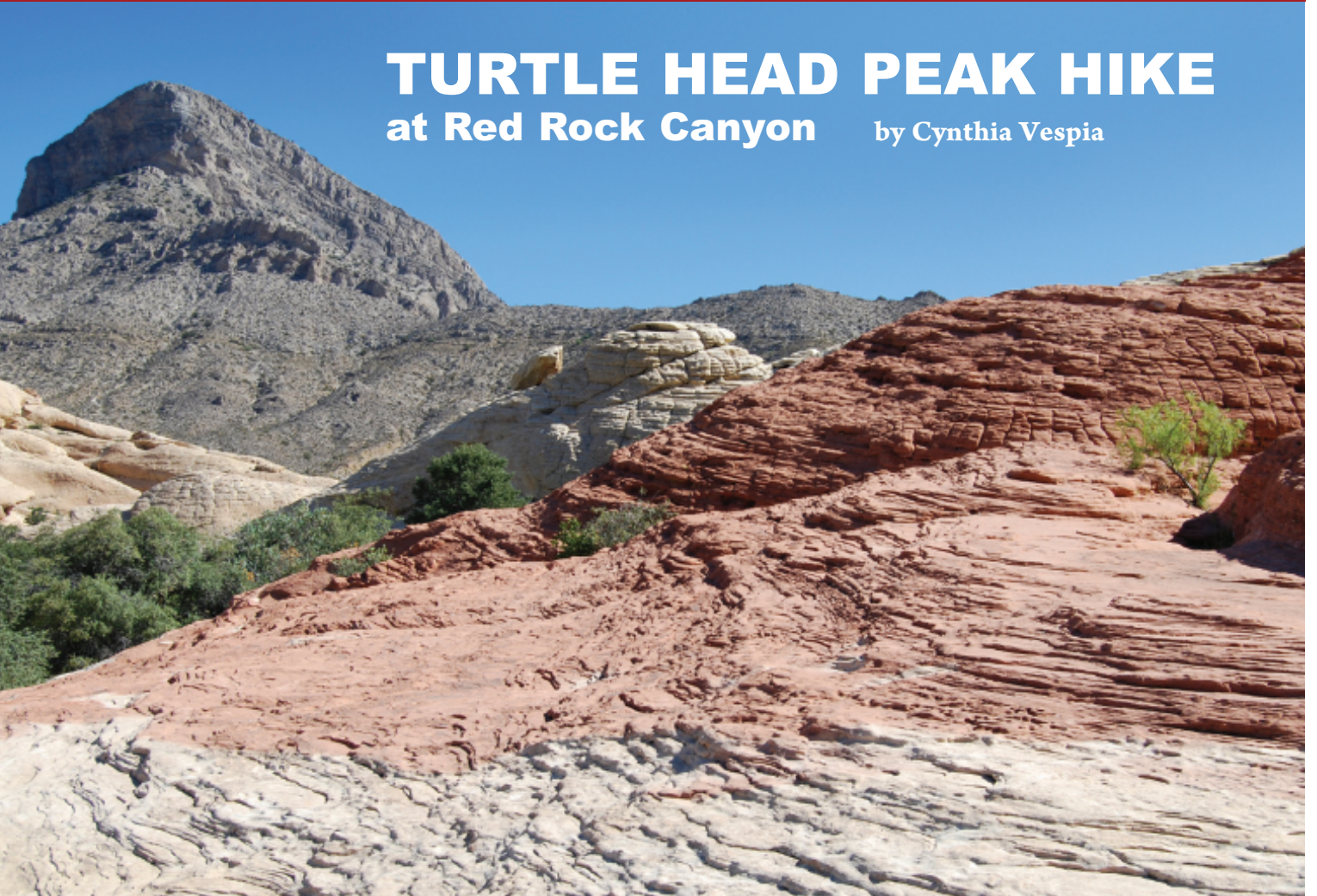


# TURTLE HEAD PEAK HIKE

at Red Rock Canyon     by Cynthia Vespia



Some things in life just need to be experienced first hand to be appreciated. Driving around Las Vegas you've no doubt seen the mountain structure out at Red Rock that is shaped like a turtle at the top. For those that don't know, this is Turtle Head Peak.

This is pretty much a "must do" trek to tackle for all hikers. This hike starts at Sandstone Quarry, follows a wash northward for most of a mile, turns east to climb hillsides and a gully to the summit ridge, and then follows the summit ridge south to the peak. At only 5 miles, it is one of the shortest distance hikes but it is also fairly difficult due to the steepness and a lot of scrambling around boulders to get to the top.

Sometimes the shortest distance to the top is not straight up, if there's a trail follow it. Trying to cut through to the top left me with scratches from random trees and bushes with a lot of extra effort on my end.

Depending what time of year you go it can either get very hot or very cold on the way up. Redrock can get icy which has caused me to slip in the past. Always make sure your footing is under you. Three miles

from the top I decided to run it. When you reach the top it is very sweet when you get there so keep moving, don't quit halfway it's worth it. Now at the top is the time to take it all in. The view to the south overlooks Sandstone Quarry and most of the route to the summit. To the north lies the La Madre Range and the grand south face of La Madre peak. To the west lies the red and white sandstone of the Wilson Cliffs and their overly-

ing limestone ridges. Las Vegas lies to the southeast in all its glory. The distinction of The Strip is unmistakable from anywhere in the world. And right now on Turtle Head Peak you are on top of the world. The city, the world, and your troubles are miles away so breath it all in before heading back down. Take your time up there, you've earned it. This trail is not just a simple stroll, it takes some effort and some doing but it is a great deal of fun.

At the very top of the peak is a sign-in book inside an old ammo can. It's a distinct pleasure and privilege to add your name to those who came before you and say you made it to the top, you're *the king of the world*, *Yo Adrian, you did it!*

The easiest way down is to retrace your steps, stay close on the ridgeline on the

summit slopes and to the middle through the gully. It's very steep and somehow going down was harder than climbing up due to the pressure on the knees. Plan your trip wisely. If it's a long way up it's a long way back down. The ambitious can make it in and out in a little over 2 hrs. There are great views of the Las Vegas Valley all the way up so take your time to enjoy the scenery around you. The particular day that I tackled Turtle Head I distinctly remember the sun just setting as I made my way back down the hill. It was a sweet sight and that I had to pause to take in. I felt like I was staring at Heaven and if I listened closely enough I could hear the voice of God talking to me...no lie.

*Writer, Author and Personal Trainer, Cynthia Vespia at the top of Turtle Head Peak*



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### CYCLING

- **BICYCLE NEVADA WEBSITE:** Get up to date info on tours, events, laws and links to other cycling sites at: 775-888-RIDE [www.bicyclenevada.com](http://www.bicyclenevada.com)
- **BOOTLEG CANYON MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK:** Just minutes outside Las Vegas. Home to over 30 miles of winding singletrack trails. They offer professional guided trips and bike rentals. [www.bootlegcanyon.org](http://www.bootlegcanyon.org)
- **NELLIS BMX:** Member of the National Bicycle League. Open to all ages. Hotline 453-1663. [www.nellisbmx.com](http://www.nellisbmx.com).
- **RED ROCK RACERS:** Affiliated with USA Track & Field. For ages 7-17. Email [RRRacers@aol.com](mailto:RRRacers@aol.com).
- **LAS VEGAS CYCLERY – CYCLING & TRIATHLON CLUB:** Group workouts, rides, clinics & coaching. Equipped to support triathlon workouts w/ bike storage & transition areas. Club is suited for all levels & abilities of riding & racing. Group rides offer post ride food, happy hour socials, training clinics. 8221 W. Charleston Blvd. 800-596-2953 [www.escapeadventures.com](http://www.escapeadventures.com)
- **BRIANHEAD RESORT MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK:** Call 435-586-5210. Voted one of the best, unique & most unusual mountain bike resorts by Mountain Bike Action magazine. Bikers can access 200 miles of single & double track trails. [www.brianhead.com](http://www.brianhead.com)
- **CEDAR CYCLE:** Full service shop. Offers mountain & road bike rentals. 435-586-5210 or visit: [www.cedarcycle.com](http://www.cedarcycle.com)

- **UTAH MOUNTAIN BIKING:** Their website will list trail rides for all of Utah including nearly 40 for the St. George area. Visit: [utahmountainbiking.com](http://utahmountainbiking.com)

### HIKING

- **GREAT WEBSITES FOR LOCAL HIKING:** Small fee for obtaining detailed information. Great source for hiking in Southern Nevada. Go to [www.hikinglasvegas.com](http://www.hikinglasvegas.com) to get self-guided hike directions to over 348 hikes in Red Rock, Mt. Charleston, Lake Mead and other areas.
- **Also visit:** [www.nevadadventures.com](http://www.nevadadventures.com) [www.redrockcanyonlv.org](http://www.redrockcanyonlv.org)
- **RED ROCK CANYON HIKING OUTFITTER:** Private guided hikes and rock scrambles in Red Rock Canyon. Ask about specials for locals. 702-393-HIKE. [www.hikethislasvegas.com](http://www.hikethislasvegas.com)
- **RED ROCK CANYON INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION:** The Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association is a non-profit association whose main purpose is to enhance the recreational, educational & interpretive programs of the Bureau of Land Management. Naturalists working for the Association provide guided hikes, walks, & other programs for visitors to Red Rock Canyon. All hikes are family oriented & start at the visitor center unless otherwise specified. For reservations 702-515-5367 between 8am & 4pm. Recommended that you wear a hat, comfortable shoes and dress for the weather. The recommended amount of water & proper footwear are a must to participate in all hikes! Bring at least two quarts of water during the summer months. Parents must accompany children on all programs!

### HIKING CLUBS

- **Sierra Club's Toiyabe Chapter** 363-3267. <http://nevada.sierraclub.org/sngroup/>
- **Adventure Recreation Club** 650-2629 to
- **Outback Hiking Club of Southern Utah.** On the internet at [www.ohcosu.com](http://www.ohcosu.com)
- **HIKING "SENIORS IN MOTION:"** Hikes are scheduled 3 times per month & destinations include Mt. Charleston, Valley of Fire, Red Rock Canyon and the Lake Mead area. Call 229-6307.
- **HIKE THE SCENIC RIVER MOUNTAINS OVERLOOKING LAKE MEAD:** Guides will lead you through the scenic River Mountains overlooking Lake Mead, the Las Vegas Valley, Boulder City and Eldorado Basin. Half day or full day trips are offered. You can choose two half day activities for one full day of fun. 800-748-3702. [bouldercityoutfitters.com](http://bouldercityoutfitters.com)

### HORSE RIDING

- **COWBOY TRAIL RIDES:** Hay rides, birthday rides, sunset rides, western BBQs, group parties. Open daily. Reservations required. 387-2457 or visit: [www.cowboytrailrides.com](http://www.cowboytrailrides.com)
- **SANDY VALLEY RANCH:** Riding instructions and a day and a half on the trail. Sandy Valley Ranch Chuck Wagon feasts: 2 lunches, breakfast, and dinner. Campfire stories and cowboy entertainment. Only corporate packages. 702-255-7948 / [www.sandyvalleyranch.com](http://www.sandyvalleyranch.com)
- **RED ROCK RIDING STABLES:** Located at Bonnie Springs / Old Nevada. 702-875-4191.

- **ZION HORSEBACK TOURS:** Explore the beauty of Zion National Park atop a horse. [www.zionhorseback.com](http://www.zionhorseback.com) / 1-800-293-5444.
- **RED ROCK RIDE:** Ride in Zion, Bryce Canyon, Red Canyon, Paria and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. [www.redrockride.com](http://www.redrockride.com)
- **ROCKIN' BAR-A CATTLE DRIVE'S:** Located just northwest of Cedar City, Utah in Beaver County. They provide authentic cattle drive adventures and horseback riding trips. If you don't want the cattle drive, the lodge is available for rent for family gatherings and business seminars. Horses are available for rent or you can bring your own. Call 435-386-2236. [www.rockinacattledrive.com](http://www.rockinacattledrive.com)

### ROCK CLIMBING

- **ROCK CLIMBING SCHOOLS:** Jackson Hole Mountain Guides and Climbing School, 254-0885. [www.jhmg.com](http://www.jhmg.com)
- **IN-DOOR ROCK CLIMBING GYMS:** Nevada Climbing Centers 898-8192, 3065 E. Patrick Ln. Suite 4 Las Vegas.
- **RED ROCK CLIMBING CENTER / OUTDOOR GUIDE SERVICE:** 254-5604, 8201 W. Charleston. [www.redrockclimbingcenter.com](http://www.redrockclimbingcenter.com)
- **PARAGON CLIMBING INSTRUCTION:** Rock climbing school in Southern Utah. They offer comprehensive training, equipment and patient instructors. Call 188-412-5462. Located in St. George, Utah. [www.paragonclimbing.com](http://www.paragonclimbing.com)