

Backpacking ARIZONA

From Deep Canyons to Sky Islands

by Bruce Grubbs

Nankoweap - Bright Angel Loop

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Nankoweap – Bright Angel Loop

RATINGS (1–10)			MILES	ELEVATION GAIN	DAYS	SHUTTLE MILEAGE
Scenery	Solitude	Difficulty	82.2	16,830	11	0
10	10	10	(63.7)	(14,190)	(10)	(179)

MAPS Point Imperial, Nankoweap Mesa, Bright Angel Point, Phantom Ranch U.S.G.S.

SEASON Mid September–May.

BEST October–November, March–April.

WATER Nankoweap Creek, Kwagunt Creek, Colorado River, Unkar Creek, seasonally in Vishnu Creek, Clear Creek, Bright Angel Creek.

PERMITS Required for camping within Grand Canyon National Park.

RULES Campfires are not allowed in the national park backcountry. Along the North Kaibab Trail near the end of the loop, camping is only allowed in designated campgrounds. Pets are not allowed on trails or in the backcountry.

CONTACT Grand Canyon National Park, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023, (928) 638-7888, www.nps.gov/grca.

HIGHLIGHTS This scenic loop takes you through spectacular geology of the eastern Grand Canyon, past permanent streams and towering, cliff-bound buttes and mesas. In the eastern Grand Canyon, colorful layers of the Grand Canyon series of rock formations meet the somber, ancient metamorphic rocks of the Granite Gorge, creating a dramatic change in the shape of the Grand Canyon's floor. Most of this loop is seldom traveled and you're unlikely to meet any other hikers on the cross-country section of the loop.

PROBLEMS This is a strenuous cross-country hike. All members of the party should be fit, and the leader should have experience hiking cross-country in the Grand Canyon. Those without such experience

COLORADO PLATEAU Grand Canyon

should choose one of the on-trail Grand Canyon hikes—Tanner Trail to Kaibab Trail, or South Bass Trail to Hermit Trail. You must have the U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute topographic maps for critical route finding on this hike. Water sources are often far apart, and each hiker should have enough water containers to carry water for an overnight dry camp. If you do this hike in the spring, before the North Rim is open, you'll have to use the optional South Rim exit, via the Bright Angel trail. This requires that you leave a vehicle at the Bright Angel Trailhead in Grand Canyon Village. This hike is dangerous during the summer. Do not attempt it from May through mid September, when temperatures commonly exceed 100°F.

Warning: *Do not underestimate the difficulty of this hike. Your rate of progress may average one mile per hour, and can fall to half a mile per hour at times. Map miles do not accurately reflect hiking distances in the Grand Canyon because of the rough terrain.*

Tip: *Bring a 50-foot, 6 or 7 mm rope for hauling packs. You'll encounter several places where hikers may require a rope belay for safety.*

HOW TO GET THERE From Flagstaff, drive 111 miles north on U.S. 89 and turn left (north) on U.S. 89A. Continue 14 miles to Marble Canyon; drive another 21.6 miles to the Buffalo Ranch Road. Turn left (south) on this dirt road, and continue 27.0 miles to its end at the Saddle Mountain Trailhead. This road may be impassable in winter, or after a major winter storm.

To reach the Bright Angel Trailhead from Cameron on U.S. 89, drive 52 miles west on Arizona 64, to Grand Canyon Village. The trailhead is at the west end of the village, near Bright Angel Lodge.

DESCRIPTION Start out on the Saddle Mountain Trail, which heads south and climbs up a gradual ridge through the pinyon pine and juniper forest. In 1.0 mile the Saddle Mountain Trail swings east and drops into Saddle Canyon, where it meets the Nankoweap Trail. Turn right and follow the Nankoweap Trail south up the bed of Saddle Canyon. As Saddle Canyon opens out into a forested basin, the trail leaves the drainage and follows a ridge south, uphill, through fine stands of ponderosa pine.

When the trail reaches Boundary Ridge, 2.9 miles from the trailhead, it meets the original upper section of the Nankoweap Trail, which comes from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, to your west.

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Above the Colorado River near Unkar Creek

This is the return route. Turn left (east) and follow the Nankoweap Trail down into the unnamed saddle west of Saddle Mountain. From here, the Nankoweap Trail descends the upper sandstone cliffs of the Supai formation in a series of short switchbacks.

Warning: *You'll encounter a bad section of trail before it rounds Point 6961. A section of the original trail construction has fallen away, and the tread traverses a steep shale slope above a cliff. While not a problem if the trail is dry, this section can be dangerous if the ground is muddy. A rope belay may be required.*

Once below this cliff band, it stays at this level in the Supai formation, heading generally east. As the Nankoweap Trail continues east along the tilted Supai formation ledges, it steadily loses eleva-

COLORADO PLATEAU *Grand Canyon*

tion. Eventually, the trail emerges onto a ridge and descends onto the west rim of Tilted Mesa. Here, the trail turns south and descends a broken slope through the Redwall limestone formation to reach gentle shale slopes that lead southeast to Nankoweap Creek, where the trail ends, 6.3 miles from Boundary Ridge. Perennial Nankoweap Creek is graced with Fremont cottonwood trees, and campsites are plentiful. An optional cross-country side hike follows lower Nankoweap Creek to the Colorado River.

South of Nankoweap Creek, the route follows a route commonly referred to as the Horse Thief Trail. Since there probably never was a constructed trail along this route, and there is little trace of a trail today, I'll refer to it as the Horse Thief Route. Head southwest up Nankoweap Creek, and turn left up an unnamed drainage toward Nankoweap Butte. The going is easy through the pygmy pinyon pine and juniper forest, and you can cross the divide between Nankoweap and Kwagunt creeks on either side of Nankoweap Butte.



East Kaibab Monocline

The Horse Thief Route is made possible by the Butte Fault and the East Kaibab Monocline. Although there is some evidence that thieves did use the route to move stolen animals from Arizona to Utah, there never was a constructed trail along the route. Probably used mostly by prospectors, a few horseshoes and other artifacts are the only evidence that suggests this was ever a well-traveled route. A monocline sometimes forms when one block of horizontal rock layers is uplifted higher than the adjoining block. In the process, the rock layers flow like toothpaste, tilting steeply along the boundary. In the case of the East Kaibab Monocline, the rocks to the west have been lifted about 3000 feet higher than the rocks to the east. The formerly horizontal sedimentary layers along the monocline have been tilted to the vertical. There has also been vertical slippage along the Butte Fault in places, which shatters the rocks. Erosion forms side canyons along the fault and monocline, and the Horse Thief Route takes advantage of these small canyons to find a way across Nankoweap, Kwagunt, Malgosa, Awatubi, 60 Mile, and Carbon creeks. The East Kaibab Monocline continues far to the north and south of the Grand Canyon—in fact, it's the longest exposed monocline on the planet.

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A Thieving Advantage

Horse thieves used the Tanner Trail to descend into the Grand Canyon from the south rim. They had to cross the Colorado River to reach the Horse Thief Route. Before Glen Canyon Dam was built upstream of the park, the level of the Colorado River varied between 3000 and 300,000 cubic feet per second. The horse thieves took advantage of the low stage in late summer to cross at a ford about a mile downstream of the mouth of Lava Canyon. The ford is no longer passable because the dam regulates the Colorado River to a moderate flow.

Descend into the unnamed drainages south of the butte, and head for Kwagunt Creek at a point upstream (west) of the Butte Fault. This massive fault is marked by formerly horizontal rock layers now tilted vertical. The Butte Fault is clearly visible just to the west of the vertical rocks, where the fault zone erodes into small canyons that cross the main canyons, such as Kwagunt Creek, at right angles. From the saddles on either side of Nankoweap Butte, you can clearly see the gray and red ramparts of tilted Redwall limestone on either side of Kwagunt Creek. This is the same formation you encountered on the Nankoweap Trail, thousands of feet higher. Follow the drainage system down to Kwagunt Creek, 3.5 miles from Nankoweap Creek. Kwagunt Creek has a small perennial flow. An optional cross-country side hike follows Kwagunt Creek 2.5 miles east to the Colorado River.

***Tip:** Pick up water at Kwagunt Creek for a dry camp, as there are no permanent water sources along the remainder of the Horse Thief Route.*

From Kwagunt Creek, hike south up the nameless canyon just west of the Butte Fault. You'll need to do some minor route finding to avoid small cliffs, especially near the saddle at the canyon's head. From the saddle, continue down to Malgosa Creek via the ravine just east of the fault. Malgosa Creek is 1.4 miles from Kwagunt Creek. Malgosa Creek is normally dry at the Horse Thief Route crossing, though you may find water by walking downstream. In a pinch, you can hike east down Malgosa Creek to the Colorado River, but Malgosa Creek is much harder than Nankoweap and Kwagunt Creeks.

Cross the pass west of Kwagunt Butte and descend to Awatubi Creek via the ravines just west of the Butte Fault. Awatubi Creek is

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1.4 miles from Malgosa Creek. Awatubi Creek is normally dry where the route crosses, but you may be able to find water downstream. Awatubi Creek cannot be followed to the Colorado River. A seasonal water source is a series of deep water pockets in the sandstone terraces northeast of Awatubi Crest, though this is 0.8 mile off the route. You'll find small campsites in Awatubi Creek near the Horse Thief Route crossing.



Peaking Power and Grand Canyon Routes

The amount of water released by Glen Canyon Dam now controls the level of the Colorado River. Since hydroelectric power generated at the dam is used to meet peak power needs, the amount of power used in distant cities determines the amount of water released. Power use peaks on a daily basis as air conditioners are switched on during the hot part of the day. A daily pattern of rising and falling water throughout the length of the Colorado River is evident in the Grand Canyon. The level changes as much as five feet every day. At low water, it is possible to walk the right bank of the river from Tanner Rapids to Unkar Rapids. If the water is high, small cliff bands may block the route. If you have a few hours to spare, you may wait for lower water and avoid a detour along the bluffs above the cliffs.

To continue, follow the ravine to the saddle just west of Awatubi Crest, and then down the fault ravine on the south side into a nameless side canyon of 60 Mile Creek. Climb over a minor saddle and descend into the main branch of the creek, 1.4 miles from Awatubi Creek. 60 Mile Creek is normally dry, and there is no route to the Colorado River. You'll find plenty of camping along 60 Mile Creek at the Horse Thief Route Crossing.

South of 60 Mile Creek, climb the westernmost of the two canyons that climb to the south, and pass over the saddle west of Chuar Butte to reach the East Fork Carbon Creek. Now, descend the East Fork Carbon Creek to the south, bypassing the small cliff bands as needed.

Tip: Carbon Creek is normally dry, but the Colorado River is easy to reach via the lower canyon.

Exactly 0.5 mile after the canyon turns east, and 3.6 miles from 60 Mile Creek, leave Carbon Creek and head south 0.9 mile over a low

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saddle into Lava Creek. Head downstream, and follow Lava Canyon 1.0 mile to the Colorado River and the end of the Horse Thief Route. You'll find several campsites at the mouth of the canyon.

Follow the right bank of the Colorado River downstream. Cross the unnamed drainage 0.8 mile south of Lava Creek; leave the Colorado River and climb the ridge to the southwest toward Point 4201.

Tip: It is normally impossible to continue at river level because of cliff bands that drop directly into the Colorado River, though it has been done at very low water.

Just below the top of Point 4201, head south along the east-facing slopes. The shale slope is uncomfortably steep, and the higher you climb, the less of this nasty traverse you'll have to cross. Ideally, you'll have about half a mile of traversing to reach the ridge south-southeast of Point 4201. Descend this ridge, cross an unnamed drainage, and follow the rim of the cliff above the Colorado River until you can descend to the broad gravel bar just upstream of Tanner Rapids. Now, follow the right bank of the Colorado River 4.6 miles downstream to Unkar Creek. You'll find several small cliff bands that may have to be bypassed at high water. Campsites are plentiful on the open expanse of Unkar Delta.

Continue the route by hiking up Unkar Creek. Water usually surfaces about two miles upstream from the Colorado River, and there are several possible campsites. At the 3800-foot contour, 3.8 miles from the Colorado River, turn left into an unnamed fork of Unkar Creek. This fork remains parallel to Unkar Creek for 0.6 mile, heading north, before turning abruptly southwest toward the nameless saddle between Vishnu Temple and Freya Castle. Head up this canyon for 0.5 mile, then leave the bed to the south to bypass a high fall in the Tapeats sandstone. Above the fall, rejoin the bed of the drainage for the rest of the climb to the saddle. You'll find one tricky section near the top of the Redwall limestone, where you will probably want to pass packs or haul them with a rope. The Vishnu-Freya saddle is 2.4 miles from the fork in Unkar Creek.

Descend southwest down the unnamed side canyon into Vishnu Creek. You will probably need to pass packs or lower them on a rope at two chockstones on this descent, and some members of the party may need a rope belay.

Tip: Watch for a small spring on the left as you descend the greenish Muav formation below the Redwall limestone. This is a good alternate water source in the event there's none in Vishnu Creek.

You may find seasonal water in Vishnu Creek above the point where the bed descends into the brownish Tapeats sandstone. You'll find several campsites above the 4000-foot contour in Vishnu Creek, 2.2 miles from the Vishnu–Freya saddle.

The cross-country route continues west of Vishnu Creek on the Tonto Plateau, the terrace above the Tapeats sandstone. Leave Vishnu Creek on about the 4000-foot contour, walk around Hall Butte, and cross the nameless canyon to the west, where you may find seasonal water pockets in the bed of the drainage. After you swing around Hawkins Butte, you'll spot The Howlands Butte to the north. The route goes over the unnamed saddle to the east of The Howlands Butte, and then drops north into Clear Creek via a nameless tributary. It may take some searching to find the descent through the Tapeats sandstone from above, but after that the route is not difficult to Clear Creek and its delightful perennial stream. It is 8.2 miles from Vishnu Creek to Clear Creek. You'll find plenty of campsites along Clear Creek.

Head upstream 0.5 mile to the unnamed side canyon joining Clear Creek from the left (northwest). Go up this side canyon 0.1 mile to find the start of the Clear Creek Trail, which climbs the side canyon wall to the south. The Clear Creek Trail, though not maintained, is frequently used and is in relatively good shape. Ascend the trail through the Tapeats sandstone and onto the Tonto Plateau, and then contour around Zoroaster Canyon before turning west toward Sumner Point. You may find seasonal water pockets in the bed of the nameless canyon just east of Sumner Point. South of the point, the trail descends through the Tapeats sandstone before turning north and descending into Bright Angel Canyon. The Clear Creek Trail ends at the heavily used North Kaibab Trail, 7.6 miles from Clear Creek. The optional Bright Angel Trail south rim exit goes left here.

To continue on the main loop from the junction with the Clear Creek Trail, turn right (north) on the North Kaibab Trail, which follows Bright Angel Creek through The Box. You'll soon pass the impressive mouth of Phantom Canyon. Precisely 6.0 miles from the Clear Creek Trail, watch for the 0.3-mile spur trail to pretty Ribbon Falls on the west side of the canyon. Back on the North Kaibab Trail,

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Along the Colorado River near Unkar Creek



Snowmelt Floods on the Colorado River

Before Glen Canyon Dam was finished in 1964, the Colorado River reached its annual high stage in the Grand Canyon during early summer, when snowmelt from the distant Rocky Mountains reached the canyons. One such spring flood in the 1880's crested at 300,000 cubic feet per second, as measured by the location of driftwood left high above the river's normal banks. At the mouth of Clear Creek, driftwood from this event is about 100 feet above the present river level.

you'll reach Cottonwood Camp 1.0 mile from the Ribbons Falls Trail. At the mouth of Manzanita Canyon, the trail passes a ranger station, and then starts to climb the slope on the west. Switchbacks lead up to the base of the Redwall limestone in the lower end of Roaring Springs Canyon. There's no difficulty in locating the namesake spring—it's so loud it can be heard from the North Rim. At the head of Roaring Springs Canyon, the trail climbs steep switchbacks up to the rim and the North Kaibab Trailhead, 5.4 miles from Cottonwood Camp.

***Tip:** Since there is no water along the remainder of the route, go to the nearby North Rim Ranger Station to fill up on water for a dry camp later. Leave someone to watch your packs.*

Continue the loop on the Ken Patrick Trail, which leaves the North Kaibab Trailhead and heads northwest across the Kaibab Plateau. Although the plateau is not level, the hiking is easy. Campsites, though dry, are plentiful in the gorgeous fir, spruce, and aspen forest. The Ken Patrick Trail crosses a tributary of Roaring Springs Canyon and the head of Bright Angel Creek before reaching the Cape Royal Road about a mile east of the Point Imperial Road junction. Follow the trail north along the rim of the canyon. This section of the Ken Patrick Trail has some great views of the head of Nankoweap Creek. The Ken Patrick Trail ends at the Point Imperial viewpoint, 7.5 miles from the North Kaibab Trailhead.

To finish the loop, hike northwest on an old fire road along the rim for 1.9 miles to the end of the Saddle Mountain Fire Road. Follow the Nankoweap Trail down the ridge to the west, toward Saddle Mountain. This upper section is little used now, and may be brushy. A 2.5-mile descent brings you to the saddle. Turn left on the Nankoweap Trail, hike north to the Saddle Mountain Trail, and turn left to return to the Saddle Mountain Trailhead.

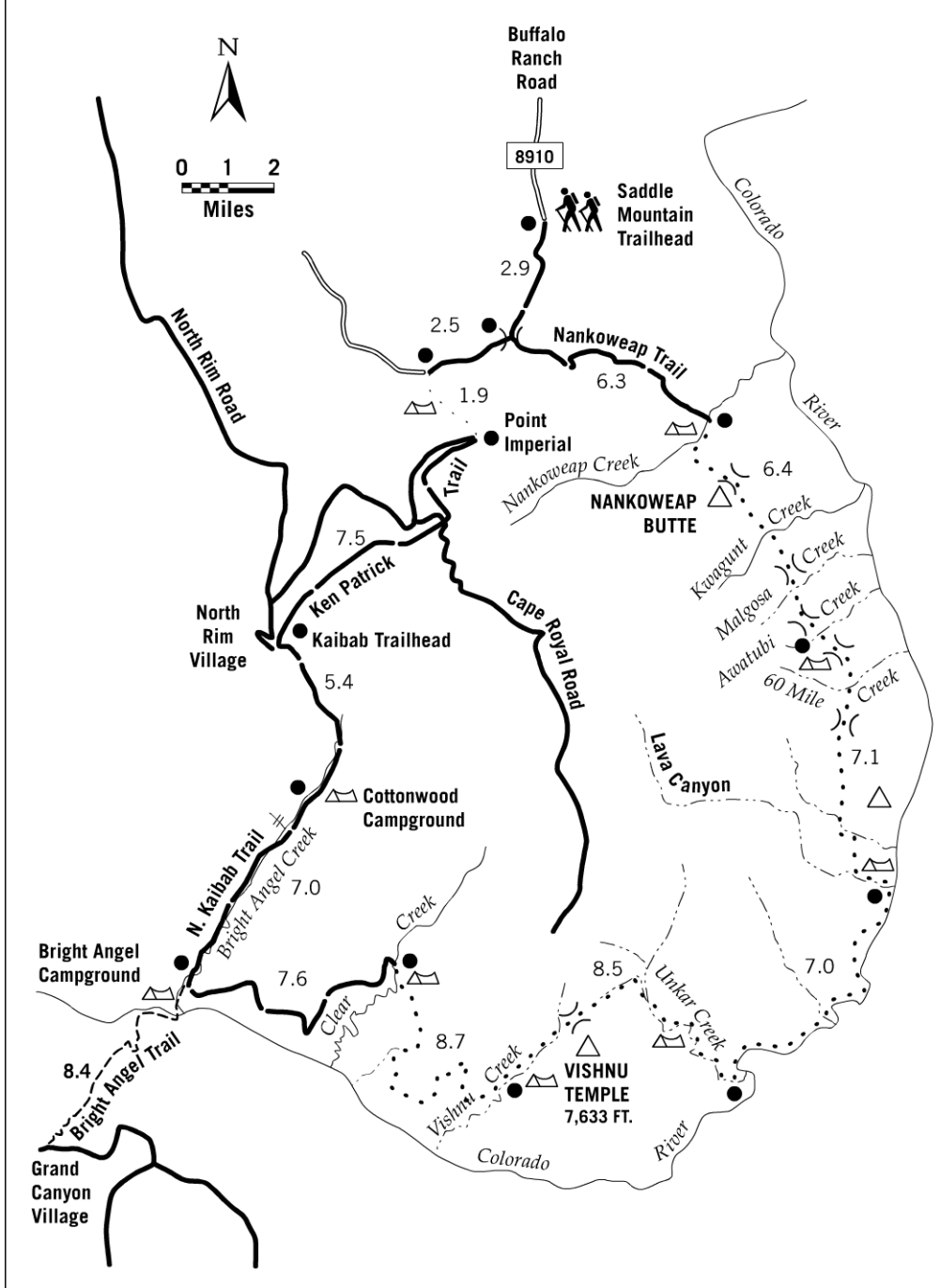
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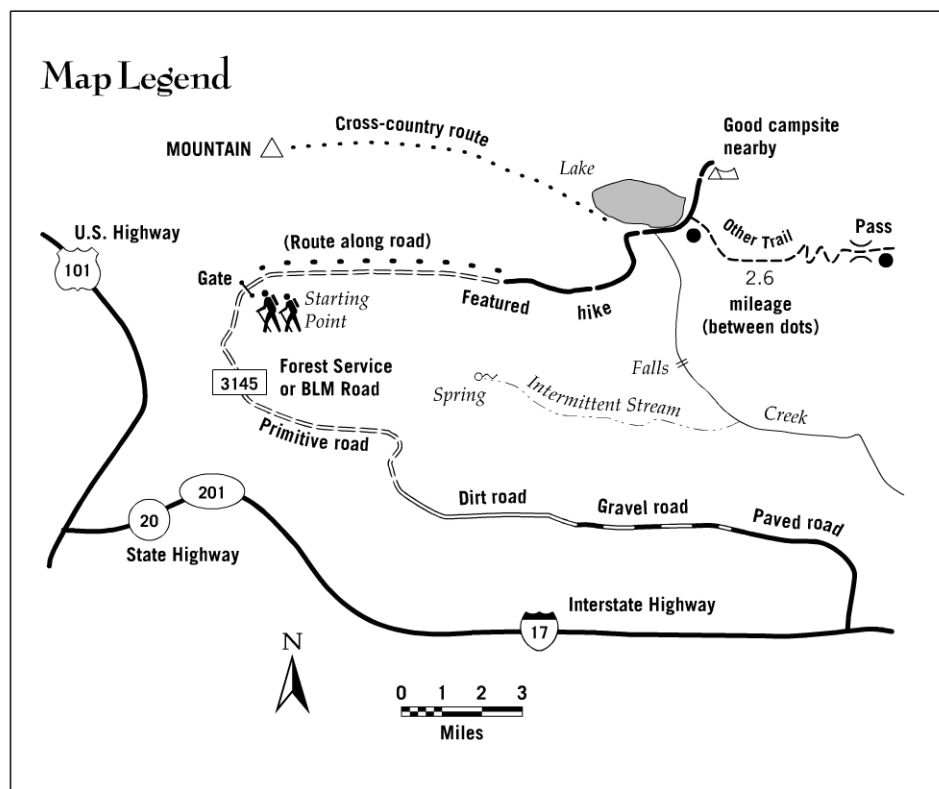
POSSIBLE ITINERARY			
	Camp	Miles	Elevation Gain
Day 1	Nankoweap Creek	7.4	1090
Day 2	Awatubi Creek	6.4	2940
Day 3	Mouth of Lava Canyon	7.1	720
Day 4	Unkar Creek	7.0	940
Day 5	Vishnu Creek	8.5	2840
Day 6	Clear Creek	8.7	890
Day 7	Bright Angel Campground	8.4	600
Day 8	Cottonwood Campground	6.8	1360
Day 9	North Rim	8.4	4560
Day 10	Out	10.0	890

SOUTH RIM VIA BRIGHT ANGEL TRAIL OPTIONAL FINISH If you left a vehicle at the Bright Angel Trailhead for the south rim exit, turn left from the Clear Creek–North Kaibab Trail junction, and hike 0.8 mile south on the North Kaibab Trail to Bright Angel Campground. Follow the River Trail from the Bright Angel Campground to the silver suspension bridge across the Colorado River, and west along the river to the mouth of Garden Creek and a stone rest house. Follow the Bright Angel Trail up Garden Canyon to Indian Gardens and on to the south rim and the Bright Angel Trailhead. Camping is allowed only at Indian Gardens Campground. You'll find piped water at Indian Gardens. During the summer you can get water at the two rest houses above Indian Gardens. It is 8.4 miles from the Clear Creek–North Kaibab Trail junction to Bright Angel Trailhead.

OPTIONAL SIDE HIKES From the Horse Thief Route, easy out-and-back side hikes are possible down lower Nankoweap and Kwagunt creeks to the Colorado River. You can also explore these canyons upstream from the Horse Thief Route. The descent of lower Malgosa Creek is more difficult than Kwagunt or Nankoweap creeks. Awatubi and 60 Mile creeks are not passable to the Colorado River. Unkar, Vishnu, and Clear creeks can be explored both up and downstream from the main route.

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Safety Notice

Although backpacking is probably safer than the drive to the trailhead, there is some risk involved. By its very nature, backpacking involves travel in remote wilderness areas where help may be days away. Anyone planning to do the trips described in this book must plan to be completely self-sufficient while in the backcountry. At least one member of the party should be experienced, and all group members should be properly equipped and fit for wilderness travel. Because trail conditions, weather, and hiker abilities all vary considerably, the author and the publisher cannot assume responsibility for the safety of anyone who takes these hikes. Backcountry safety is mostly a matter of common sense and being aware of your abilities and limitations. All water sources mentioned in the hike descriptions, except for the Bright Angel Trail option on the Nankoweap–Bright Angel Loop, are untreated and must be purified before use.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Scenery

This is the author's opinion of the trip's overall scenic beauty, on a scale of 1 (ugly) to 10 (unsurpassed). Obviously this rating is highly subjective and dependent on the author's tastes. Remember that all of the trips have been carefully selected from a plethora of candidates, and all of them are scenic. Some are more scenic than others, so use this rating as a guide to relative scenic qualities.

Solitude

Most backpackers prize solitude. With this rating, you can get an idea of the degree of solitude to expect, from 1 (you'll be elbowing your way through crowds) to 10 (you won't see a soul, even on holiday weekends). Remember that even popular, crowded areas may be very lonely during mid-week and off-season. On the other hand, a quiet, remote area may be invaded by a large group sponsored by an organization.

Difficulty

This is another subjective rating that is intended to rate a trip's difficulty in relation to other backpack trips. Dayhikers unaccustomed to carrying heavy loads will probably find the easiest of these trips to be strenuous, and couch potato non-hikers will have a very tough time. If you have some backpacking experience, expect a 1 to be a straightforward hike on good trails. At the other extreme, you'll find that a 10 will probably have such obstacles as serious cross-country walking, tedious bushwhacking, difficult navigation, scarce water sources, and possible rock scrambling where packs may have to be hauled and some group members may want a belay. Backpackers attempting these most difficult trips should be fit, and at least one member of the party should be an experienced desert backpacker. Most trips in this book fall in between these limits.

Miles

This is basic mileage for the primary trip, with no side trips or options. Since official trail mileage varies widely in accuracy, the author measured the trip distance on 1:24000 scale U.S.G.S. topographic maps. Such map-derived distances tend to be slightly shorter than mileages measured with a trail wheel on the ground, but they are very consistent. A second mileage figure in parentheses below the primary number gives the total distance for the primary trip and all optional side trips described. Some of the loop trips have short-cut options that make the loop shorter. In this case the mileage in parentheses is less than the main loop mileage.

Elevation Gain

This number is an attempt to give the total elevation gain on the primary trip. It doesn't count minor ups and downs that are too small to show on a U.S.G.S. 1:24000 topographic map. A second number in parentheses shows the elevation gain or loss for the primary trip plus all optional side trips. Some of the loop trips have short-cut options. In this case the elevation gain in parentheses may be less than that of the main loop.

Days

One hiker's three-day backpack trip is another's dayhike! Nevertheless, this number is the author's recommendation, based on an average of 8 miles per day—a reasonable figure with a big pack in rough country. This figure is strongly influenced by the availability and spacing of water sources and good campsites. A second number in parentheses below the first gives the number of days required for the primary trip and all optional side trips in the description. Some of the loop hikes have an optional short cut, so the number of days required may be less.

Shuttle Mileage

If this number is 0, and the trip is a loop or an out-and-back hike, no shuttle is required. Otherwise, it shows the shortest driving distance between the beginning and ending trailheads. Remember to schedule enough time at the start and end of your hike to drive the shuttles. In a few areas, it's possible to hire a shuttle service that will drop you off at the starting trailhead, and then move your vehicle to the exit trailhead. Such services save a lot of time, and are listed under the contact information if available.

Maps

Each hike in the book includes an accurate sketch map to give you a general idea of the layout of the trip. You should also carry a topographic map covering the area. The most detailed maps are the U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series of quadrangles, and the names of the maps covering the hike are always listed. If there is also an agency-issued or privately produced wilderness or recreation map covering the hike, its name is listed. These maps may have less terrain detail, but road and trail information is usually updated more often.

Season

The months listed are those in which the hike is possible, either snow-free for mountain hikes, or when the weather is reasonably cool for desert hikes.

Best

These months represent my opinion of when it's the best time to do the trip, a decision that is strongly influenced by the availability of water. Lesser factors include fall colors and wildflowers. Of course, most areas are at their most crowded during the best season; if solitude is your primary consideration, consider an off-season.

Water

The availability of water controls the planning of most Arizona backpack trips. This section lists all known springs, natural tanks, water pockets, and streams along the hike. I use the term "seasonal" to refer to creeks and springs that may have water only during the cool season and after wet weather. Very few water sources can be considered permanent.

***Warning:** Never depend on any single water source, and always have an alternate route, or even retreat, in mind if water sources are unexpectedly dry. All backcountry water should be purified before use, by chemical treatment, a water filter, or by boiling.*

Permits

Permits are required for some of the hikes in this book, and in certain areas only a limited number of backpackers are allowed. The permit requirements at the time of writing are described, but since the permit situation is changing rapidly on Arizona public lands, you should contact the land management agency before your trip for the latest information.

Rules

As land managers deal with increasing impact on the backcountry, they are often forced to impose special rules on hikers, such as campfire restrictions and group size limits. These rules are listed here, but do not include common backcountry rules such as the requirement to leave no trace, keep pets quiet and under control, and pack out everything you brought in.

Contact

This is the telephone number for the local land management agency that is responsible for the area of the hike. I also list a web site if a useful one is available. It's a good idea to call ahead and check on road and trail conditions, as well as permits and special requirements.

Highlights

This paragraph focuses on outstanding features such as the opportunity to see wildlife, exceptional views, narrow canyons, and other appealing attributes.

Problems

Unusual difficulties such as lack of water, poorly maintained trails, rough access roads, crowds, and other potential problems are listed here. Please remember that it's impossible for a book to list all the problems you may encounter in remote country.

How to Get There

This section describes the best access route from the nearest sizable town. Alternate routes are listed where appropriate, as is the route to the end of the hike if a shuttle is required. With a few exceptions, you'll need a vehicle to get to these backpack trips. While you can reach some trailheads on paved roads, most require travel on dirt roads that can be traversed by a normal vehicle. Some approaches do require high-clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicles. Because some trailheads are very remote, it's a good idea to carry extra water, food, and a change of clothes in your vehicle.

Description and Tips and Warnings

The detailed description includes clear navigation directions using natural landmarks and trail signs. Directions are given as left and right, and are backed up with the compass direction in parentheses. Although mileages between trail junctions are provided, the emphasis is placed on natural landmarks since mileage is difficult to measure in the backcountry and trail signs may be damaged or missing. Cross-country routes are described entirely by landmarks. ***Tips*** and ***Warnings*** are based on the author's experience and are embedded in the text to call your attention to things that may make your trip safer and more enjoyable.

Possible Itinerary

A suggested plan for the primary trip is listed after the description, based on the author's experience on the route. This may or may not include side trips. Side trips are clearly labeled as such. Treat itinerary as a starting point for your own trip planning, remembering that such things as water availability, trail conditions, and the fitness and experience level of the group will affect your final itinerary.

Optional Side Hikes, Shortcuts, and Alternate Routes

These are mentioned by name in the main description of each hike. An optional side hike offers you the chance to explore a feature, trail, or route off the main hike. These are usually done as out-and-back dayhikes. A shortcut is an optional route that shortens the length of the overall trip. An alternate route is an optional trail or route that is the same length or longer than the main trip.

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