



[Roam-O-Rama](#)

Climb Morena Butte's three-peaked summit for great views of Lake Morena and the border region.

By [Jerry Schad](#) | Published Thursday, Oct. 18, 2001

Morena Butte's three-peaked summit plateau presides over a diverse landscape of V-shaped canyons, rock-strewn ridges, and grassy depressions known as potreros (pastures). All three peaks are attractive photographically, as they consist of great slabs and boulders of pink-tinted granitic rock weathered into sometimes-surreal forms.

The starting point for this 8-mile hike to and from the butte is Lake Morena County Park, 12 miles south of Pine Valley via Interstate 8, Buckman Springs Road, and Morena Village. Start hiking at the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) parking lot, at the entrance to the county campground.

Follow the PCT as it ascends west on the slope overlooking Morena Reservoir. During wet cycles, the lake expands to nearly fill this two-square-mile former potrero; while in drought as we are now, the water surface may shrink to only one-tenth that size. Fine views of the blue water can be had for a while, but presently the trail swings away, generally south over and around several hilltops. Good displays of blooming ceanothus liven things up in the springtime, but this time of year the chaparral-draped slopes look somewhat drab.

At 1.8 miles the trail starts descending generally west into a shallow tributary of Hauser Creek. You cross that ravine at 2.7 miles and then gently ascend to a saddle on the southeast shoulder of Morena Butte (3.0 miles). From that point find and follow a rough and sketchy path going northwest up the ridge 1.0 mile to the summit area. Climb all three of the rocky peaklets on top for great views in various directions.

Return to where you left the PCT, retrace your steps for 0.2 mile, then stay left on a path (old roadbed) that slants north, gains about 100 feet, and attains a broad divide. There you meet a dirt road that will take you northwest through a beautiful valley, graced with live oaks and Coulter pines, right beneath the stony gaze of Morena Butte. Then continue to Morena Reservoir's shoreline road, and follow it 2.0 miles back to your starting point.

