

Grand Canyon

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park
Arizona



Hermit Trail

Locations/Elevations

Hermit trailhead (6640 ft / 2024 m) to:

Santa Maria Spring (5000 ft / 1524 m)

Breezy Point (4420 ft / 1347 m)

Tonto Trail Junction (3210 ft / 978 m)

Hermit Creek (2900 ft / 884 m)

Colorado River at Hermit Rapids (2300 ft / 701 m)

Monument Creek, BL BL7 (2995 ft / 913 m)

Colorado River at Granite Rapid, BL8 (2330 ft / 710 m)

Mileages

2.2 mi (3.5 km)

5.5 mi (8.8 km)

7 mi (11.2 km)

8.2 mi (13.1 km)

9.7 (15.5 km)

9.3 mi (15.0 km)

10.3 mi (16.6 km)

Trailhead Access

The Hermit and Boucher Trails are accessed by way of Hermit's Road. This road is open to all traffic from December 1st through the end of February, but during the rest of the year this road is restricted to the Shuttle Bus and to Backpackers with a valid backcountry permit for either the Hermit or Boucher Trails (they should enter the gate code which is listed on their backcountry permit). Take the paved Hermit Road 8 miles west to where it ends at Hermit's Rest then continue on the dirt road ¼ mile to the trailhead.

Water Sources

Santa Maria Spring, 2.5 miles below the rim offers year -round spring water. Hermit Creek is a permanent water source that flows all the way to the Colorado River. All water sources require purification.

Campsites

The only legal places to camp within the Hermit Creek drainage are the designated campsites at Hermit Creek (BM7, toilet on site) and Hermit Rapids (BM8, no toilet). A sign with a prominent 'L' marks the Large Group site near the toilet at BM7. Large groups of 7 to 11 people must use this site.

At-large camping is not permitted along the Hermit Trail.

Important Notes

At Hermit Rapids abundant sand and rocky cliffs surround the camp area. Urinate directly into the river. Appropriate locations to bury waste are non-existent. Be sure to get above the beaches and away from the creek to deposit human waste, or utilize wag bags to avoid the additional hiking. Never deposit waste in sand or sand dunes. Please carry out your toilet paper.

Critter-proof food storage is required. A metal tin, metal mesh bag, or bear canister will protect your food and trash.

Campfires on backpacking trips are strictly prohibited by Federal Law in the Grand Canyon backcountry below the rim. Please note that while you may observe river trips with fires, those fires are structured in approved pans which assure no damage to the beaches. Campfires in the Canyon cause irreparable damage to a very delicate ecosystem, please take the best care of our beloved Canyon so as future generations can know the Canyon as we do.

Trail Description

The upper section of the Hermit Trail is steep and sustained, dropping almost 2000 vertical feet in the first 2.5 miles. Passage through the Kaibab and Coconino Formations is via well-defined switchbacks. Most of the Hermit

Trail was originally surfaced with large hand-fitted rock slabs that created a smooth walking surface. Ongoing erosion has claimed much of this remarkable labor-intensive paving, but a few isolated fragments survive, especially in the Coconino. Fossilized animal tracks have been noted in many locations throughout the canyon but they were first studied in detail along the Hermit Trail. A few of these fossilized lizard-like tracks can be seen by observant hikers in the lower half of the Coconino.

Pass the Waldron Trail junction and then the Dripping Springs Trail junction near the bottom of the Hermit Shale (stay right at both junctions) and drop into the Hermit Creek gorge. Santa Maria Spring is soon reached offering a trickle of water and a historic masonry rest house. There is an ammo canyon with a guest book you are encouraged to write your thoughts in. Do not place any trash in this ammo can; as always, pack it in, pack it out!

Between Santa Maria Spring and the top of the Redwall at Cathedral Stairs the Hermit Trail is characterized by long traverses. This section of the trail is tucked up against the west facing walls of the south rim and thus offers hikers a period of extended shade during the hotter months.

At Cathedral stairs the descent becomes unrelenting. An endless series of rocky switchbacks eventually leads hikers through the Redwall cliff and down the west facing talus below Cope Butte to the intersection with the Tonto Trail. The Tonto Trail is an important inner Canyon route that allows access in both directions along the Tonto Platform, east to Monument Creek, west to Hermit Creek. Turn left (west) and follow the Tonto Trail about a mile to the Hermit Creek campsite. Be sure to walk downstream a short distance during your stay at Hermit Creek. The little Tapeats gorge is a real gem.

The Hermit Trail continues another 1.5 miles beyond the established campsite at Hermit Creek to the Colorado River and Hermit Rapids. Follow your nose down the bed of Hermit Creek or take the cut-off from the Tonto Trail that drops to the drainage bottom below the campsite. A little of the original trail construction shows in the Vishnu Formation, but today the lower section of this once impressive trail is mostly a little foot path winding quietly through riparian vegetation to the shoreline. Hermit Rapids is a big one, well worth the trip if time and energy allows.

General Information & History

Much pioneer period history of northern Arizona revolves around various schemes of development designed to promote and capitalize on the indescribable but undeniable magic of the Grand Canyon. The Hermit Creek basin was the scene of one of the most aggressive of these improvement efforts. Initiated by the Santa Fe Railroad in 1911, this program involved much development on the rim and also included the construction of what was, at the time, a state of the art rim-to-river trail. The Hermit Trail was built to serve a luxury campsite near Hermit Creek. Hermit Camp predated Phantom Ranch by 10 years, and in its heyday was complete with a tramway from the rim, a functional automobile for transportation within the facility, and a Fred Harvey chef. Operations ceased in 1930, but for two decades Hermit Camp was the last word in gracious tourism below the rim. As is always the case at Grand Canyon, time and erosion have taken a heavy toll. The old Hermit Trail is today a mere shadow of its former self, but for experienced, knowledgeable canyon backpackers the walk offers a direct link to the excitement and romance of the early days at Grand Canyon.

The "hermit" of the Hermit Creek basin was Louis D. Boucher who lived in the area for 20 years. Boucher built the Boucher Trail (west of the Hermit Trail) and seasonal residences at Dripping Springs and near Boucher Creek. Labeled a hermit because he lived alone, Boucher was in fact socially active within the South Rim community.

Maps

7.5 Minute Grand Canyon Quad (USGS)

Sky Terrain Trails Map, Grand Canyon (Sky Terrain)

Trails Illustrated Map, Grand Canyon National Park (National Geographic)

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