Highland Range (East Side) Backcountry

The eastern side of the Highland Range is one of the biggest surprises in Southern Nevada for sheer beauty and backcountry exploration. The volcanic Highland Range is about 10 miles long and remarkably rugged and ragged. The multicolored volcanic peaks tower several thousand feet above the surrounding valleys and are remarkably scenic. The area was set aside by the Bureau of Land Management for the protection and propagation of desert bighorn sheep.

You will need a high clearance vehicle and preferably a 4-wheel drive vehicle to penetrate more deeply into the valleys. The area is accessed from U.S. Highway 95 just 20 miles south of the junction of I-11 and U.S. 95. At the 20-mile mark, there is a 2-mile long transmission line maintenance road that takes off U.S. 95 towards the west to the base of the Highland Range. That road goes through the Paiute/Eldorado Valley Area of Critical Environmental Concern established to protect the Desert Tortoise. This area is critical desert tortoise habitat with one of the highest density of tortoise in the state. That road then intersects with a north/south transmission line corridor road. Take a left (south) on that road. In the first 4 miles, there are a series of four backcountry roads that head west into the heart of the Highland Range, following the valleys. You can take one or all four of the roads. Each road is distinctively different, offering spectacular views of the colorful and rugged peaks and also good hiking opportunities, although there are no designated trails in the area.

You can either return the way you came in or continue down the transmission line maintenance road for another 16 miles where it comes out on Nevada Highway #164 just west of Searchlight. There are several other backcountry roads that take off from the west for further exploration. There is also a 5th backcountry road at mile 7 and a 6th at mile 8.
The washes and alluvial plains that lead to mountain ridges in this area are filled with scattered Mojave Yucca, Banana Yucca, Barrel Cactus, various species of cholla cactus and other cactus species. There is a surprisingly diverse vegetative mix and the area is good for wildflower viewing in the spring.