

PT 13736 and Mount Champion (13,646')

Ascent: Northwest ridge, Descent: South Slopes. 3,000 feet, 7.5 miles, class 2

These two summits East of Independence Pass do not reach the magical 14,000 feet limit, which means wonderful solitude for the hiker.

8am. We started at 10,780 ft at the North Fork Lake Creek trailhead off HWY 82 and followed the North Fork trail for two miles, gently rising through mountain meadows.



At 11,600 ft we left the trail to the right and followed the drainage to a basin with a small lake and the beginning of the ridge.



The ridge was very steep, but nice grass with embedded rocks made for good footing, and the views were outstanding. Higher towards the summit, the ridge became solid talus. We had no problems with route finding, and the difficulty never exceeded class 2.



It got very windy on the exposed ridge and we had to put on our jackets

After four hours, we reached the summit of PT 13736 at noon. Large rocks created a pleasant shelter from the wind. After a brief rest we started on the ridge that connects the summit of PT 13736 with that of Mount Champion. The ridge is half a mile long and drops down to a saddle at 13,340 ft.

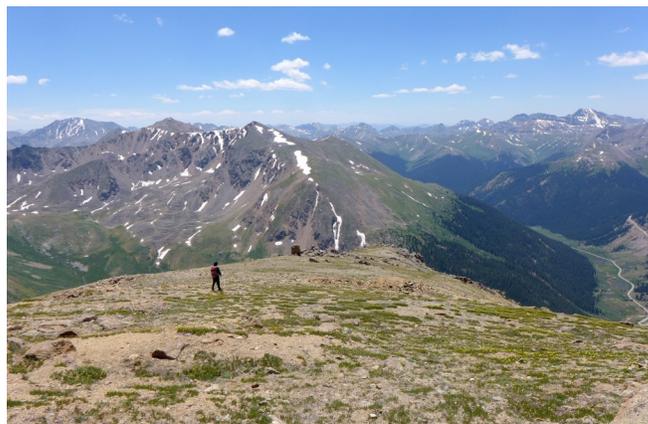
The summit of Mount Champion is unremarkable, but boasts gorgeous views.



A wide ridge with interesting tall boulders leads down towards the South and the eponymous gold mine.



First signs of mining are visible just below the summit, and further down the South slopes you can find remnants of Champion Mine: buildings and machinery—and hundreds of rusty tin cans littering the mountain meadow.



The way down from the mine through Lackawanna Gulch was trailless—or at least we did not find the trail. We followed the creek through the woods until we emerged in open terrain in the valley of Lake Creek, shortly above the trailhead.