

Missing Teen Camper Near SJ Peak

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San Jacinto Mountains
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by Liz Sandz

It was a beautiful Sunday day in February and I had decided to take my kids and dogs for a hike and some rock climbing in Idyllwild. We had hiked around for almost four hours and were on our way home, when I had reached the bottom of the mountain and a page came through for a body recovery. I drove home to Lake Elsinore to drop my kids/dogs off and I headed right back to help the team out. But by the time I got back, the team was just completing the mission, so I turned around and headed home. Just as I walked into my house and sat down to take off my boots, (which were driving me nuts) another page came through for a lost 17-year-old hiker. So, I retied my boots and headed back to the mountains for the 3rd time today.

I was the first to get up to Humber Park and shortly thereafter, the rest of the team started to show up. We had two teams of two, team #1 was Lee and I (kill the FNG, right?), team #2 was Brenda and Kirk (all their idea to kill the FNG by sending me with Lee). We got the information on where the hiker might be and so we all took off in search around 9 p.m. Both teams took off at the same time, but one person of team #1 (who shall remain nameless) was not a fast hiker, but a L O- N- G strider (or so he says). He went up the mountain and stopped to wait for me, so we could call out for the hiker together (and save me from being eaten by a mountain lion, or at least that's what went through my head while alone). With no answer, we continued to stride quickly up the mountain (or at least as fast a stride as my short legs would take me) to where we hit some snow and ice.

By this time team #2 had made the decision to take another path to see if maybe the hiker had gotten lost in a different direction. As Lee and I got 3/4 of the way to where the kids camp should have been, Lee spotted an arrow and a time written in the dirt telling which direction the kid went (very nicely done). So, with no waste of time, we headed in that direction. About 45min later, we called out and had a response. Lee told him to shine a flashlight so that we could see where he was, and as we came into his camp he said 'Its not me you need to worry about, its my friend.' Lee explained to the young man that his friend was the one that thought he might be lost (due to him not feeling good earlier) and that it was him who had been reported missing.

At this time two things came to my mind (No! Not mountain lions) Firstly, thank god he is safe! And secondly, God, please just help me down this mountain! My legs had had

it by then, and my nice new boots (now for sale) wanted to see how much skin they could rub off my ankle (they won).

Now at about 3 a.m., Lee had informed base and team #2 that we had found the subject, and team #2 offered to wait to help carry the kids stuff down. Lee had already informed the kid to only take what he could carry and that he could come back another time to retrieve the rest. We all started down the mountain, and I have to say a big thanks to Rob for my nice, wonderful, life saving trekking poles: without them I would have had to drag myself down with my arms! (I would have done it, but it was way better with the poles) To say that we finally made it down around 6 a.m. (hallelujah!!!) for the most part (excluding my legs and ankles) safe and sound, what better outcome could there be?!

To sum it all up, I want to say a special thanks to Lee for being very patient with me while I tried my hardest to keep up. I appreciate the encouraging words you gave me and all the information that I learned from you while on this hike.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.