

PICACHO PEAK 1920+ FEET CLASS 6

See important note at end of this guide! (2/13/19)

MILEAGE: 307 miles of paved road, 14.55 miles of excellent dirt

DRIVE/ROUTE A: From El Centro, CA drive approximately 55 miles E on California Interstate 8 to the "Winterhaven Drive, Fourth Avenue" exit (This exit is about 2 miles W of Yuma, AZ). Turn N over the interstate to a stop sign at signed, paved County Road S24. Turn right on S24, following it 3.7 miles to where it turns right (E) at Ross Road. Leave S24 here and continue straight (N) 0.7 miles to the end of pavement, picking up an excellent dirt road that is followed 0.35 miles N then E to a spillway bridge just S of the All American Canal. A sign here reads "Picacho State Recreation Area, 18 miles". Cross the spillway bridge and turn left, crossing a second bridge over the canal. Continue N approximately 13.4 miles to a signed fork at the entrance to the Picacho Mine. Large tailings piles and chain link fences on the left (W) side of the road appear as you near this fork. Bear right and drive 0.8 miles to a wide spot in the road at Little Picacho Wash. Park. Any 2WD vehicle can make it to this spot.

NOTE: Because of the complex route description for "Little Picacho", this writeup is broken down into two segments, the hiking approach (Routes A & B) and the actual climb itself (Same by either approach).

APPROACH/ROUTE A: From the parking area walk 0.2 miles SW up Little Picacho Wash to a fork. Take the right (W) branch, following it about 2.0 miles to a point 0.4 miles SSE of the peak. Climb NW to a saddle at 1200+ feet elevation. Follow a good use trail N from here along the base of cliffs to the deep gully on Picacho's W side. This gully forms the division between the peak on the right and two sheer pinnacles on the left. Follow the faint trail up this steep gully to a large notch.

CLIMB/ROUTES A & B: From the notch climb right, zigzagging up ledges to the base of a sheer rock wall above, where you'll turn left and follow a worn path to a 12 foot high, Class 4 step. A short wooden ladder is found here. (As of 12/26/17 this ladder was cracked and repaired with some webbing.) Once above this step the next major obstacle presents itself, a 3 foot wide jump-across that has turned back more than one climber! Most people will probably want a rope here; a long drop into a dark slot if you miss. As a suggestion, fix and leave one 45 meter rope here to secure the jump across and provide a top belay for the preceding 12 foot step move. This way a large group can pass these obstacles quickly on both ascent and descent. A rock horn on one side of the jump across and a large boulder on the other side are the only two natural anchors to protect this move. It is also possible to climb down into the slot beneath the jump-across and work your way to the opposite side. Once safely past this challenging barrier, follow ducked ledges to a 10 foot overhang. An aluminum ladder here offers aid past the overhang. Because the ladder is somewhat unstable, the leader will probably want to fix and leave a rope here for top belaying the group. There are two good belay anchor (bolted D-hangers) available above the overhang. If you choose to do this overhang without using the ladder, it's a high 5th Class pitch. Above the overhang climb up then right around a point, heading SE past a shallow cave and on to the false summit block. The false summit block can be tackled in two ways. First, it can be climbed on its N side via an exposed 15 foot face of Class 4 rock. Once atop the block, three bolted D-hangers can be found to secure and leave a rope for the 15 foot downclimb or rappel (and upclimb on the descent) on its S side, after which it's just a hands-in-

PICACHO PEAK (CONTINUED)

pocket stroll to the register. A pair of 5-step etriers come in handy on the S side of the false block to aid in its re-ascent after returning from the peak. Alternately, the false summit can be bypassed on its E side by descending 30 to 40 feet on awkward Class 4+ exposed rock to a worn path which is followed upward through a distinctive window (hole through the rock). Once through the window, follow the path S to the highpoint. A good belay spot just N of the false summit can be used to protect this downclimb on the E side.

DRIVE/ROUTE B: Follow **DRIVE/ROUTE A** directions to the fork at the Picacho Mine entrance. Bear right at the fork and drive 2.0 miles to a dirt road turnoff on the left (W). Turn left (W) here, passing a BLM Limited Use Area sign and brown stake road marker A278. Drive 3.0 miles W on A278 to a fork just before the road climbs steeply out of a wash. Bear left and drive 0.35 miles up a side wash to where progress is barred by brush and rocks. Park. This drive is for high clearance vehicles only. 4WD, although not actually required, would make it easier in some of the sandier spots.

APPROACH/ROUTE B: Picacho Peak is visible at a bearing of 155° from the vehicle parking area. Hike 0.5 miles S up the wash, then 0.25 miles SE towards the mountain, where you'll pick up a trail that leads to the steep chute on Picacho's W side. Follow this chute to the large notch separating Picacho from its lower western neighbor. Follow the **CLIMB/ROUTES A & B** directions from this notch to the summit.

ROUND TRIP STATS/ROUTE A: 1500 feet elevation gain, 6 miles, 8 hours

ROUND TRIP STATS/ROUTE B: 1250 feet elevation gain, 2+ miles, 6 hours

SIDELINES

1. Picacho Peak is the most technically difficult ascent described in this guide book. It should not be attempted by any group weak in rock climbing skills or having inadequate equipment. Each climber should have a seat harness with either one locking or two opposing carabiners and a Figure-8 rappel ring. In addition, larger groups as a whole should have at least 4 each 9mm diameter (or larger) x 45 meter long ropes (3 can be fixed as described above), 6 each slings of 12 foot long x 1" nylon webbing, 6 carabiners and 2 5-step etriers (optional but handy). Climbing helmets, as always, are recommended.

2. Picacho Peak is commonly called "Little Picacho" among DPS climbers. This is to distinguish it from El Picacho del Diablo in Baja California, which the same climbers routinely refer to as "Big Picacho". The issue is further confused because there is a peak N of Picacho Peak named Little Picacho and another to the NE named Little Picacho Peak. Actually, a historical search into the naming of this peak turns up some interesting facts. In 1775, Father Pedro Font, a Spanish missionary named the peak La Campana, figuring that it looked like a mission bell. Eight decades later, in 1858, Lieut. Joseph C. Ives sailed up the Colorado River above Yuma in a steamship and, upon seeing the crag called it Chimney Peak. The

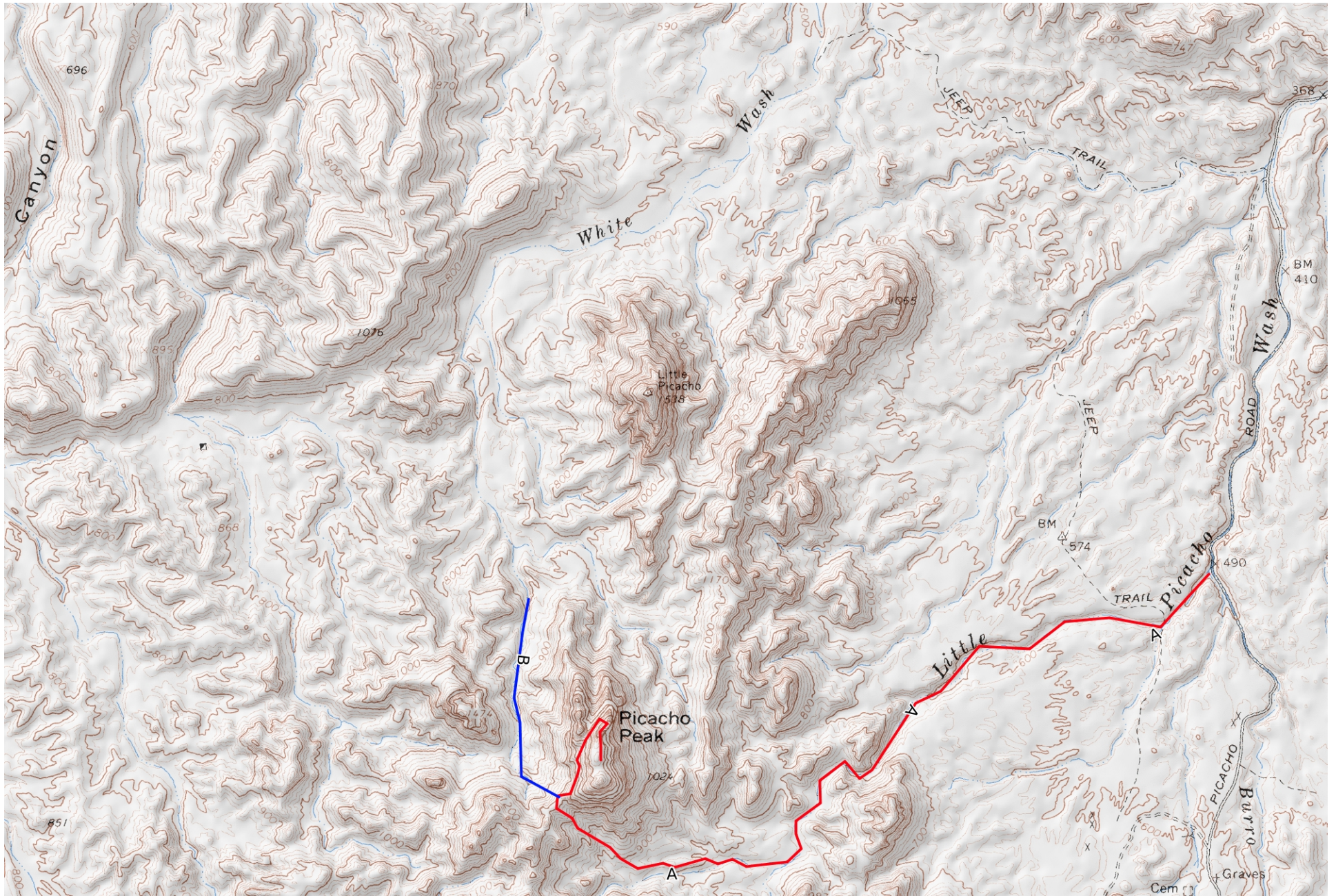
PICACHO PEAK (CONTINUED)

Mexican miners who came to the area in search of gold a few years later simply called it El Picacho, The Peak.

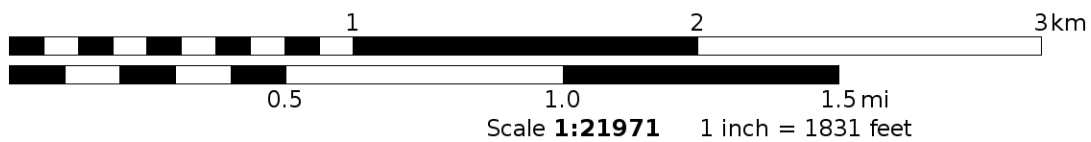
3. During the long Thanksgiving weekend of 1947, the Desert Peaks Section of the Sierra Club made its first large group ascent of Picacho Peak. Under the leadership of Randall Henderson and Roy Gorin (Gorin of Gorins Gully on El Picacho del Diablo in Baja) the DPS put 10 members on the summit, a feat unmatched up to that time. The proud ascenders were Roy Gorin, Randall Henderson, William G. Johnson, A.D. Hamilton, Jack Adams (age 12), Louis B. Mousley, Bradley and Roger Janetzky and Bill Yinger. A detailed account of their expedition is found in the April 1948 issue of Desert Magazine. As would be expected, they took the same climbing route that we use today.

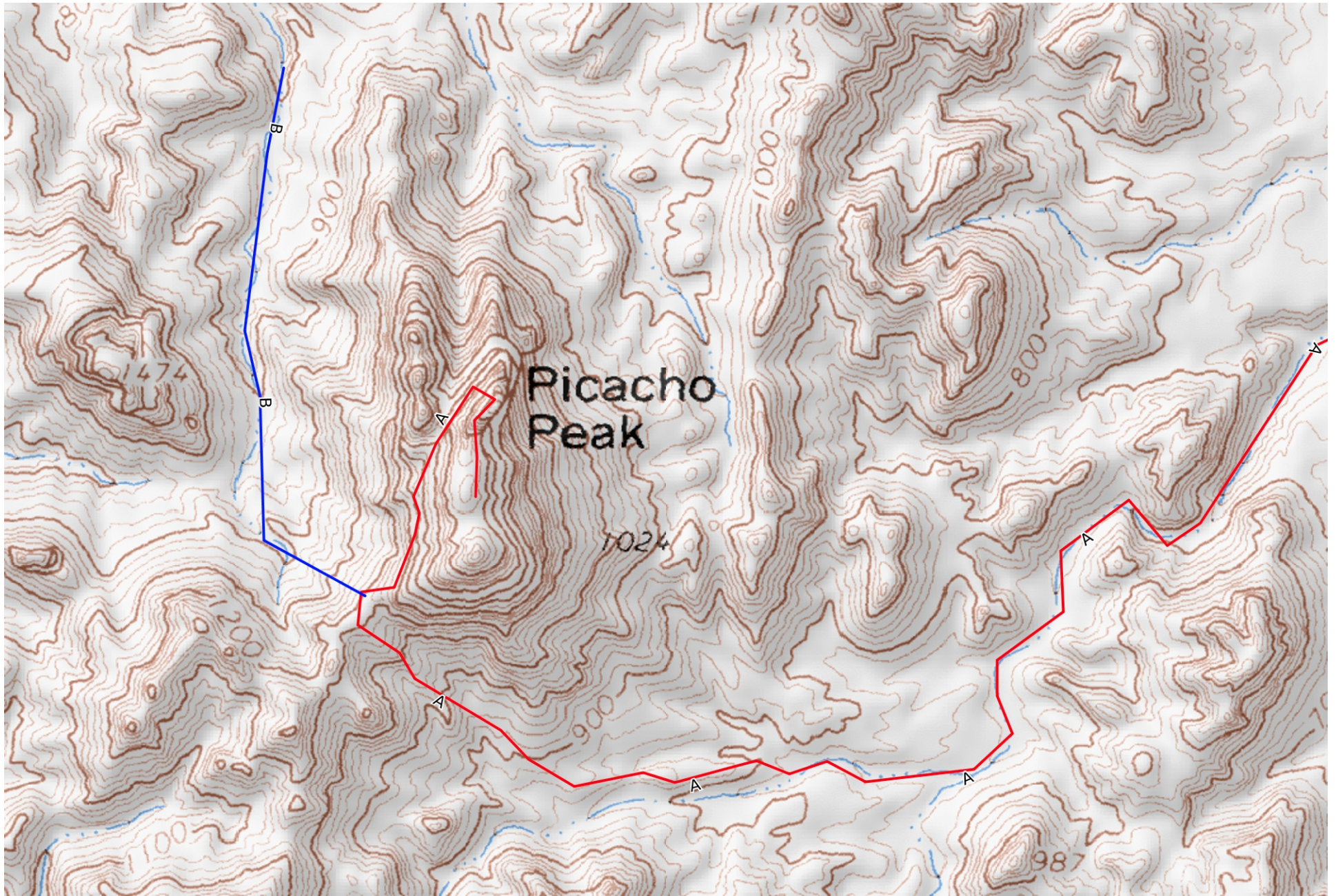
Revised 2/13/19

PICACHO PEAK (AKA LITTLE PICACHO) UPDATE - Feb 2019: The DPS received a report about worn-out and dangerous bolts on the false summit of DPS listed Picacho Peak located in Imperial County. One bolt failed on a recent climb of the peak, and an adjoining bolt is loose. Climbers are urged to exercise extreme caution and not take any undue risk when climbing the peak. Do not depend on these bolts to protect you from a fall!



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