Kanab Creek

Locations/Elevations

	Mileages
Colorado River (1920 ft / 585 m) to Scotty's Hollow (3000 ft / 914 m)	9 mi (14.5 km)
Scotty's Hollow (3000 ft / 914 m) to Lower Jumpup Spring (4800 ft / 1463 m)	7 mi (11.3 km)
Kwagunt Hollow (4200 ft / 1280 m) to Sowats Point 6200 ft / 1890 m)	5 mi (8.1 km)
Sunshine Point to Willow Springs via Hack Canyon	10.5 mi (16.9 km)
Jumpup Spring trailhead to Kwagunt Hollow (4200 ft / 1280 m)	7 mi (11.3 km) 3000 ft confluence of Kanab/Hack Canyon 3600 ft Willow Springs

Trailhead Access

The most popular access points to the Kanab Creek area are Sowats Point, Jumpup Spring, and Hack Canyon. Indian Hollow is used to complete a loop hike starting at Indian Hollow Point (see George Steck: Grand Canyon Loop Hikes). Kwagunt Hollow (via Sowats Point) is probably the quickest way in. The USFS and BLM maps provide direction to these points. Due to snow, Sowats Point, Indian Hollow Point, and Jumpup Spring may be inaccessible in late fall, winter, and spring. Four-wheel drive is advisable on all these roads under wet conditions.

Water Sources

The Kanab Creek drainage includes lands devoted to agriculture and livestock. As a result, the water is reported to be high in chemical content. Under dry conditions, water usually shows up in the bed a few miles below the Jumpup confluence. Other water sources are available in side canyons where seeps sometimes occur. A large pothole of stagnant water under a pour-off is fairly reliable in Jumpup, about 2 miles up from the Jumpup/Kanab confluence. There is a seep in a west side canyon of Kanab, approximately ½ mile up from the Kanab/Jumpup confluence. More springs will be found about 2-3 miles down Kanab Creek from the Kanab/Jumpup confluence. Of all the springs shown in the Jumup/Kwagunt/Sowats area, Mountain Sheep Spring is the most reliable, has the highest flow, and offers excellent camping.

Tennis shoes or sandals may be helpful for the numerous stream crossings.

Important Notes

Kanab Creek is a remote, beautiful, deep gorge. Under wet or monsoon conditions, Kanab Creek can form an impassable raging torrent and the possibility of a flash flood anywhere in this drainage is real.

Tributaries to Kanab Creek include several narrows which are impressive places formed by vertical walls of polished stone (Jumpup and Indian Hollow, for example). There is virtually no protection during a flash flood and there are no rapid exits. These narrows should be entered with trepidation any time that rain is possible and especially during the monsoon season of July, August, and September. Keep in mind that help may be several days away in the event of an emergency.

Route Descriptions

Sowats Point to Kanab Creek. The trail begins from the road about 200 yards before reaching Sowats Point. There is a Forest Service bulletin board introducing hikers to the Kanab Creek Wilderness Area. The trail is fairly easy to follow as it descends and contours around the point through the Kaibab, Toroweap and Coconino Formations. This trail is steep and covered with loose gravel. Upon reaching a large group of cottonwood trees,

you have a choice. The simplest and fastest is to head down the drainage of Kwagunt Hollow about a quarter mile past the trees. For the most part, this is open and involves minimal route finding. Several falls are easily bypassed on the left side. Kwagunt Hollow joins Jumpup Canyon just above the Jumpup Narrows.

An alternative is to head north on the trail at the cottonwood trees into Sowats Canyon. A large cairn marks the descent into Sowats Canyon, entering the canyon just below Bitter Springs. From here, boulder-hop down the drainage to Jumpup and then the top of the Jumpup narrows at Kwagunt Hollow. Indian Hollow enters from the left-hand side about a mile further into the narrows. It is possible to walk up Indian Hollow to the Esplanade, and out to Thunder River trailhead. This is a tough route, with exposed climbing and several pools of water that must be swum.

The confluence with Kanab Creek is obvious where the narrows enter a spacious (by comparison) creek bed.

Hack Canyon to Kanab/Jumpup Confluence. Start at the Willow Springs Trailhead (Sunshine Point) or drive down Hack Canyon from the top as far as possible. From the corral at the Willow Springs trailhead descend to the west along the trail a little way and then switchback below the cliffs. Follow the trail through the Coconino and then on down to the bed of Hack Canyon. Willow Springs is a few hundred yards upstream. Kanab Creek is an easy walk downstream from here. The way to Jumpup involves more walking down an open streambed.

Jumpup Spring to Kwagunt Hollow. From the Forest Service cabin, the trail is well maintained down to the verdant Jumpup Spring. From here, the trail follows the drainage, with fairly easy walking down to Lower Jumpup Spring. Flows may be quite low at this spring. From there, one can continue on the Esplanade to the north all the way to Snake Gulch, on the Ranger Trail. To reach Kanab Creek, follow the Esplanade to the south and east to Kwagunt Hollow. A short amount of boulder hopping and following the creek will lead to the perennial, delightful Mountain Sheep Spring. From there, it’s an easy scramble back into the bed of Jumpup Canyon.

Jumpup/Kanab Confluence to Colorado River. Follow the main creek bed to the Colorado River. The entire way involves tedious boulder hopping, wading and numerous detours over and around large rocks and pour-offs. The walls of this canyon rise impressively out of the creek bed for a thousand feet. Scotty's Hollow is the largest side drainage on the west side of Kanab. The large spire at its mouth and across the creek bed identifies it. This should not be confused with another similar spire a mile downstream. Scotty's Hollow is an interesting side trip but contains pour overs and chockstones that will be accessible only to those with climbing skills and no aversion to swimming and heights. Continuing to the Colorado River below here is more boulder-hopping and stream crossings.

General Information & History

Kanab Creek bisects the Arizona Strip in a long, impressive gorge as it winds its way to the confluence with the Colorado River. There are several dramatic and spectacular routes into the canyon, many of which have been used over the centuries by adventurers both historic and prehistoric. John Wesley Powell aborted his second Grand Canyon exploration at the mouth of Kanab Creek, preferring to hike out and salvage what data he could, before being exposed to the thrashing of the unportagable rapids that had caused tragedy on his first trip. It is one of the longest and most well developed tributary canyons of the Grand, leading geologists to suggest it is an “antecedent stream” (present as a mature drainage before the formation of the canyon).

Maps

7.5’ Quads: Grama Spring, Jumpup Point, Fishtail Mesa, Kanab Point
15' Quads: Jumpup Canyon, Kanab Pt.
BLM: Arizona Strip District
USFS North Kaibab Ranger District Map